



The Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP

**Minister for Indigenous Australians
Member for Hasluck**

MEDIA RELEASE

13 November 2019

Voice Co-Design Underway

The first meeting of the Senior Advisory Group to guide the development of an Indigenous voice was held at Old Parliament House in Canberra today.

Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, welcomed Co-Chairs Professor Marcia Langton AM and Professor Tom Calma AO and other Group members before reflecting on the historic significance of the meeting.

“We have a unique opportunity in front of us to enact meaningful, long-lasting change for not just Indigenous Australians, but for our entire nation. And along the way, everyone will get to have their say,” Minister Wyatt said.

“We may not agree all the time, and members of the Senior Advisory Group may not agree with each other, but the advice they will provide to me will be invaluable and appreciated.”

“It is important that we remain respectful of each other – we’re here to grasp hold of this opportunity to create lasting positive change for Indigenous Australians.”

The Senior Advisory Group has been established to advise Minister Wyatt on the co-design process to develop options and models for an Indigenous voice to government.

The Group agreed clear communication is critical so everyone has the opportunity to engage with, and understand the co-design process. The Group also recognises all the work to date, and the need to ensure we learn from current and past models.

The Members will now consider the membership of the Local/Regional Advisory Group and the National Advisory Group.

“It was clear from the meeting that there is enormous good will from those involved to see this process work, we share a common goal to ensure that the voices of Indigenous Australians are heard and their lives improved,” Minister Wyatt concluded.

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Authorised by Ken Wyatt AM, MP, Member for Hasluck.



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SENIOR ADVISORY GROUP

13 November 2019

OPENING REMARKS

O&OE Check against delivery.

'Kaya wangju' – Hello and welcome.

I start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people, whose land we are meeting on today and acknowledge their elders past, present and emerging.

And to Aunty Matilda House, thank you for that wonderful Welcome to Country – your Welcome always reminds me of our strong connection to land, and the way we draw strength from our community and culture.

I think it is particularly special to have our first meeting here in Canberra.

Ngunnawal for meeting place, Canberra has been where many of us have lent our voices to pursue better outcomes for our people – and it's also likely the place that many Indigenous Australians feel that their voice isn't being heard.

That's what we're here to change.

It is particularly apt to be meeting here, in Old Parliament House, where the first Indigenous Australian voice was heard in Parliament; that of Neville Bonner, who first walked these corridors as a Senator from Queensland four decades ago.

We have a very unique opportunity in front of us to enact meaningful, long-lasting change for not just Indigenous Australians, but for our entire nation.

And along the way, everyone will get to have their say.

You are all leaders in your fields and have a wealth of experience to contribute to the Senior Advisory Group – thank you once again for accepting my invitation to be part of the co-design process.

I look forward to working with you all to develop models and options that ensure Indigenous voices are heard by all levels of government – local, State and Federal.

PROCESS

The NIAA will go through the co-design process in greater detail after breakfast but I wanted to take a moment now to outline my thoughts and rationale to you all.

The Morrison government is committed to a genuine co-design process.

Co-design is working with Indigenous Australians at the table alongside government – and we want to get this right.

The process we are about to embark on was outlined by the Joint Select Committee chaired by Liberal MP Julian Leeser and Labor Senator Pat Dodson as the next step in the constitutional recognition journey.

It's also the policy that we took to the last election – so we're being consistent and doing what we said we'd do. As Tom and Marcia outlined in their op-ed on Monday – this process should come as no surprise.

I understand that many in this room and across the country have expressed disappointment that enshrining the voice in the constitution is off the table. I also acknowledge and respect the fact that many of you will not reconcile from that view – I'm not here to change your mind.

But we are here to deliver outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

What I do ask though, is that we remain pragmatic throughout this process and focus on what can be achieved – the opportunity we have in front of us.

The Senior Advisory Group has been established to advise me on and oversee the co-design process to develop options and models for an Indigenous voice to government.

This Group will ensure that the two co-design groups link up at appropriate times, don't overlap or duplicate work and bring it all together at two key points – first in May and then later in the year. Again, the NIAA will go through this in greater detail later.

I have been working with Tom and Marcia for a few weeks now to develop the terms of reference, agenda for today's meeting and the membership of this group – you have not been handpicked by me, rather we have made joint decision to approach you all to be part of this group.

Later today, you will be engaging in a similar exercise when you consider the membership of the National and Local/Regional Co-Design Groups.

You will provide me with key and critical advice, which will inform the government's approach to co-design and the models that may be adopted in the future.

We may not agree all the time, and you all in this room may not agree with each other, but the advice you provide to me will be invaluable and appreciated.

I ask that we remain respectful of each other and leave any outside issues at the door – we're here to grasp hold of a very unique opportunity to create lasting positive change for Indigenous Australians.

When I've been out in community, people are saying to me – don't worry about the constitution, we just want to be heard.

We want to know who will listen to our concerns and be in a position to do something about them – and the majority are local or State service delivery issues.

That's what has informed the development of this process.

To me, the most important aspect of this work is the Local/Regional voices.

There are a number of structures already in place across the country, and the States and Territories have their own models and processes in place as well – I'm not seeking to duplicate or change that – and they will also be critical to this process.

I've invited all States and Territories to nominate representatives to link in to the co-design process as well and the Agency will discuss their role further.

We are committed to building non-partisan support for this process and I have established a Parliamentarians Working Group.

The co-chairs of this group will play a role in updating parliamentarians of the process and keeping the working group informed of the work being undertaken.

Thank you once again for being part of the Senior Advisory Group, I look forward to working with you all and I'll now hand over to the Co-Chairs for some housekeeping before we break for breakfast.

Authorised by Ken Wyatt AM MP, Member for Hasluck