

## RA Indigenous Network Aboriginal Caucus statement on the Voice Referendum

*As a Collective voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff of Relationship Australia from across states and territories we have sat together in deep challenging and insightful conversations the last couple of days, and we would like to thank you all as CEOs and National office for allowing this, and living to the **Plan on the Page**.*

What we have come to as First Nations people within your organisation - we deeply want to improve what is happening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, women, men and families in Australia. We care and feel the pain of our communities due to the ongoing colonist destruction that has created ongoing trauma and disadvantage. We want and can see a better way. We want to become a united voice. We reclaim our power to self-determine as we have always determined our lives through connection to lands, seas, skies and waterways. We also reclaim our rights to practice our cultural Lore, ceremonies, song, dance and rituals, as non-indigenous Australians do through their own cultural customs.

The time for action is now. For this to happen we must come together as a people, feel the strength of each of our ancestors and connect back to our old ways of gathering and problem solving by sharing information and knowledge. We know the impact of invasion and colonisation has kept us separated and we are saying no more. Instead, we seek to decolonise, sit together and be strengthened by our differences and voices, uniting to stand for our people as our Ancestors and Elders have done before us.

All of Australia should know what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want. It has been clearly articulated, discussed, fought for and shouted for many years. Demands for justice, more authority, political and economic power, and resources in decision making. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Rights are paramount. We acknowledge the recommendations of the **Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody** and the **Bringing them Home report** are yet to be actioned. **Closing the Gap** metrics demonstrate the failures of the current systems.

Will an Indigenous voice to parliament and constitutional recognition vote give us this? We as a collective recognise divergent voices across our respected communities. We all come with different opinions and experiences, and we believe the weight of this decision is an individual choice.

As CEOs and the National office, you too must come to your choice of a position or a statement, and you have begun this work by embedding an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice in Relationships Australia. We implore each State and Territory to continue to demonstrate and invest, as a priority, to Cultural Fitness, the Plan on the page and RAIN.

### **The recommendation from the collective voice of Relationships Australia Indigenous network:**

**Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to feel culturally safe in their workspace. CEOs and their executive staff to take responsibility to prepare, elevate, and resource their organisation and its Employees, to enter these high challenge - high support conversations that keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff safe.**

**Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff can come together in their State and Territory to support, discuss and strengthen their voice.**