

MEDIA RELEASE

DIVERSE FAITH GROUPS URGE POLITICIANS TO “WORK TOGETHER ACROSS POLITICAL DIVIDES” FOR VOICE REFERENDUM

Wednesday, 22 February 2023

A powerful coalition of national religious and ethno-religious organisations has sent a joint open letter to all federal parliamentarians, calling on politicians to co-operate across political divides in support of the upcoming Voice referendum.

The influential alliance of nine national organisations, representing diverse Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish communities, has thrown its collective weight behind the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Their letter builds on the joint resolution released by the group in May last year, which urged bipartisan action on the Voice referendum.

The joint letter was sent on Wednesday morning as part of the campaign ‘week of action’. It urges parliamentarians to “to find ways to collaborate constructively across political divides to achieve the modest constitutional recognition First Nations people seek: a constitutionally guaranteed Voice in their own affairs.”

“We draw upon our diverse traditions, beliefs and cultures to unite in support of this just cause,” the letter says. “We respectfully ask our political representatives to do the same... Whatever our disagreements, let us work together to resolve them. The Voice referendum deserves cross-party co-operation.”

Describing the Voice as “an invitation to move towards national healing, unity and reconciliation”, the letter demonstrates growing multifaith and multicultural support for the referendum. The joint initiative comes after the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) rejected the ‘No’ campaign’s attempt to attract migrants as “offensive” and confirmed “resounding support” for the Voice referendum among ethnic communities.

Commenting on the joint letter, Indigenous film-maker Rachel Perkins, who launched the joint resolution last year, said “This is an alliance of great spiritual power, speaking persuasively to political power, and asking politicians to co-operate across political divides to achieve Indigenous recognition, for the good of my people and the country as a whole.”

CEO of Cape York Partnership, Fiona Jose, has contributed to *Statements from the Soul*, a collection of essays by Australians of diverse faiths and cultures making the moral case for the Uluru Statement, which was launched on Monday. “It is so uplifting to see Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian and Buddhist Australians, plus migrant communities all over the country, coming together and courageously speaking up to support Indigenous peoples’ request for a constitutionally guaranteed Voice in our own affairs,” Ms Jose said. “It gives me hope that if we all continue to work together, the referendum will succeed.”

Efforts are underway in faith and migrant communities to hold more conversations and events to build support towards a successful Yes vote in the referendum.

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