The Salvation Army Australia Territory
Territorial headquarters

2 Brisbane Avenue, Barton ACT 2600
PO Box 4224, Kingston ACT 2604

P 02 6270 3118

Senator Nita Green
Joint Select Committee on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum

Support for the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) Bill 2023

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to this Bill.

The Salvation Army is one of the biggest providers of social services in Australia. Our vision is that wherever there is hardship or injustice we will live, love, and fight, alongside others, to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are overrepresented in almost every service we deliver. We are compelled, by our desire for social justice and our faith, to work to address the social injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To this end, The Salvation Army is a long-term supporter of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We see great potential in how the Voice, as conceived of in this Bill, can make a material difference to the disadvantage and hardship experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In relation to the specific and substantive provisions of the Bill, we consider the wording is appropriate as introduced to the Parliament. In particular:

- We support the **establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice** and that the Voice (and the recognition it represents) be **enshrined in the Constitution** – the Uluru Statement was an invitation to the Australian people. A referendum is the best mechanism for the Australian people to accept that invitation;
- We support the **power of the Voice to make representations**, and these powers being **enshrined in the Constitution** – for the Voice to be a meaningful and enduring institution, the ability to make representations needs the kind of permanence that can only come from the Constitution. There needs to be a distinct change from the current and historical model that has seen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices ignored, misinterpreted, or even silenced. This amendment to the Constitution provides that distinction;

- We support the **Voice having power to make representations to both the Parliament and the Executive** – the ability to make representations to both these institutions is critical to achieving material and lasting change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Representations to the Executive is crucial so that policy makers have early access to the wisdom and knowledge of the Voice in designing and implementing programs. Representations to the Parliament are critical to ensure that the Opposition and cross-bench can hold the Commonwealth Government accountable; and
- We support **Parliament having power to make laws with respect to the Voice** including its composition, functions, powers and procedures – we know through long experience working with governments in Australia and around the world that institutions need to grow and change to remain current and effective. The balance of having the fundamentals enshrined in the Constitution with details to be determined by the democratically elected legislature is, in our view, right and proper.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to recommend passage of this Bill through the Parliament without amendment.

The Salvation Army would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission should any further information be of assistance. Further information can be sought from Government Relations, at [redacted]

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Stuart Glover, Captain
Secretary for Mission
The Salvation Army Australia

19 April 2023

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia.

We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

We also acknowledge future aspirations of all First Nations peoples. Through respectful relationships we will work for the mutual flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.