

Uluru Statement from the Heart

A call to the Prime Minister and Australian Parliament

We support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' right to be listened to in the Australian Parliament and acknowledged in the Australian Constitution

The Consumers Health Forum represents the interests of health care users, carers and those with an interest in health consumer affairs in Australia. Our membership consists of organisations and individuals who are passionate about improving consumer access and experiences with health services and constantly striving for the best health outcomes for all Australians through genuine consultation and partnerships with consumers.

In 2017, more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders came together and established the consensus position on Indigenous constitutional recognition through the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. This calls for constitutional acknowledgement of the ancient sovereignty that was 'never ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the crown' and makes a collective call for 'constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful* place in our own country'.

There have been numerous consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and reports that highlight the ongoing gaps in life-expectancy, health, education, employment and housing with the general population. There is established international evidence that non-health factors such as income and social status have a greater impact in determining health outcomes than clinical care. Many Australians have seen the devastating effects, including worse health outcomes and lower rates of participation in the health workforce, of successive federal, state and territory policies that have been imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Consumers Health Forum believes all Australians deserve to have a say in the issues affecting them and that genuine consultation and partnership lead to successful

outcomes and solutions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have consistently reminded us that they are best placed to address the current situation facing their families and communities.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* also seeks an advisory body "enshrined in the Constitution" to provide non-binding advice to Parliament. It also seeks a Makarrata Commission to commence treaty negotiations engaging with all Australian governments and more active steps for 'truth telling about our history'. Implementing these two recommendations would give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples an unprecedented voice in Parliament.

A national survey recently found over 70 per cent of respondents support constitutional recognition and 60.7 per cent supporting the Voice to Parliament proposal. The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* has received unmatched, collective support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We strongly urge governments to listen to the Australian people and acknowledge the historical and ongoing lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the constitution and prioritise genuine consultation in the Australian Parliament.

Recognition at the highest levels of leadership followed by an ongoing commitment to a genuine partnership will be central in reshaping and strengthening Australia's national identity and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to flourish.

We support the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and we call on the Australian Parliament to make this a national priority.