



VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Grange Chancellery
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795

Tel: +
Email:

11 June 2018

Senator Patrick Dodson and Mr Julian Lesser MP
Chairs
Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition
Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Dodson and Mr Lesser

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION RELATING TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Yindyamarra Winhanganha is a Wiradjuri phrase meaning, *the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in*. It's a sentiment at the heart of Charles Sturt University's approach to teaching, learning, research and engagement. It reflects the University's ethos for the public good and positions Wiradjuri culture at the heart of the Charles Sturt University's governance, management and operations.

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,100 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia.

The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of rural and regional Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions it serves. The University is most proud of its connections with the indigenous peoples of the regions in which it operates including the Wiradjuri in Central and Southern New South Wales and the Birpai on the Mid-North Coast.

Charles Sturt University is honoured to provide a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples regarding its inquiry into constitutional recognition (https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Constitutional_Recognition_2018/Constitutional_Recognition). The University supports the scope of the Committee's inquiry, including:

- consideration of the recommendations of the Referendum Council (summarised below), the Uluru Statement from the Heart (Attachment 1), the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2015), and the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians (2012);
- examine the methods by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are currently consulted and engaged on policies and legislation which affects them, and consider if, and how, self-determination can be advanced, in a way that leads to greater local decision making, economic advancement and improved social outcomes; and,
- recommend options for constitutional change and any potential complementary legislative measures which meet the expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and which will secure cross party parliamentary support and the support of the Australian people.

Charles Sturt University supports the principles for moving forward with recognition as set out in the *Final Report of the Expert Panel on Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution*, including:

- contribute to a more unified and reconciled nation;
- be of benefit to and accord with the wishes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples;
- be capable of being supported by an overwhelming majority of Australians from across the political and social spectrums;
- be technically and legally sound;
- engage with key stakeholders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and organisations; and,
- advise on the possible steps that could be taken to ensure the referendum has the best possible chance of success, including proposals for a constitutional convention or other mechanism for raising awareness in the broader community.

Charles Sturt University welcomes progress towards constitutional recognition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The University was pleased to have the opportunity to provide feedback to the Government at several of the public information sessions that were held across Charles Sturt University's footprint in recent months.

The University has a long and proud history of advocating First Nations' recognition and reconciliation, including most recently contributing to the review of the Closing the Gap initiative (Attachment 2), the proposed Aboriginal heritage legislation in New South Wales (Attachment 3) and most recently the leadership of Mr Stan Grant Junior, our Chair of Indigenous Affairs, during National Reconciliation Week 2018 <https://news.csu.edu.au/latest-news/indigenous/uluru-statement-and-indigenous-australians-diverse-identity> (Attachment 4).

Drawing on Charles Sturt University's extensive experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching, learning, research and engagement, the University believes that constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples is a crucial step towards reconciliation and closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Taken together, Charles Sturt University believes the outcomes set out in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* will significantly and substantially increase the presence and place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australian society. Further, the University believes the proposed policy settings and program design options set out in Mr Stan Grant Junior's *The Political Status of Indigenous Australians* June 2018 Paper should play a crucial role in effecting Australia's recognition journey. In addition, the University also refers the Committee to the recommendations set out in our recent submissions regarding Closing the Gap and the New South Wales Government's proposed aboriginal cultural heritage legislation.

To this end, Charles Sturt University looks forward to working with our indigenous communities, including the Wiradjuri and the Birpai, as well as with governments of all levels, to ensure all policy objectives and program outcomes are met from these important reforms.

I would be delighted to provide further information to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition regarding constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Peoples and, together with the University's Office of Indigenous Affairs, would be available to provide evidence at any further proposed hearings that the Committee may undertake on this matter of crucial national importance.

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrew Vann
Vice-Chancellor

cc Ms Cathy McGowan AO MP, Independent Federal Member for Indi

Encl. Attachment 1 – *Uluru Statement from the Heart*.
Attachment 2 – *Charles Sturt University - Submission to the Closing the Gap – The Next Phase Public Discussion Paper*, April 2018.
Attachment 3 – *Charles Sturt University - New South Wales Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2018 – Public Consultation Draft - Submission*, 20 April 2018.
Attachment 4 – *The Political Status of Indigenous Australians*, Stan Grant Junior, June 2018.