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Date: 6 September 2024

Committee Secretary

Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Committee Secretary and Hon. Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT 2600

Via: JSCATSIA@aph.gov.au

**Subject: Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024**

Dear Committee Secretary,

Re: Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024

I am writing to express Australian Volunteers International's (AVI) strong support for the establishment of a **Truth and Justice Commission**.

A commission of inquiry into historic and ongoing injustices against First Nations Peoples in Australia, would represent a critical step forward in the pursuit of justice, reconciliation, and healing for First Nations communities across Australia.

AVI is an international development organisation supporting global volunteering, and a rights-based approach to development and community engagement.

We support locally led change. We recognise that capacity strengthening is a long-term, complex process that must be locally owned, and must provide platforms for the voices of Indigenous Peoples to be heard. Through our work, we support partners and First Nations Peoples to progress their own locally determined objectives. This includes and values the voices and lived experiences of First Nations Peoples in Australia, and in the countries that Australia engages with, and where AVI operates.

AVI is a member of the Coalition of Allies, which supports the establishment of a Truth and Justice Commission.

The Albanese Government has pledged to implement the **Uluru Statement from the Heart** in full.

The creation of a national **Truth and Justice Commission** is an essential part of fulfilling this commitment. Without such a commission, we risk failing to honour the promise made to First Nations peoples to listen, acknowledge, and address the injustices they have endured.

Justice for First Nations communities cannot be achieved without first laying a collective foundation of truth. A national **Truth and Justice Commission** would provide an official platform for First Nations voices to be heard, their experiences acknowledged, and their stories shared with the broader Australian community. This truth-telling process is vital for understanding the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and systemic racism.

Moreover, a national truth-telling process would complement local community-led initiatives, as well as support truth-telling processes already underway at the state and territory levels. By working in

tandem with these local efforts, a national commission would ensure that the stories and experiences of all First Nations communities are heard and respected.

Importantly, a **Truth and Justice Commission** should not only focus on the injustices of the past but also highlight the strength, resilience, and richness of First Nations cultures. The Commission can and should shine a light on the enduring connection of First Nations peoples to their Country, their vibrant cultural practices, and the wisdom inherent to their ways of life.

In closing, AVI urges the **Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs** to support the establishment of a Truth and Justice Commission. This would be not only a step toward justice for First Nations communities but also a crucial element of our nation's journey towards true reconciliation.

Thank you for considering AVI's submission.

Yours sincerely,



**Melanie Gow,**

**AVI CEO**

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