



WestCASA Board statement regarding The Voice

The WestCASA Board is disappointed by the outcome of the referendum on changing the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. We are sorry that the generous offer enshrined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart was not taken up by the majority of Australian voters. We are sorry that a proposal to help close the gap and progress Treaty was rejected and that the wishes of a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were ignored. We are sorry for the deep hurt, pain and disappointment felt by many First Nations people as a result of the referendum outcome.

The referendum is over but the fight for First Nations justice continues. Now is the time for non-Aboriginal organisations and allies across the country to commit our ongoing support for voice, truth telling and Treaty – in whatever form that takes. Now is the time to strengthen our commitment to reducing the gap, addressing inequality and centring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our work – for us at WestCASA, this is the Bunurong, Wurundjeri and Wadawurrung People of the Kulin Nation.

In the wake of the referendum, WestCASA makes the following commitments:

We recognise that First Nations communities hold the solutions to matters that affect them.

We commit to continuing to work in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), and building partnerships with other First Nations organisations in our community. We commit to centring the perspectives of First Nations communities in decisions that affect them.

We recognise that all First Nations people have a right to culturally safe services, care and support.

We commit to reviewing our practices and investing in building culturally responsive, anti-racist practice within WestCASA, to improve care and reduce barriers to accessing our services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of sexual violence.

We recognise that First Nations people are deeply impacted by the racism inherent within systems and institutions in Australia, and that the harms and trauma of colonisation are ongoing.

We commit to advocating for systemic change in order to reduce the structural inequalities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience.

We recognise the strength, love, resilience and power of First Nations people and communities across this country.

We commit to active allyship and support for a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty is recognised and First Nations wisdom, cultures and ways of being are honoured and celebrated.

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia and

acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. **This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal Land.**