



# Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

## Archbishop of Adelaide

1<sup>st</sup> September, 2023  
20230901:004:L:POR

Dear sisters and brothers,

### **RE: The Voice Referendum**

Grace and peace, I hope this note finds you well.

In 2017, The Uluru Statement from the Heart was presented to the Australian Government by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. It called for reforms to address disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, specifically providing a constitutionally protected First Nations Voice and a Makarrata Commission (a process of conflict resolution, peacemaking, and justice). A copy of this statement is available to view on your church noticeboard.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023, all Australian citizens will vote in the referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament. Over the past months, many community leaders and leaders of organisations have put forward cases for and against this proposed alteration to our constitution.

We will be asked the question:

*'A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?'*

The Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference (ACBC) released a statement regarding an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament in May, 2023. In this statement, the ACBC stated:

*'This is an important moment in the history of the nation, and it can help us to move towards a deep and just reconciliation. It also offers a mechanism to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. We urge all Australians to engage in the debate productively, respecting each other and accepting that people may, in good faith, have differing concerns and perspectives. We are an open democracy, and this is a moment to use our democratic institutions to produce a high-quality debate shaped by a genuine concern to do justice and bring healing to First Nations Peoples.'*

The words of Pope Francis also speak to us at this time of discernment, reminding us of our obligation to advocate for the marginalised in the pursuit of the common good:

*"Even in the developed world, the effects of unjust structures and actions are all too apparent. Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments, and thus promoting the well-being of individuals and of peoples."*

Throughout September, I am asking all Parishes and Communities to prayerfully reflect on this upcoming referendum.

I encourage all Catholics to consider this important issue and inform themselves from reliable sources such as: [www.indigenousvoice.church](http://www.indigenousvoice.church), [www.catholic.au](http://www.catholic.au), or [voice.gov.au](http://voice.gov.au).

Please pray the prayer for ‘The Voice’ regularly in your Parishes and families in the lead up to the referendum. The Frequently Asked Questions flyer, produced by the Justice, Healing and Inclusion Team may address questions you have about the referendum. It is an excellent resource which draws on information from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC).

In Domino,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Pat O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

+Patrick O'Regan  
**Archbishop of Adelaide**