

ACPP Position Statement on the Voice to Parliament

We can no longer ignore the painful struggles of First Nations people living with the legacies of an oppressive colonialist past and the intergenerational psychological trauma which has resulted. For too long the voices of First Nations people living in Australia have not been heard.

First Nations people suffer disproportionate poverty and disadvantage, discrimination and catastrophic gaps in health and mental health services, education, and housing. Indigenous communities have suffered disproportionately high imprisonment rates, deaths in custody, suicide and disability and deaths from manageable health conditions. In addition, the intergenerational trauma of Indigenous children being forcibly removed from their loved ones has and will continue to leave its damaging imprint on generations to come. This trauma has been exacerbated by the continuing failure by non-Indigenous Australians to listen carefully, act in a culturally informed manner, recognise the consequences of this history and act appropriately based on advice from First Nation co-workers and patients and community members.

First Nations people in Australasia have, for the most part, over the past 200 years been rendered invisible and voiceless. In addressing this damage, we cannot assume that we understand the experience and needs of Indigenous Australians without listening carefully and attentively to their story, respecting their voice. This is true both at an individual and community level.

Many psychoanalytic practitioners represented by the Australasian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies (ACPP) have long standing working relationships with First Nations people including Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations. This work has occurred in

urban and rural and remote regions in hospitals, prisons, clinics, and has demonstrated the necessity of authentic, respectful, collaborative relationships as a foundation of constructive work with Indigenous individuals and groups. We have learned from these collaborations that without indigenous guidance and collaboration our work in such settings is doomed to be at best of limited help and at worst counterproductive. An essential component of these partnerships is listening to the experience and perspective of First Nations people. If our work is to be effective First Nations people need to feel that they have been treated as active and equal participants in the work, not as passive recipients.

The Voice to Parliament presents an opportunity for Australians to validate authentic two-way collaboration. It is a beginning step to redress the harm that has been done by rendering our First Nations people invisible and voiceless. The Voice offers the possibility of moving out of this devastating often heartbreaking repetition with the guidance of First Nations people who understand their own contexts, their own needs, and the most appropriate therapeutic practices for social and emotional well-being. **It offers a statement to First Nations people that we hear their plight, we respect their place in our history and our future, and that we welcome their guidance in working together toward a healthier collective future.**

It is on this basis that the ACPP supports the Voice initiative.