

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 Narelle Shannon, and I live on Yuggera and Turrbal Country in Queensland and have First Nations family members from Quandamooka Country on North Stradbroke Island. I am a non-Indigenous Australian who strongly supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and all genuine actions to improve outcomes for First Nations Peoples.

The Albanese Government pledged to implement the Uluru Statement in full. While the outcome of the Referendum on a Voice to Parliament was disappointing for many of us, holding the referendum fulfilled the government's commitment to the first element of the Uluru Statement. The creation of a national Truth and Justice Commission would be an important step toward ensuring the commitment to the remaining elements are implemented.

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 particular matters relating to historic and ongoing injustices against First Peoples in Australia and the impacts of these injustices on First Peoples.

First Nations Peoples in Australia have been calling for truth-telling processes for decades in order to lay a foundation of truth about our shared history, and as a necessary first step towards justice, healing and greater self-determination.

Working with victim survivors of institutional child sexual abuse, has taught me something of the impact of being heard and believed. As with other similar royal commissions, it took a supported legislated process for the rest of the country to hear and believe what happened and to gain some understanding of the lifelong impacts of abuse and trauma.

Truth-telling is not just about reliving trauma, it is essential that a Truth and Justice Commission encompasses non-Indigenous Australians engaging in listening that creates a positive change in understanding our shared history.

In the spirit of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, a national truth-telling process must be accompanied by treaty-making whereby First Nations Peoples can exercise meaningful self-determination.

A national Truth and Justice Commission would demonstrate a genuine commitment to acknowledging the history of our country and allow Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to moving forward together as a nation.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry and sincerely hope the points I have raised will be considered.

Narelle Shannon

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