



HISTORY IS CALLING

We accept the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart
ulurustatement.org

At its March meeting, VATE Council unanimously accepted the following motion:

VATE Council supports and will advocate for the Yes vote in the forthcoming referendum on the Voice to Parliament.

In doing so, VATE Council gratefully accepts the invitation of the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](http://ulurustatement.org) to walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the movement of the Australian people towards a better future.

As a Council, we endorse the constitutional reforms in the knowledge that when people have power over their destiny, their children flourish. We look forward to a time when all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can walk in two worlds and their culture is valued as a gift to our country.

We commit to working towards [Makarrata](#). We recognise the role that subject English teachers have in truth-telling. We commit to supporting the VATE member community to ensure that our work is based in the true histories of Australia.

Essential to our teaching in subject English is the creation and maintenance of [inclusive, safe and supportive learning environments](#). We commit to providing cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the young people in our care and their communities and our colleagues with whom we share this journey.

What we will do as an organisation to support the Voice

VATE has already commenced on its own journey of understanding and action, including the following:

Inviting Thomas Mayo, a passionate advocate for the Uluru Statement to deliver the opening keynote at the 2022 State Conference with its theme of It's (Our) Time. Thomas is the author of [Finding the Heart of our Nation](#) and the forthcoming publication with Kerry O'Brien [The Voice to Parliament Handbook](#).

The development of a [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) (RAP). Council believes that such a plan will provide a framework for the development of VATE policies and programs for, about and with First Nations peoples.

Through VATE's online member journal *Idiom*, to provide a space for discussion and sharing of ideas about the Voice campaign, especially from First Nations representatives.

Revisiting VATE's Mission Statement to explore ways in which our commitment to First Nations peoples and the education of their young people can be foregrounded.

Organising a Student Forum on the Voice late in Term 2 in which various perspectives on the referendum will be presented.

Developing and promoting resources, texts and professional learning activities that enrich the teaching of the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures](#) and reflect our commitment to the goals of the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration \(2019\)](#).

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VATE's role to educate and advocate: The ACNC's guidance on Voice campaigns

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) says charities and not-for-profit organisations are within their rights to campaign for their preferred result in the coming referendum.

ACNC commissioner Sue Woodward said that groups could make a valuable contribution to the debate and advocating would not breach guidelines if a charity were able to 'demonstrate how it believes its advocacy furthers its ... purpose.'

VATE's [purpose](#) is to 'advance the teaching and learning of English in Victoria. To this end the Association is committed to developing, implementing, and advocating for, policies and practices that enhance that purpose.' VATE Council believes that its support and advocacy for the Voice strongly aligns with this purpose.

The role of the English teaching community

VATE Council believes that English teachers are in a unique position to educate about the implications of the Uluru Statement. Our business is language and the ways in which it can inform, persuade, move and inspire.

The analytical skills we teach will be important in assisting students to critique and assess the arguments related to the referendum as they are expressed through government statements and publications, by advocates for the yes and no votes, and in the media.

As English teachers, we are attuned to the imaginative dimensions of language.

The Uluru Statement is certainly a political statement with a call for action. It is also a poetic, symbolic and metaphoric vision with profound reverberations regarding ancient sovereignty and custodianship, dispossession, recognition and potential renewal. It is its poetry that makes it, not simply a petition, but a generous invitation 'from the heart'.

Consider, for example, the resonances of the opening and the closing paragraphs.

In the opening paragraph the participants in the constitutional convention gather 'from all points of the southern sky', with its echoes of timelessness. They come as members of 'nations', and as heirs to the wisdoms of 60,000 years of histories, traditions and cultures. They do so to deliberate on a new, more inclusive vision of nationhood.

In the closing paragraph the image of leaving 'base camp' to 'trek across a vast country' evokes an icon of colonial history – the early settler explorers setting out into the unknown, mapping a new land – and radically transforms it. Non-Indigenous people are invited to join in another exploration, a 'walk' to that new more inclusive vision of nationhood yet to be discovered.

Resources

[The Uluru Statement](#)

[Yes 23](#)

[Uluru Statement from the Heart Background Video](#)

[Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies \(AIATSIS\)](#) and the following resource:
[AIATSIS guide to evaluating and selecting education resources](#)