



2 November 2023

Centre for Marine Socioecology statement of commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

As we are all aware, Australians have now voted in the October 2023 referendum, rejecting a change to the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia and to establish a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

Whilst CMS celebrates democracy and acknowledges the decision of the nation, it is clear that misinformation is an enormous challenge in our democracy, and that many Australians are lacking an understanding of the truth of our colonial past and its continuing impact on First Nations people today. We are very disappointed by the outcome. This is particularly since the electoral data very clearly shows that First Nations communities living in remote and regional areas overwhelmingly voted Yes. We recognise the stress and hurt felt by many – in particular, Indigenous colleagues and their families and communities – as a result of public debate surrounding the referendum, and its outcome.

We are heartened that 70% of people in our home municipality of Nipaluna/Hobart voted “Yes”. We are also buoyed by the statement released by the Science and Technology of Australia (<https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/we-will-continue-to-listen-and-act/>), which reads in part “...in the wake of the referendum result, STA re-dedicates ourselves and our community to partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in STEM to advance the cause of repair, respect and recognition. We renew STA’s longstanding commitment to support, amplify, and elevate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in STEM – and highlight the inspiring Indigenous STEM knowledges of this country. You can [show your support for STA’s Indigenous member organisations and other Indigenous causes in so many ways.](#)” We are pleased to see such support from the broader scientific community.

Regardless of the referendum outcome, Australia will continue to face challenges to better understand the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for just and empowered lives. We recognise that a powerful opportunity remains for us to realise the generosity and wisdom of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and to renew our journey toward a shared vision of a better nation for all Australians.

At all levels, it is obvious that we have much more work to do to better connect with each other, and to the people and cultures who have managed the many Countries that make up the land now referred to as Australia for at least 65 000 years. CMS re-commits, strongly, to listening, learning, and working to ensure we can do this in a way that maximises the success and wellbeing of Indigenous people now and into the future.