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Closing the Gap report show Indigenous input vital

The latest Closing the Gap report shows how important it is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to have a say in the laws and policies that affect them through a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament, says the Law Council of Australia.

Law Council President, Pauline Wright, said the latest report showing only two of the seven Closing the Gap targets are "on track" was the legacy of many years of ignoring and silencing the views of First Nation peoples.

"The lack of a voice continues to manifest itself through the outcomes we see in this report and through Indigenous incarceration rates which are a national shame," Ms Wright said.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders need to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives and be able to propose bills and be consulted on bills before Parliament. This is why we will continue to advocate for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

"Governments also needs to respond and act on the Australian Law Reform Commission's Pathways to Justice Report, including introducing a COAG Closing the Gap justice target."

Ms Wright acknowledged the commitment of Minister of Indigenous Australians Ken Wyatt in Parliament today to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to listen to their voices. But to make a real difference to the lives of Indigenous people it was vital for their voices to be heard by Parliament as well.

"There is simply no reason to be fearful of constitutional enshrinement. Any concerns that it would be a 'third chamber' in Parliament have now been thoroughly dismissed," Ms Wright said.

"People should not be afraid of giving our First Nations peoples a real and meaningful voice in our democracy."

Ms Wright said the alternative that has been proposed, a voice to government, would not be enshrined in law and could therefore be abolished at any point in the future.

"It is essential we have an open and wide-ranging consultation process that addresses all options, especially a key recommendation of the Uluru Statement: constitutional recognition. The principle of self-determination requires meaningful Indigenous participation in decision making.

Media Release



“The Uluru Statement was one of the most comprehensive consultations ever conducted with Indigenous Australians. We should be respecting that process and the many leaders and community members who took part in those consultations.”

The Law Council will continue to work closely with Minister Wyatt and the highly regarded advisory team, which includes Marcia Langton and Tom Calma.

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