

Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024

Dear Committee Secretariat,

My name is Matthew Perkins and I live on Gadigal land.

I'm a person of colour whose family history is a product of colonialism and I have long been passionate about understanding the past to build a better future.

For decades, First Nations Peoples in Australia have called for truth-telling processes to lay a foundation of truth about our shared history, and as a vehicle toward justice and greater self-determination for their communities.

I wholeheartedly support the Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024 which would establish a national Truth and Justice Commission to inquire into and make recommendations to Parliament on matters relating to historic and ongoing injustices against First Peoples in Australia and the impacts of these injustices on First Peoples.

I've been regularly surprised how little known well-documented facts about Australia's are, such as the mass killings described in Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* or The Guardian's online interactive map made with the University of Newcastle Colonial Frontier Massacres Project team.

As a country, Australia has a responsibility to engage in truth-listening to confront the ways in which this history and the settler colonial system continues to benefit non-Indigenous peoples at the expense of First Nations rights.

That is why it was wonderful to hear Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pledge to implement the Uluru Statement in full, and the creation of a national Truth and Justice Commission would be an important step toward ensuring this commitment is not broken.

The Makaratta mentioned in The Uluru Statement from the Heart needs all of Australia to consider how First Nations perspectives, culture, and connection to Country could play a more central role in the way our country operates.

Australia would only be stronger for that.

Those who don't know their history are destined to repeat it, so the saying goes.

The accountability and honesty of a truth-telling process would ensure we don't make the same mistakes again.

There have been several major truth-telling opportunities in our history, from the 1997 Bringing Them Home Report to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, that have not been adequately acted on by the Government.

So, a national truth-telling process must be accompanied by structural change in the form of treaty-making, whereby First Nations communities can exercise their right to self-determination and make decisions best for their peoples, communities and futures.

The establishment of a national Truth and Justice Commission would also complement and support the many community-led truth telling processes that are underway at a local level and encourage these place-based processes to be established in other communities.

It has been well established that many First Nations Peoples believe engaging in these local, community-led truth-telling processes with their non-Indigenous neighbours and community members will be a powerful and transformative process that can change how individuals see each other and develop greater collective responsibility and social cohesion.

I look forward to seeing our country walk this path together and I thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,
Matthew Perkins

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.