

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGEE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Dr Marisa Paterson to call on the ACT Government to endorse the Uluru Statement from the Heart and support the First Nations Voice to Parliament campaign

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA, Member for Murrumbidgee, and Labor backbencher will introduce a motion in the ACT Legislative Assembly on Wednesday; calling on the assembly to endorse the Uluru Statement of the Heart in full, including support for the First Nations Voice to Parliament referendum campaign.

Local Ngunnawal Elder, Auntie Violet Sheridan, expressed her support for the motion stating “My community and First Nations people across Australia have been fighting our whole lives for the recognition and respect of the spiritual and physical relationship between our people and land we stand on. Enshrining a First Nations Voice in the Constitution and coming together for truth-telling is vitally important to empower my people and return the power over our own destiny that we lost with colonisation. To achieve this important goal, we need to walk together towards a future that empowers the voices of our First Nations communities and comes together over the truth of our history.”

Paula McGrady, member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, in her personal capacity highlighted that “We have to start somewhere, and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, speaks truth with good intentions. I believe this will evolve into something much stronger with our future generations at the helm. We are giving them a step up now to show that we are working on creating a place for them at the table, that is rightly there for them and us, that hopes to improve on all outcomes of disadvantage. Our future depends on decisions being made now. It’s so important that we educate the wider Australia and try to share the vulnerability we are all giving up, in support of understanding more about each other.”

Dr Paterson has worked in remote Indigenous communities around Australia for much of her academic career and has committed to using her role as an MLA to help influence and contribute to positive change for reconciliation.

Dr Paterson stated “Enshrining the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution will ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are always a part of conversations about issues that affect them. It will also start an important process of truth-telling and treaty making. You simply cannot make a practical difference without having First Nation peoples at the forefront of conversation, otherwise you are simply repeating historical injustices’.

But to get the Voice to Parliament, we need to have a referendum where everyone will get a chance to cast their vote to change the constitution. The Voice referendum is an invitation for all of us to walk together for a better future.”

It was an ACT Labor Government that established a democratically elected voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans in 2008 following the Howard Government’s abolition of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

ACT Labor has consistently and steadfastly supported the Uluru Statement from the Heart since it was generously gifted to all Australians in 2017.

The motion calls on the ACT Government to continue this commitment by exploring the potential to work with and support local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups in initiatives around the Uluru Statement of the Heart; as well as options to build grassroots momentum for the Voice campaign.

McGrady outlined that “It will be an empowered voice for our future leaders, created from the unity to Strengthen and Truth Recording to permanently enshrine for our future forevermore. There has to be permanent recognition of the beautiful people and culture we are and history that we want, to safely, and honestly bare and share together as an understood, heard, and united Nation.”

Dr Paterson believes that we are stronger as a nation when we walk together towards real action on First Nations justice, rights, and respect. It is time to walk the talk and support the First Nations Voice referendum.

Statement ends

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