

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd supports Voice to Parliament

4 October 2023

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd joins its full support to the Yes campaign in the upcoming referendum.

We endorse the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its calls for voice, treaty and truth-telling. We stand behind First Nations groups and communities calling for Constitutional recognition and a Voice to Parliament in the October 14 referendum.

ACSL recognises that disadvantage, marginalisation and disempowerment put children and adults at greater risk of abuse and discourages victims, survivors and witnesses from seeking help or healing.

We believe that a Voice to Parliament and appropriate Constitutional recognition are just, and that when Indigenous Australians are listened to and empowered, Indigenous children and adults at risk will be safer.

It is also critical that these principles are lived out within Catholic organisations. ACSL recognises the need to ensure that First Nations Catholics, and all those First Nations peoples who engage with the Church, have their voices heard in decisions affecting them. Many groups within the Church provide ministries and services that touch the lives of First Nations Australians in ways big and small.

We also acknowledge that the Catholic Church has been responsible for a great deal of harm to First Nations people. Through actions and inaction Catholics have perpetrated, permitted or failed to prevent many injustices.

These injustices and crimes, as well as the abuse of Indigenous children and adults by clergy, religious and lay Catholics, have contributed to immense trauma. These facts are undeniable and deeply shameful.

At the same time, there is a rich history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholicism. Our Church has been enriched by Indigenous Spirituality and many Indigenous people have been and remain Catholics despite the sins of their non-Indigenous sisters and brothers. Many other First Nations people retain a connection to the Catholic faith and community in various ways.

For these reasons ACSL adds our voice to the chorus of Catholic organisations that have already pledged their support to the Yes campaign.

We acknowledge this is but one step in a path to the ongoing project of reconciliation but it is a meaningful and appropriate step which we encourage all Catholics to support.