



## **ALA support for the Uluru Statement and Voice to Australian Parliament**

**March 2021**

### **Adult Learning Australia**

Adult Learning Australia (ALA) has been in operation for more than 60 years and is the largest national peak body for adult community education in Australia. ALA exists to provide leadership and professional development that advances quality services for all adult learners.

ALA is a not-for-profit entity with both organisational and individual members in all states and territories who reflect the diversity of adult learning and community education, including community learning centres, community colleges, neighbourhood houses, Aboriginal learning cooperatives, TAFEs and other adult education institutions.

Our vision is for equitable access to learning for all Australians to support social cohesion and economic prosperity.

ALA is a trusted long-term leader in the field of adult learning and community education. We believe in the power and potential of adult learning and community education to transform lives and to affect both social and economic change. ALA values and promotes the benefits of learning in all of its forms and is an active advocate in state, territory, national and international communities.

ALA is committed to advancing the adult education and learning opportunities of First Nations peoples. We actively reach out to include Indigenous people on our Board. Our current Board includes one Indigenous Board member who works at a grassroots level with First Nations peoples in NT and other Board members have extensive experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities. Our membership includes ATSI community education providers in metropolitan, rural and remote areas across Australia, who work each day to advocate for and support First Nations adults to engage in rich and fulfilling learning throughout their lives. ALA has a history of working collegially with ATSI adult education and learning organisations and has provided scholarship funding through our Learning Changes Lives Foundation to help secure the education and work prospects of ATSI individuals.

## **ALA Statement of Support**

First Nations representatives have offered the nation a way forward through the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It is an offering that invites all Australians to reflect deeply about this country, the land, its history and its peoples. ALA welcomes the opportunity to join with First Nations People on this journey of connection including acknowledgement of the deep grief and loss that have occurred over the last two hundred and fifty years. Australia will be a much better nation for embracing our First Nations Peoples voice to guide and inform our country so that it can grow towards a healthy sustainable future.

The Australian Parliament must demonstrate true leadership and commitment towards reconciliation, by adopting the statement and ensuring an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice in Parliament'. Talk and good intentions will never be enough. Empowerment needs to be embedded within a legal framework to guarantee the First Nations voice will be heard.

In the Voice to Parliament, the Uluru Statement provides an opportunity to the Australian people to address the 'unfinished business' of the history of this country, to hold a truth and reconciliation process about the past, and to begin the pathway to healing and making it right. Australia is a great nation; we can be better by giving our full endorsement and commitment to the three key principles of The Uluru Statement.

ALA supports the three key positions put forward:

1. The Australian Government must honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled
2. Enabling legislation for the Voice to Parliament must be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament
3. The membership model for the Voice to Parliament needs to reflect the diversity of First Nations Peoples and ensure that those previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the opportunity to be included and involved.

This acknowledgement is long overdue. If we are to move forward as a nation, we must do so together.

It's time for the Uluru Statement and Voice to Australian Parliament to have a rightful place in the Australian Constitution. The most significant lifelong learning achievement our nation as a whole could attain is enabling First Nations Peoples voice to be heard. Support for the key principles of Uluru Statement provides a much needed opportunity for an enriched Australia.