



AUSTRALIA



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UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

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Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Australia recognises the value of making sure that the voices of Indigenous Australians are heard and they have greater participation and input into the policies and programs that affect their lives.

Co-design is at the heart of Australia's efforts to reform decision-making structures and processes on matters central to the lives of Indigenous Australians. Australia is committed to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve outcomes in their communities. Specifically, this includes a partnership approach that respects regional particularities, the expertise of Indigenous Australians and acknowledges their unique place in our nation.

Australia has committed to a co-design process to determine options for an Indigenous Voice, to improve local and regional decision-making, as well as options for constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. An Indigenous Voice is one mechanism for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people to be heard on the issues that affect them. Given their vast and diverse experiences, an Indigenous Voice will provide tangible input for Indigenous Australians at the local and regional level – and help achieve greater and more sustainable outcomes on the ground, where it matters most.

Already, 52 people from around the country, who are predominately Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, worked together to develop proposals for what an Indigenous Voice could look like and how it could work. They presented an interim report to the Australian Government with their proposals – and consultations are now underway with all Australians invited to provide feedback on how those proposals could work. Consistent with the Government's commitment to working in partnership, consultations are taking place in cities, towns and remote communities around the land.

Australia has a historic formal ten-year National Agreement on Closing the Gap between all levels of government and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Partnership agreed to a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap that came into effect on 27 July 2020. It outlines the reforms needed to guide coordinated efforts to improve the economic, health, safety and education outcomes of Indigenous Australians.

In alignment with the UNDRIP principle of representative decision making, Australia's partnership efforts ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are at the centre of decision making on the matters that affect them.

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