

27 September, 2023

### **College statement on the Voice to Parliament**

Throughout its 50-year history, the Australasian College of Paramedicine (the College) has been focussed on fostering high standards of paramedic care. Paramedics proudly provide care equitably to our communities and they know from first-hand experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples generally experience significant healthcare disparities.

The College recently updated our Constitution to acknowledge our role as a leader of the profession, and this included an undertaking to improve access to and the provision of healthcare, and to reduce disparities in healthcare for individuals and communities across Australasia, including First Nations, Tangata Whenua and Indigenous Peoples. The College supports measures that empower First Nations people to actively engage in decisions that impact their health and wellbeing.

In 2017, the Uluru Statement from the Heart invited all Australians to help create a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and called for a Voice for First Nations peoples to be added to the Constitution. The referendum in October is asking Australians to vote to amend the Constitution to formally recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a Voice to Parliament.

The Australian Human Right Commission recognised that the gap in health and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians represented a fundamental social justice issue, and that only through further empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can this fundamental goal be realised. The Voice to Parliament provides a way forward for empowerment and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and an opportunity to enhance health outcomes for them.

The College acknowledges the diversity of views within the membership of the College and the broader paramedic and health community regarding the proposed Voice to Parliament and we support the democratic process by encouraging respectful and evidence-based discussion.

It is important during the lead up to the referendum as we engage in discussions on the Voice to Parliament that we do so in a respectful and considered way, with an understanding that our language and actions can have unintended impacts, especially on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The College does not have capacity to vote on the referendum, therefore we encourage all members and those in the profession to inform themselves and consider the potential for health and wellbeing benefits that the Voice to Parliament could provide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Provide links to different resources.

<https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>

<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/projects/close-gap-indigenous-health>

<https://lawcouncil.au/policy-agenda/the-referendum-for-an-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-voice>