

Australian Council for International Development

Submission on the
Indigenous Voice Discussion
Paper



The Dreaming:
Photo of original artwork by local Ngunnawal
artist Richie Allen, commissioned for ACFID



AUSTRALIAN
COUNCIL
FOR
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

ACFID's Vision, Purpose and Values

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action.

ABOUT ACFID

Our vision is Australia acting with compassion and fairness for a just, sustainable and equitable world. Our purpose is to lead, unite and support international development and humanitarian organisations to realise our vision.

Founded in 1965, ACFID currently has 129 members and 22 affiliates operating in more than 90 developing countries. The total revenue raised by ACFID's membership from all sources amounts to \$1.86 billion (2018-19), \$701 million of which is raised from over 1.26 million Australians. ACFID's members range between large Australian multi-sectoral organisations that are linked to international federations of NGOs, to agencies with specialised thematic expertise, and smaller community-based groups, with a mix of secular and faith-based organisations.

ACFID members must comply with the ACFID Code of Conduct, a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of signatory organisations. Covering 9 Quality Principles, 33 Commitments and 92 compliance indicators, the Code sets good standards for program effectiveness, fundraising, governance and financial reporting. Compliance includes annual reporting and checks. The Code has an independent complaint handling process.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

'The Dreaming' is an artwork that connects Mother Earth with the Dreaming. The colours also represent the Sky, Sun and the Rain. When we talk about 'The Dreaming' we talk about an atmosphere that is the place to connect with the Land.

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ACFID'S VALUES

INTEGRITY

We act with honesty and are guided by ethical and moral principles in all that we do.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We take responsibility for our actions and are accountable to our stakeholders, and in particular primary stakeholders, for our performance and integrity.

TRANSPARENCY

We openly share information about our organisations and our work with all our stakeholders and the public.

RESPECT

We recognise the value and diversity of all people and are committed to treating others with due regard for their rights, dignity and integrity.

EFFECTIVENESS

We strive to deliver outcomes that bring about positive change in the lives of people living in poverty.

EQUITY

We are committed to overcoming prejudices and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to resources and opportunities.

COOPERATION

We work with and alongside others in a spirit of mutuality, respecting diversity and difference in the pursuit of common goals.

Artist- Richie Allan
Ngunnawal Kamilaroi
Totem- Wedge Tail Eagle
Spiritual Totem- Bogong Moth

Submission on the Indigenous Voice

Discussion Paper

ACFID Members recognise that indigenous people the world over have the right to self-determination (Article 3, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), and that truth-telling has a vital role in restorative justice and healing.

BACKGROUND

ACFID has had a long-standing commitment to reconciliation and the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia and around the world. Representation at the historic Australian Reconciliation Convention in 1997 led to ACFID (ACFOA at the time) taking an active role in coordinating NGO responses to the Government's proposed amendments to the Native Title Act, raising concerns on the erosion of Indigenous Rights and the implications for the Racial Discrimination Act and for the reconciliation process. Sir Ron Wilson, President of ACFID from 1998 – 2001, was co-author with Mick Dodson on the 1997 "Bringing them Home" report into the Stolen Generation, leading to the creation of National Sorry Day and the walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2000. Sir Ron Wilson is now the namesake for ACFID's Human Rights Award, which was awarded to the Referendum Council in 2017 in recognition of their outstanding and collaborative consultative process on constitutional reform and their vitally important report to the Federal Parliament.

At our Annual General Meeting in November 2017, ACFID Council moved a resolution in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, resolving to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples for Makarrata through truth, justice, healing, and agreement making; and to support the aims and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples for substantive constitutional reform, by leveraging our networks and influence.

ACFID and its membership support First Nations led, community driven approaches to program design and delivery. In 2007, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community of Practice was formed to enable collaboration within our membership and external Indigenous organisations to ensure effective development practice, decision-making and programs reflect community aspirations and priorities.

ACFID's commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality are realised through our vision, purpose and values. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, recognition and reconciliation are vital to the work of ACFID and its members as we work towards a world free from injustice and inequality. As such, ACFID has commenced its first Reconciliation Action Plan and is committed to building respectful, meaningful and sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACFID welcomes the government's Indigenous Voice co-design report and the work completed to date. We wholeheartedly support a framework that is community designed and led and it is encouraging to see models for both a "Local and Regional Voice"

and a “National Voice” emerge. We believe these should always espouse the principles of participation, empowerment, and local ownership. Therefore, the specific details should be decided upon by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, which will enable structures that best suit communities and the myriad of rich cultures from across the land.

We commend the commitment to gender parity in the National Voice and support the measures to include Youth and Disability Advisory Groups to ensure the voices of these groups are heard. We recommend this be extended to all marginalised and underrepresented groups.

The membership model for the National Voice must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which calls for a Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution. It is a crucial step in ensuring the longevity of the Voice and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We call on the Australian government to uphold its election commitment to hold a referendum once the model for the Voice is decided. Enabling legislation for the Voice must then be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of parliament.