



Community sector urges support for constitutional reform recognising Australia's First Peoples

The Australian and State and Territory Councils of Social Service today warmly welcome the release of the Final report of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and fully endorse its recommendations.

In the days and weeks ahead, we again urge all politicians and political parties in the country to show good faith and responsibility, welcoming the considered advice of experts on this important area of long overdue constitutional reform. We must engage in a sincere and mature debate on this important issue. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to include our first peoples in the single most important framing document of our nation.

The official apology to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Stolen Generations in 2008 showed deep community sentiment for a new relationship based on respect and equality. The community services sector knows all too well the enormous disparity that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in our frontline daily work providing crucial assistance to the most disadvantaged in society.

We know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples still face gross inequities and are the single most disadvantaged group in our country on virtually every conceivable measure. It is essential that any recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples includes the removal of racially discriminatory elements within the Constitution that can otherwise undermine a statement of recognition.

We look forward to working together with all those committed to social justice and human rights in ensuring that this process of constitutional reform is conducted with informed care, and considered deliberation.

For comment, please contact ACOSS on 0419 626 155

Signatories

- *Dr Cassandra Goldie - ACOSS Chief Executive Officer
- *Alison Peters - NCOSS Director
- *Cath Smith - VCOSS Chief Executive Officer
- *Irina Cattalini - WACOSS Chief Executive Officer
- *Wendy Morton - NTCOSS Executive Director
- *Roslyn Dundas - ACTCOSS Director
- *Tony Reidy - TASCOSSE Chief Executive Officer
- *Mark Henley - QCOSS Director
- *Ross Womersley - SACOSS Executive Director