

# REFERENDUM 2023

# A VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

## CFMEU/MUA

**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

On October 14, Australian's will have their say in a referendum on whether to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First People of Australia in the Constitution through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The Voice will be an independent, representative body for First Nations people that will give advice to the Australian Parliament and Government on matters that affect First Nations people.

In response to the upcoming referendum, in late 2022 the CFMMEU held a conference of 400 delegates, and it was unanimously voted by members to endorse the YES campaign by recognising indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

The resolution reads:

*"The CFMMEU is proud to be the first union to back the Uluru Statement from the Heart with strong resolutions from the construction and maritime divisions in 2017. Our solidarity is a continuation of our long history of standing with First Nations people in their struggle for recognition, respect, self-determination, and treaty."*

*The CFMMEU re-commits our support for all goals in the Uluru Statement - Voice, Treaty and Truth-telling to the nation.*

*Acknowledging the Albanese Labor Government's commitment to hold a referendum to establish a First Nations Voice in this term of Parliament, likely to be held in late 2023, we commit to planning and resourcing an effective campaign to ensure the 'Yes' vote at the referendum succeeds."*

I would like to acknowledge that supporting the YES vote is a contentious issue with our CFMEU Victorian Construction division, and members of the Koori mob have every right to choose how they vote as every indigenous person around the country does. It's a respectful NO as the Koori people voted and are wanting a better deal. However, the CFMMEU's position to support this campaign has been endorsed by our delegates, and as the leader of this union, it is my responsibility to inform the broader membership of this supported resolution.

**Please do your own research carefully and educate yourself on the Voice before October 14.**



## KNOW YOUR UNIONS HISTORY

The Construction and Maritime unions have a long history of standing in solidarity with our indigenous brothers and sisters when campaigning for indigenous rights.

The 1946 Pilbara strike, which is known as the longest industrial strike in Australian history, was fought for and won by indigenous station workers. Fighting against racist employer restrictions and requesting pay rates enjoyed by non-indigenous people, indigenous workers stood solid for 3 years, supported by the Seamen's Union, Waterside Workers Federation, and our Construction unions. Seafarers and Wharfies refused to load wool bales until the dispute ended.

Our Wharfies and Rank & File membership also played a role in supporting the 1966 Gurindji campaign at Wave Hill, donating supplies and funding in support of the Gurindji peoples claim to their land.

Our union always has and always will continue to support the rights of First Nations people.





## WHAT WILL THE VOICE DO?

The Voice will give independent advice to the Parliament and Government.

The Voice will be accountable and transparent.

The Voice will work alongside existing organisations and traditional structures.

## WHAT WILL THE VOICE LOOK LIKE?

The Voice will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on the wishes of local communities.

The Voice will be representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, gender balanced and include youth.

The Voice will be empowering, community led, inclusive, respectful and culturally informed.



"All the First People ask is to be acknowledged as the First People of this continent, thousands of generations old. The sins of two century old modern Australia still to this day, have left most of the descendants of the First People behind. All we ask is for a peak central voice to amplify our concerns of those of left behind to the Federal Government. These are not big asks, to be seen and to be heard. This is the road only to equality."

**"We are brothers and sisters of the human family."**

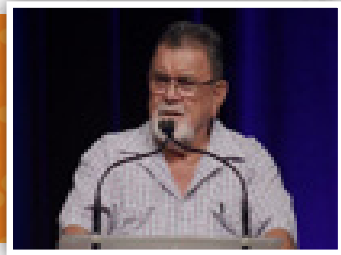
- Megan Krakouer, Director - National Suicide Prevention and Trauma Recovery Project X



"The Voice to me is important because our younger generations need us, and we need to be there for them. If not now, when?? How many mor generations do we have to go through before something is done? This is about all Australians supporting our First Nations People."

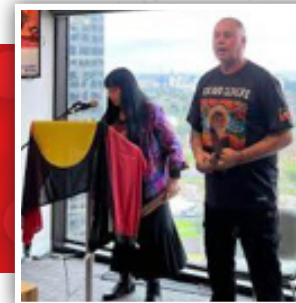
- Vicki Morta, MUA Member & First Indigenous Female Bosun, & Proud Ngadjou'jii Woman.

**"A voice gives the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders people an opportunity to help Close the Gap. From my life experiences it's better to be in the room to be a voice than left outside the room with no voice".**



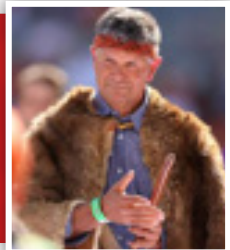
"I will Vote YES on Saturday 14th October in a bid to break the shackles of prejudice imposed on First Nation Peoples and the working class via colonisation for the last 123 years of Federation, Freedom is an ideal we as a society must strive for to ensure the full potential of our Nation is realised"

- Terry O'Shane, Merchant Seaman & Proud Western Yalanji Elder.



"I will be voting YES so we can help create generational change for our children as they are the future. We are the oldest living culture in the world & rightly fully so, we should be in the Australian constitution. This moment in time on October 14th is an opportunity for all Australians to be united"

- Ricky Baldwin, CFMEU Shop Steward, & Proud GUNAIKURNAI Man.



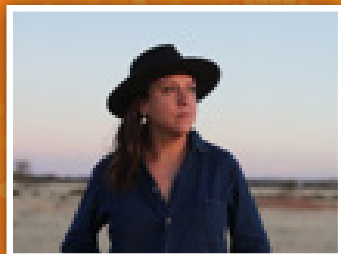
**"Our culture teaches people how to think, not what to think... Do your research and do what you think is right, not what you are told."**

- Richard Walley, Performer, & Proud Nyungar Man.



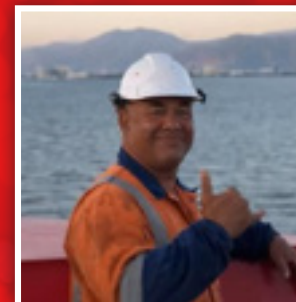
"It's a simple matter of fairness. Indigenous people are asking that governments listen to their representations on decisions about them. Of course we should say 'YES' to that."

- Thomas Mayo, MUA Assistant National Secretary & Kaurareg Aboriginal & Proud Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander Man.



"At every major turning point in the advancement of our people, Unions have stood with us. They have risen to assist when we have asked, and often when we have had no others to turn to. Right now we are the underdogs and powerful forces oppose what is a modest, safe and just amendment to our constitution. We ask you to stand with us again at this pivotal time in our nation's history."

- Rachel Perkins, Indigenous Rights Activist, Film/Television Director & Arrente and Proud Kalkadoon Woman.

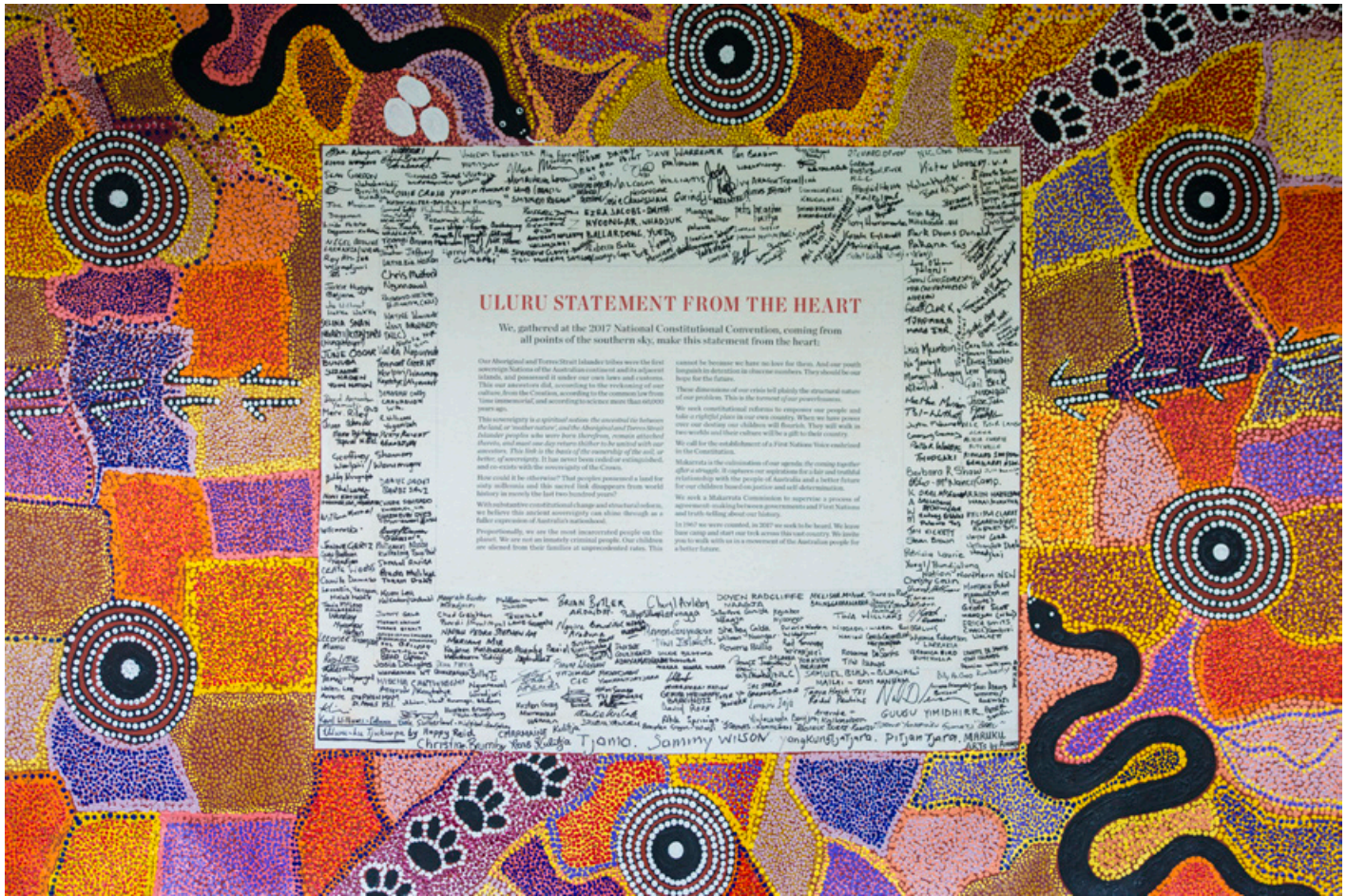


**After more than 2 centuries of brutal dispossession that has violated every human right there is possible, we still have paternalistic governments that determine every aspect of First Australians affairs, and, by all social indicators, "no gaps have closed." It is time that as a Nation we pressure governments to address these challenges collaboratively with our First Australian Sisters and Brothers, and advance Australia fairly."**

- Michael O'Shane, MUA Relieving Union Official QLD, Western Yalanji Man.



“ Take a moment to read this important piece of history. This Statement calls for substantive reform to help realise Indigenous rights, through the establishment of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission”.



## ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years? With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates.

This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.