

Wet Tropics Management Authority Board position statement:

First Nations Voice to Parliament

The Wet Tropics Management Authority recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are best placed to shape the solutions that will help their communities to overcome the systemic disparities and disadvantage. The Authority's Board of Directors strongly supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and, in particular, a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority is established under the *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993* and is responsible for protecting and managing the environment, biodiversity and heritage values of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area). The Area is home to the world's oldest continuously surviving tropical rainforests and the traditional lands of one of the world's oldest cultures. The Authority acknowledges the significant contribution that Indigenous Peoples have made, and continue to make, in the stewardship of the Area, and we are privileged to partner with Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples to manage the cultural and natural heritage values within the Area.

In 2017, more than 250 Indigenous Australian delegates gathered at the First Nations National Constitutional Convention at Uluru. The Uluru Statement from the Heart was the agreed position from the convention - this document is an invitation to the nation to walk with and work with Indigenous Australians to deliver a better and fairer Australia.

Later this year, Australians will vote on a single question to change the Constitution in a referendum. The question will be about adding words into the Constitution to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The Board recognises and respects that there are a range of opinions and diversity of views from Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians regarding the Uluru Statement. We do not purport to speak for any sector of the community, but as our organisation has the responsibility of protecting and presenting the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area for the benefit of all humanity, we respectfully offer our perspective to be included in the national conversation.

We acknowledge that everyone is entitled to reach their own decision come the referendum, and we encourage all Australians to consider the invitation and opportunity with an open heart and an open mind as we move forward to this historic referendum.

The Authority practices inclusivity of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples' protocols to provide their voice across all its work and will continue to do so regardless of the outcome of the referendum.