

## Statement from ANTaR ACT: we why are supporting Yes

ANTaR ACT members have long been advocating for justice, rights and respect for First Nations peoples. We support recognition in the form of a Voice, as part of implementing the Uluru Statement in full: Voice, Treaty, Truth. Here are 7 key reasons ANTaR ACT committee members give for supporting Yes.

### 1. The proposal brings recognition with substance.

First Nations peoples have lived in this country for over 65,000 years. Recognising this prior occupation is long overdue, a vital step towards righting the wrongs from the start of colonisation and moving towards reconciliation. This is essential for a better and fairer Australia. Recognition requires substance, not just empty symbolism, and the substance will come through the Voice.



### 2. First Nations people have asked for a Voice.

The proposal for a Voice came out of many years of lobbying by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, numerous Government enquiries and an extensive consultation process. The Voice is supported by a wide range of First Nations groups, including many land councils, traditional owners groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health & legal services, and other First Nations organisations across the country.

### 3. The Voice must have status and stability.

Having the Voice in the constitution will provide stability and status, and prevent a government abolishing it, as has happened for previous First Nations representative bodies.

### 4. This is about fairness and human rights.

The 1967 referendum gave the government the powers to make laws regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the Voice would ensure they would be able to make representations regarding any such laws. This is consistent with Article 18 of the UN Declaration of Indigenous Peoples: 'Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights'.

### 5. What we are doing is not working.

Australia has spent vast amounts of time, money and effort trying to address Indigenous disadvantage over the years, yet the Closing the Gap reports do not show progress. It is too easy to find examples of government decisions that do not reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's priorities and perspectives and that exacerbate, rather than remedy, disadvantage and discrimination.

### 6. The Voice will make a difference.

The Voice, working with regional and local voices, can make a difference in addressing the issues facing First Nations peoples, including poor health, racism and disadvantage. When people have a say in the decisions that affect them, the decisions are likely to be better, and the people will feel a greater sense of control, which in turn will improve their health and wellbeing.

### 7. Voting Yes gives hope.

A Yes vote can move us forward. We think a No vote will not lead to more change, will not bring forward a treaty, but would be seen to endorse the negativity and divisiveness prominent in the No campaign.