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No referendum result a sombre outcome for all: Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services says the No result of yesterday's Voice to Parliament referendum is a disappointing outcome that hinders progress towards self-determination and reconciliation, and urges continued solidarity with First Nations communities.

"This is a sombre day in Australia's history and a devastating outcome, particularly for First Nations communities, and for all members of our society," said Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"It is a great shame that voters have not heeded the call of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, rejecting its generous invitation for a more welcoming and connected world in which First Nations people and communities can determine their own lives and flourish. I encourage all of us to continue standing in solidarity with First Nations communities and to close health and equality gaps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

Jesuit Social Services has endorsed and supported the Uluru Statement from the Heart since it was presented to the Australian people in 2017 and strongly supports a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament. We believe the Voice would support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's self-determination, progress achievement of Closing the Gap targets, help to address historic wrongs and advance reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

Ms Edwards said a Voice to Parliament, alongside Treaty and Truth-telling, would align with the vision of reconciliation cast by Jesuit Social Services' Reconciliation Action Plan.

"Jesuit Social Services imagines reconciliation as walking alongside, respecting and sharing our learning with each other," she said.

"Reconciliation commits us to address the enduring impacts of colonisation and the many disadvantages faced by First Nations people that we see in our work every day, including their overrepresentation in the criminal justice system and poorer health and living standards.

"A Yes referendum result could have made a lasting difference in the lives of First Nations peoples. Nevertheless, we continue to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and advocate for stronger investment to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and adequate resourcing to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, who are best equipped to meet their communities' needs.

"We encourage the Australian public to stand in solidarity and raise our collective voice to support First Nations peoples in their desire to determine their own lives and flourish."

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