

Statement of Support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart and an Indigenous Voice to Parliament



February 2023

The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) accepts the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk with First Nations peoples in support of a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

We acknowledge that this land was never ceded, that it always was and always will be Aboriginal Land.

We agree with the Statement from the Heart, that a Voice enshrined in the Constitution, will empower First Nations peoples and allow them to take their “*rightful place*” in Australia.

QAMH has a deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which, despite so many adversities, have continued to be a source of strength for its people. We believe, as the peak body representing the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Sector in Queensland, that non-Indigenous cultures and systems, including the mental health system, would be enriched if it could learn lessons from this ancient and enduring culture.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often over-represented in mental health statistics. An estimated 31 per cent of First Nations peoples aged over 18 report high or very high levels of psychological distress. The suicide rate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is twice that of the non-Indigenous population, and suicide occurs at much younger ages.

Concerningly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples report that they are often treated poorly in mental health systems which are not delivering culturally appropriate models of care. Historical and ongoing colonisation, including the forced removal of children, lack of self-determination and structural racism contribute to this.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart outlines the structural nature of the crisis engulfing First Nations peoples, as “*the torment of our powerlessness*”.

We believe enshrining a First Nations Voice to Parliament in the Constitution will be a significant step in alleviating that torment.

In 1967 First Nations peoples asked to be counted.

In 2023 they are asking to be heard.

