

22 February 2023

The AAS Response to the Proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament

The AAS recognises the sentiment of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in calling for a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament, a path to Treaty and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission.

This response is provided with acknowledgement of the complexities the proposed Voice, as one component of Uluru Statement, raises and the communities potentially impacted. As anthropologists, we appreciate that there is no single view on this matter. Our membership includes First Nations Anthropologists and those in allied disciplines, who have varied and complex views on the proposed change to the Australian Constitution via referendum. The Society also recognises the diverse range of perspectives and priorities among Indigenous communities, and more broadly across Australia on this referendum proposal.

The AAS therefore will not make comment or take a defined position on the many questions relating to the Uluru Statement or enshrining an Indigenous Voice to Parliament within the Australian Constitution. This discussion must be led by Indigenous peoples and communities. While the Society acknowledges the importance of the debates taking place nationally, this does not distract the Society from continuing to critique the on-going experiences of colonial and institutional subjugation, injustice and violence for First Nations peoples in this country.

We believe anthropology offers an important framework with which to consider the specific and complex intersections raised when considering an issue like the Voice to Parliament, and in promoting the professional and nuanced use of this framework in universities, in the field, in political discourse, and wherever anthropology may be deployed. We strongly support respectful, considered, constructive and empathetic discourse.

AAS Executive Committee.