

By John Wiseman

The case for Voice – and Truth and Treaty – rests on many clear and powerful arguments.

Fully acknowledging the sovereignty of Indigenous and First Nation people who have occupied this land for over 60,000 years.

Fully recognizing and repairing the loss and damage arising from 200 years of colonial invasion and dispossession.

Clearing the path to self-determination; closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health and housing outcomes; and dramatically reducing the shocking rates of Indigenous incarceration, child removal and deaths in custody.

Justice and self-determination for Indigenous Australians are also, in my view, essential foundations for accelerating the action needed to create a just and resilient safe climate future.

I am very conscious that we all come to this debate about Voice and Truth and Treaty from many different backgrounds and with many different views.

I arrive in this conversation, for example as a descendant of white colonial settlers, starting with Solomon Wiseman of Wiseman's Ferry. I was born and raised in Naarm on the unceded lands of the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

My views are also strongly influenced by my work as a climate emergency and climate justice researcher, writer and activist.

In September 2022 I had the honour of attending the Climate and Country Yarning Circle – a thoughtful, respectful dialogue between Indigenous and non-indigenous climate change researchers and policy makers. This event was held as part of the Desert Song Festival in Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

Speakers at this Yarning Circle began by noting the many ways in which climate change impacts continue to intensify ongoing legacies of colonial violence and displacement. The impact on Indigenous communities of climate change intensified fires, floods and droughts also reminds us that people who have played the smallest role in producing fossil fuel emissions often suffer the worst consequences.

These Climate and Country Yarning Circle presentations also included many valuable reminders of how much we have to learn from Indigenous communities about survival and resilience in tough times and harsh climates – and about the importance of Caring for Country.....

Recognising and respecting the complexity and fragility of the environments and ecologies in which we live.

Strengthening our awareness that short sighted choices about the resources we consume and the waste we leave behind are likely to have bitter implications for many other species and for future generations.

And listening more carefully to the learning of peoples who have lived on this land for many thousands of years about sustainable and resilient fire and food and forest management practices.

Climate justice and justice for Indigenous Australians are both, in short compelling and deeply interrelated reasons for supporting Voice and Truth and Treaty.

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