

# POSITION STATEMENT

## THE VOICE REFERENDUM



### Introduction

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart, a referendum will be held in late 2023 to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

The question Australians will be asked is very a simple one. It will read:

*"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?"*

### Key Statement for website

GLaWAC supports the Federal Government's commitment to recognise the First Peoples of Australia through a change to the Constitution, while respecting the individual views held by our members and their right to vote how they choose.

We want to acknowledge that the Referendum to recognise First Australians through a Voice to Parliament is only one pillar in the step to support broad institutional reform at the Commonwealth level.

The organisation continues to work tirelessly toward a self-determining future for Gunaikurnai people, and we welcome any opportunity to strengthen our mob's cultural, spiritual and physical needs.

### Key Messages for Media

- GLaWAC supports the Commonwealth Government's commitment to recognise the First Peoples of Australia through a change to the Constitution.
- GLaWAC respects the individual views held by our members on the Referendum question.
- GLaWAC acknowledges that the Referendum to recognise First Australians through a Voice to Parliament is only one pillar in the step to support broad institutional reform at the Commonwealth level.
- Our mob want a greater say in the issues that are important to us regarding culture, Country, and the social and economic wellbeing of Gunaikurnai people.
- GLaWAC will continue to work for Treaty and truth-telling with all levels of Government on our path to self-determination.

### Position Statement discussion points

- We are Gunaikurnai, the First people of our Country. We have survived for tens of thousands of years, often against great adversity. We have looked after Country and passed on our stories and traditions through countless generations. We continue to survive and thrive, maintaining connection to our Country and to our Ancestors.
- We note that the political discourse around the Referendum has often been misrepresented and we encourage all Australians to consider the impacts that a No vote will have on First Nations people and the nation.
- GLAWAC recognises the tireless work of all Gunaikurnai who have contributed over the years in our long fight for self-determination – those who continue in their efforts to strengthen the mob and those that have sadly passed away.
- We encourage people to read the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan, available on our Website <https://gunaikurnai.org/>

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#### **Whole of Country Principles that GLaWAC upholds and uses for its decision-making:**

*Look at what was there before*

*When we are healing and restoring degraded landscapes, we should try to put back the plants and animals that used to be there.*

*Sustainable use*

*Our approach to managing Country is to balance resource use with conservation – they are all part of the same.*

*Take only what you need – leave some for others.*

*Seek collective benefits. We use our resources for the benefit of our mob rather than seek individual gain.*

*We have the right to be on our Country*

*Traditional Owners should not be restricted in accessing our traditional Country. At the same time, we should have the right to restrict access to others who disrespect and damage our sensitive areas.*

*Our traditional knowledge is valuable*

*Our traditional practices and approaches sustained the land for thousands of years. Our Country should be managed in harmony with our traditional ways. We need to take the time to understand what natural and cultural heritage exists out on Country. It can't be managed properly if we don't know what is there.*

*We have cultural obligations*

*It is our inherent responsibility to look after Country – to heal the damage of the past and protect it for future generations.*

*Everything is connected*

*All of our Country is linked. There is no separation between our landscapes, waterways, coasts and oceans, and natural and cultural resources. All are linked and bound to our people, law and custom.*

*Every bit matters*

*We understand the need to prioritise limited resources to where important values are under threat, but every part of our Country remains important to us.*

*Our values exist even when you can't see them – whether they are under water, deep inside caves, covered with vegetation, they are still important to us.*

*Don't wait until it has gone*

*When you lose a site, it's gone forever. We need to act now to prevent any further loss of environmental or cultural values.*