



VOICE

Referendum

THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART



Australian
Human Rights
Commission

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The [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) (the Statement) is an invitation from a group of First Nations people to non-Indigenous Australians. Shared in 2017, the Statement calls for substantive reform to help realise [Indigenous rights](#), through the establishment of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission. 'Makarrata' is a multi-layered Yolŋu word understood as the coming together after a struggle. The Statement specifies that the Makarrata Commission would undertake processes of agreement-making (treaty) and truth-telling.

The three key pillars of [substantive reform](#) called for in the Statement are:

- **Voice** – a constitutionally enshrined representative mechanism to provide expert advice to Parliament about laws and policies that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- **Treaty** – a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations peoples that acknowledges the historical and contemporary cultural rights and interests of First Peoples by formally recognising sovereignty, and that land was never ceded.
- **Truth** – a comprehensive process to expose the full extent of injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to enable shared understanding of Australia's colonial history and its contemporary impacts.

The Uluru Statement comes after decades of research, reports and calls for genuine substantive reform to recognise and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of these lands and waters.

The Australian Government announced on 23 March 2023 that it would hold a referendum in 2023, to ask the Australian people whether they agree to recognising the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution by establishing an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. [Learn more about this in the 'referendums and constitutional change' section of the resource kit.](#)



The [Australian Human Rights Commission affirmed its support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart](#) in March 2023.

About the Australian Human Rights Commission

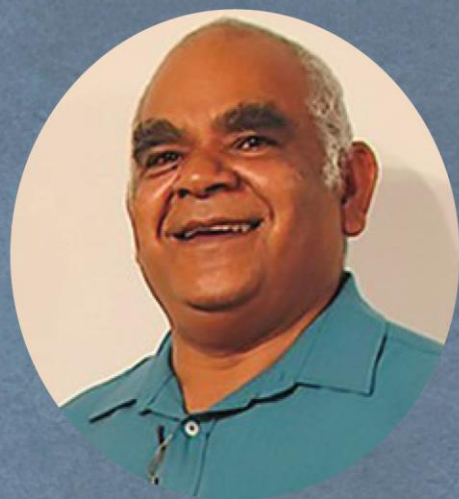
The Australian Human Rights Commission (Commission) is an independent organisation, established by [an Act of the Australian Parliament](#). The Commission is responsible for promoting awareness of human rights, educating the Australian community about such rights, and providing expert guidance on Australia’s human rights obligations, both internationally and domestically.

The Commission’s contribution to the 2023 referendum is independent and non-partisan, appropriate to its role as a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). We encourage and support the Australian public to consider the Voice proposal and associated referendum through a human rights lens.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Paul Bong (aka Bindur Bullin), is a descendant of the Yidinji tribe who occupied the fertile rainforest lands from Cairns in the north to Babinda in the south and west into the Atherton Tablelands. His ancestral history is rooted in this region. Paul's father George was forced to reject the traditional ways and to assimilate into white society. This broke the continuity of Paul's culture, language and heritage from being passed down through the generations.



Paul's grandmother spoke Yidiny and taught him stories and legends about the rainforest – its bush food, animals, young warriors and special places. These stories are the inspiration for many of his works. Paul's work reflects the stories and culture that was lost to European settlement. Bong incorporates traditional designs with modern techniques, with each design having its own spiritual meaning.