

## VOICE REFERENDUM

### *Motion*

**HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral)** [11.28 am]: I move —

That the Legislative Council supports the proposal to recognise the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution and establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

Good morning, everyone. First of all, I would like to make reference to Senator Pat Dodson's speech yesterday. Before I came here, I had time to sit down and have a good listen to it. For me, it was a very powerful speech and very riveting. It brought home a lot of things on a personal level. Everything he said was 110 per cent right. He is a man of character and a great leader. He is one of the greatest leaders I and Aboriginal people have had in my time. I mention that and I salute him for his great work in pushing this agenda. Thank you, Senator Dodson.

Here we are just two days away from a very special day in our calendar. I think Saturday, 14 October is going to be a very historic day in the Australian calendar, when we will finally hear from Australia whether it chooses to recognise the First People of this country in our Constitution and establish the Voice to Parliament. Members, we have two days to ensure we recognise 65 000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history. I find it very ironic that here I am, standing here again. I was reading this thing for the last couple of nights and thinking: I have to stand here and beg to recognise the First People of this country in this coming referendum.

I am very passionate about this, and as an Aboriginal person, it brings home a lot of stuff. As Senator Dodson said in his speech yesterday, whatever the result is on Saturday, 14 October, when we wake up the next morning on Sunday, 15 October, "The truth of our integrity as a nation is at stake, people." Members, it is. Right now, we are in the Flora and Fauna Act, nothing else.

Then I find I am talking to myself in my head again, thinking, "As an Aboriginal person, I should be used to repeating myself." It is something I have done my whole working life. People come to see us, and the government comes to talk to us. Yes, they said they would listen. They eyeball us. I do not think they listen. This is an opportunity to have a good listen to what we have to say, what we want, how it is done and who we want them to do it with. You know what, repeating ourselves as Indigenous people is something we are so used to. Every day, we are used to it. It is like talking to a brick wall. We might as well get a ball and throw it against the wall—at least it comes back. Nothing we say ever gets heard.

I am in full support of this referendum. I honestly should not have to stand here to try to convince someone or explain why. As an Australian person, as a human being here, I think the right thing to do is go to Saturday's voting with a clear head on what exactly it is we want for the Indigenous people of this country that we all call home. For 235 years, listening has not worked for First Nation people. We have been living in the no for 235 years. This is the no. This is what no looks like: shocking rates of suicide, incarceration and poor health and education. How will we ever close the gap on anything if we continue to say no?

You know what, as Aboriginal people, history has taught us that white things do not work right now. History has taught us why now is the time to make a change. Some members in this chamber do not, or may not, see why 14 October will forever be marked in our country's calendar, no matter what the outcome is. Maybe this is because members are too focused on how they feel and think right now. If history cannot help members see why a successful yes vote is so important, maybe it is the future that members need to look to instead. Can members sit here and honestly tell me that they know what kind of future they want for our country? Honestly? Have any members truly thought about what the future holds for us Indigenous people? I can tell members what my hope for the future is, how I see it, what I want, and my dreams. I see what is not working every day through my children, grandchildren and all the Indigenous people from where I come.

Let me take members on a journey of what I see. Firstly, after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are finally recognised in our country's Constitution, First Nation language and culture will be treasured by this country so much so that no top-level sportsman will dare suggest that our Welcome to Country ceremony should be booed by audiences. Secondly, the next generation will learn the truth about our country's history from a young age—and I am not talking about the James Cook history; I am talking about our black history of this country. They will never have to hear a senator or leader of their country tell them that colonisation had no negative side effects on First Nation people or that it was beneficial. Lastly, I reference my grandchildren—even my great-grandchildren if I am lucky enough to be alive to see one. They will know of all the moments that brought them to this point, a point that will change their lives, because today we teach our kids about our black history. This is unlike when I went to school, when all we talked about and had thrown down our throats was the James Cook story, white history and colonisation, not about the black history or the massacres.

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A lot of things have happened to our people around this nation. Aboriginal children will think about their parents' grandparents—that stolen generation forcibly removed from their families by the policy of the day. They will look back at me sitting here right now, the only Aboriginal person in this chamber, asking this Parliament to allow for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be recognised and have a Voice to Parliament. They will be able to advise government on matters that affect them—not after they see the effects of government policies—before these policies are created for them and then imposed on them. This unmovable voice will allow them to address 235 years of issues without having to stop and start again in a rigged race that was already set for them two centuries before their births. They will have a consistent voice that will speak to all future governments and not just the government of the day. Most importantly, no decision will be made about them, without them.

These are my hopes and dreams that I believe only a successful yes vote will give us. When you go to the polling booths this weekend, you need to ask yourself what it is you want to be remembered for. Will you vote no and then continue to complain about all the things that will remain the same in Indigenous Affairs, even though you had a chance to cast a vote for change? Or, will you go to the vote on Saturday and vote yes—to forge new relationships, moving forward to the next generation, and help close the gap? This is not about us today. This is for the next generation, because if they do not know the truth, we need to tell them. We need to educate them about the truth. If history has taught me one thing in my life, it has taught me to stand up for what I believe in. I was raised by parents who said, “If you don’t ask questions, you don’t get answers, and always stand up for what you believe in.”

I stand here today as a colleague of yours in this chamber. I want all members to seriously think about their votes. I know that some members have already made up their minds, and that is okay; I respect that. As far as I am concerned, this is the right thing to do. It is the right time. It is an opportunity of a lifetime to make a difference. It is the right time to unite this country. I do not want to see my grandchildren thinking it is a them-and-us country when we should all be one. If we cannot acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution, as far as I am concerned we mean nothing to you guys. So members can stand here, they can sit here, they can make all their decisions about us and think that they are right, but they will be wrong because nothing has changed. I have worked my whole life and nothing has changed. You still do not listen, but you like listening to yourselves. So wake up on Saturday morning, look at yourself in the mirror and do some hard thinking about what it is you want and what is right for this country—not your political views. Do not even make it personal; just do the right thing.

As Senator Pat Dodson said the other day, the Voice to Parliament is just a humble request. Regardless of what happens on Saturday or what the result will be, whatever people vote on that day will stay in their minds for the rest of their lives—whether it is a yes or no. As an Aboriginal person standing here right now, I am saying: look at the big picture. Look forwards to 10 years' time. I am the only Aboriginal person in the upper house now, but I bet members that in 20 years' time, this house will be full of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, the up-and-coming young leaders. There is going to be a reversal effect, and then we will be the ones making the decisions here. I will be either in the Bran Nue Dae Respite Centre nursing home or locked away somewhere in one of my kids' houses, sitting there with my cane and my wing chair! But that is true; that is what it is.

Thank you, everyone, for listening. I just hope you make the right decision on Saturday.

**Government members:** Hear, hear!

**HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.44 am]: That was very humbling. I want to thank Hon Rosie Sahanna for what was a very powerful speech in this chamber this morning. I also want to thank Hon Rosie Sahanna for her lifetime of advocacy and continued passion in the First Nations space not just in Western Australia, but also Australia-wide. I want to thank the member for her courage and for standing up and delivering such a raw and honest view on what is and has been a very heavy couple of months on the referendum debate in the public eye. I also want to thank Senator Pat Dodson, and I want to pay homage to the work that he has done over many years to bring First Nations people's voices to the table. I also want to acknowledge that the Senator has been quite ill over the last couple of months, hence he has not been out doing what he has always done and advocating from the front. Even in his state of being ill, he has come out and delivered a powerful message to the people of Australia that I think needs to be listened to, as the Hon Rosie Sahanna said, because the result that happens on Saturday will be forever in our history.

I want to start my contribution to this motion with a little bit of a history lesson. In 1973, Gough Whitlam established the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee. He established that not through the Constitution, but as the government of the day. Malcolm Fraser came into power and got rid of it. It was replaced by the National Aboriginal Conference. Bob Hawke then came into power, and he got rid of that. Bob Hawke set up the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. John Howard got into power and abolished that. In 2011, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples met for the first time. That was under a Labor government. When the new Liberal government came in, it defunded and got rid of it.

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Members, to me, it is as simple as that. We have seen, over our history, the creation and destruction of an Aboriginal voice by different governments. I am not choosing sides here—Labor or Liberal, they have all done it. Why now, when we have the opportunity to establish and enshrine a body that cannot be played as a political football, do we find ourselves having such a disgusting debate in the public eye? It really irks me because, as I said, it is as simple as listening to advocates who have fought for over 100 years to get a voice. This is not new. This is not something that has just come up. We can see, from what I just went through, that we have gone a little bit of the way and then gone backwards, and that has happened in a cycle of history that should really be a shame on our governments. We now have this opportunity because we have been invited by First Nations people not to set an agenda for them, not to make decisions for them, but to stand with them and create something that has the ability to stand on its own and provide a voice for our First Nations people not affected by the political environment. It is something that will be able to grow and forever get better and stronger, and provide to this country a voice that has been missing.

Hon Rosie Sahanna talked about education and what we are taught in school. To this day, I am still disappointed that I was offered French and Japanese class at high school, but I was never given the opportunity to learn the First Nations language of where my high school was. It was not even a question. What is the use of French when I do not understand the history of my own country? There is over 65 000 years of rich culture that could have been taught to me as a child, and I am now trying to find it out for myself as a 35-year-old. I think it is a blight that we have not had that in our education system to ensure that now, when we are having this debate, people actually understand why we are having it.

I pay homage and respect to a man whom I worked with for many years and have the utmost respect for—Thomas Mayo. Thomas has been subject to what I think have been some of the most disgusting public attacks I have seen since the marriage equality debate. The cartoons, the jabs, the threats of physical violence, the atrocious lies about his intent in the campaign—I am absolutely disgusted. He is a First Nations man who worked on the waterfront, worked his way up fighting for First Nations people across this country, and put his own time into advocating for the Voice and absolutely busting his arse around this country to send the message of what the Voice is, and he is subject to people like Anthony Mundine inviting him into a boxing ring so he can punch him. That is a terrible side of the campaign. The misinformation that has been put out and that I have seen firsthand on the polling booths at the pre-poll for the last week and a half is nothing short of disgraceful. Lies are being peddled. I would urge anybody to re-watch the 15 minutes that we just heard from Hon Rosie Sahanna and then tell me how they justify voting no on Saturday, because that was one of the rawest and most up-front speeches I have ever seen.

One thing that has always irked me about this debate is how we got here over the last six years. Members should remember that it was a Liberal government that requested First Nations people to tell it what they wanted, and the First Nations people did not sit on their hands or pick something out of thin air; they advocated around the country, between and across cultures, to meet at Uluru and come to a decision in three to four days on what they wanted to achieve. I dare someone to put over 250 current politicians in a room and get them to come to an agreement on such a powerful message as the Uluru Statement from the Heart, because I can guarantee we would not be able to do that even in this room. I think that it is an absolute blight on our history that after the First Nations people achieved that and asked for a voice, treaty and truth—makarrata—a simple request for this country, the Prime Minister rejected it. Not only did the Prime Minister reject it, but there was nothing else after it. There was no working with First Nations people on an alternative; there was nothing but silence. How insulting! They were asked to come back to the government with what First Nations people wanted; they did that, and they were met with silence.

We now have a chance to turn that volume up and show Aboriginal people that we listened to the Uluru statement. We listened to the fact that they went around and consulted cross-cultures of First Nations communities—we all know there are so many—and came up with a statement they wanted our country to agree on. I for one am going to put out my heart and soul on Saturday, as Hon Rosie Sahanna has asked. I will be voting yes, and I will proudly remember that I voted yes, regardless of the result.

Again, I thank Hon Rosie Sahanna. Her advocacy and work in the space of First Nations people is admirable. I am absolutely privileged to serve in this Parliament with her. I thank her for bringing it to the chamber.

**HON SAMANTHA ROWE (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.54 am]: Firstly, I thank Hon Rosie Sahanna for bring this important motion to the house today, and for the incredibly moving contribution that she gave earlier. I think it has touched everyone in this chamber today.

I stand here very proud to support the motion that has been moved by my colleague —

That the Legislative Council supports the proposal to recognise the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution and establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

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I am one of the many Australians who have gone and voted early at a pre-poll location, and I am very pleased to place on the record that I have voted yes in this referendum. For me, voting yes in this referendum was a really easy decision. It is one of the easiest decisions I have ever had to make in my life, because the Voice, as many people hopefully are aware, is a permanent advisory body that will be enshrined in the Constitution. It is nothing more, nothing less, and nothing to be afraid of. The Voice will comprise First Nations representatives from each of the states, territories and the Torres Strait Islands who will provide advice to the Australian government on matters that directly affect First Nations communities across Australia. That sounds pretty reasonable to me. That sounds pretty fair.

In my view, and in others' views, I am sure, the Voice is about three fairly simple issues. Firstly, it is about recognition and respect. It is about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution, and it is about paying respect to their 65 000 years of culture and tradition. Secondly, the Voice is about listening. It is about listening to advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about matters that affect them directly so that governments of the day can make better and more informed decisions. Thirdly, it is about better results—making practical progress in Indigenous health, education, jobs and housing so that people have a better life. Again, that all sounds pretty reasonable and fair, and nothing to be afraid of.

There was an article in yesterday's *The West Australian*. In a very old-school fashion, I have actually cut it out of the paper, for some reason! I want to share it with the chamber. It is written by Kate Emery from *The West Australian*. The heading is, "You may know what the Voice is, here are a few things it isn't", and I am going to share some of those things with the house. The article states —

**It's not about giving First Nations people an unfair advantage**

If you're not sure about the difference between equality and equity, think of a brick wall and three people of varying heights trying to see over it. They're each standing on a box of the same size: that's equality. Except, while the box enables the medium-sized person to see over the wall, the tallest doesn't need it and the shortest still can't see over the wall. If you take the superfluous box away from the tallest person and give it to the shortest one, they can share their friend's view. That's equity ...

**It's not Canberra's Voice**

A Voice to Parliament is what the overwhelming majority of First Nations people want. Of course there are Aboriginal people who don't support the Voice, just as there were gay people who argued against marriage equality, but they represent a minority. First Nations Australians are the ones who have been asking for this, it's up to the rest of us to decide if we listen.

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**It's not a blank cheque**

You've heard it before but it bears repeating: the Voice would be an advisory body only. The lack of detail about how it could operate has unnerved some people and I get it. But the way I look at it is that we don't want too much specificity in the Constitution because that can be a real bugger to change: the detail will come from elected politicians and so can be changed to make it work.

**It's not a vote for who you like best**

Whatever you think of John Farnham lending his pipes on You're The Voice for the Yes campaign or Clive Palmer sinking \$2 million into the No campaign doesn't really matter. It's not a vote on who ran a better campaign, it's about what outcome you want.

This referendum is an opportunity for Australians to do what is right, and I have chosen to vote yes. I really hope the rest of Australia is able to get behind the yes referendum campaign and get it across the line so that we can have better outcomes for our First Nations people.

**HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan)** [12 noon]: I, too, give acknowledgement to my colleague Hon Rosie Sahanna for the very touching motion that she has just read out to all of us, as both members of Parliament and community members. I listened as Hon Rosie Sahanna speak, and, as other colleagues have already mentioned, it is really a case of: who else can we listen to? It is always best to listen to those who have lived that life and have come from that community—to support them to better our community.

As we know, 14 October is only two days away. I am here to support the proposal to recognise the First Nations peoples of Australia in the Constitution and to establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. It is very nice and simple. It is crucial that we come together to support each other in this very important, historic moment—to make sure we give First Nations peoples what they have been asking for for many years.

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Because I come from an African background, I understand how important it is to listen to First Nations people because they know how they started their community. For many years, since I have been in Australia, I have seen a lot of policies made with the right intentions by both major parties to try to support First Nations people. The question is: Has our support been effective? Has it really helped our First Nations people over the years? I would say that it has not, and that is why it is important for us to go back and listen. It is not too late.

It is simple: First Nations people are not going to take away anyone's land, which is one of the things I have heard in the community. They are not going to take away anyone's house. They basically are requesting us, as a community, to recognise them in the Constitution—a permanent recognition, as my colleague Hon Samantha Rowe referred to earlier. It is about listening to the First Nations community through an advisory board to advise the government so that it can actually improve the lives of the First Nations community in this beautiful country that we live in.

I have mentioned to a few people during this campaign why it is important to have that advisory board. The advisory board will be included in the Constitution and will not be able to be easily removed by any government. The other day I had a conversation with one particular person who said, "Why can we not just set up an advisory board? We don't have to have a referendum for that." I said, "Any government could remove such an advisory board in a day. They could just abolish it, whether it is a Liberal or Labor government—any government would have the power to remove it. Including it in the Constitution through a referendum will mean that no government will be able to easily remove it, so our First Nations people will not have to be played like a soccer ball, being kicked here and there."

As an African-born person, I was born in a country, South Sudan, that has for many years faced many challenges as a new nation. When I came to Australia—my colleague mentioned this earlier—I was not taught about our First Nations history in a very accessible way. We had to learn for ourselves in the school system. I remember well that we were offered other subjects before First Nations history. There is a problem with that because I feel that we, as a community, know that this is a First Nations country. We should be given an opportunity to be part of that history, because without the First Nations people, the Western people, the white generations and the migrants who have come to this country would not be here, had the First Nations people not established this beautiful country for us. It is very important for us to give them an opportunity to be happy in their own country.

I know that if the referendum passes, it will give us peace as a nation; I feel that that would be wonderful. I know there are some First Nations people who are not in support of the referendum. They have their own reasons, and I cannot judge them for that, but I am sure that the majority of First Nations people have been fighting for this recognition for a long time. If we, as a community, go and vote in support of our sister Hon Rosie Sahanna and other First Nations sisters on Saturday, we will create a wonderful peace for our country as Australians.

I am in support of the Voice, as someone who has been given an opportunity to come to Australia. I am very, very honoured and grateful for that opportunity created by First Nations people because if they had not, God knows where I would be now. I was born in a refugee camp and could not speak English when I came here. I am now a proud member of Parliament. Without the First Nations people, I would not be here, so to me this referendum is very crucial. I encourage my community to give support to minorities. First Nations people are not in the majority, which is why it is not easy for them to voice their concerns. That is why they have not achieved what they have wanted to achieve for a very long time. That is why we, as the community with the numbers, need to support them so they can be happy in their own country and better the lives of their children and future generations. It is fundamental that we look after our own people. They are the pioneers of this country, and we would not be in this Parliament without them.

I want to say to Hon Rosie Sahanna: thank you very much for the touching speech you delivered earlier today. We are here to support you. No matter what happens on Saturday, just know that Australia is behind First Nations people. Either we put the question through or we do not, but we have to try, and my hope is that we will win this referendum. I do not think anyone will ever do it in the way we have supported this Voice referendum. Thank you.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [12.08 pm]: I rise to make the government's contribution to this motion. I will not use my full time because I understand that there are members on both sides of the house who want to make contributions.

I will start by saying two things. Firstly, I proudly voted yes last week. Secondly, I want to thank Hon Rosie Sahanna for bringing this motion before the house today. What has been lost in the course of the public discourse on this referendum is that it is about recognition and establishing a permanent advisory body, the terms of reference and the membership of which will be determined through the processes of the Australian Parliament, which is as democratic a body as one can find. I have no problem voting yes, and I have been really disappointed that others have struggled with it.

At the very beginning of this public debate, my husband said to me, and others have picked it up, "What changes if we don't do this?" If we do not do this, nothing changes. What we are doing right now, which is well meaning and well resourced in many areas, is not providing the best outcome. It is not providing a reasonable infant mortality rate for Aboriginal babies. It is not providing the best educational outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

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students. It is not providing the best levels of tertiary and other education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It is not, by any measure, improving mortality rates for Aboriginal adults. What we are doing now is not as good as it can be. I have been disappointed in the number of commentators who seem to have taken the view that we lose something if we vote yes. We do not, but we do lose an opportunity if we vote no.

Despite all the things I have said about Aboriginal infant and adult mortality and all the rest of it, they are a very resilient mob. Whatever the outcome of the referendum, they will regroup and continue to progress matters to improve those things, because that is what they have been doing for more than the last 200 years. They will regroup, but it will have been a lost opportunity. As an Australian, if that happens, it will be really disappointing.

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.12 pm]: Thank you, President, for the opportunity to address the motion before the house today. Although I do not agree with the motion, I can acknowledge and recognise the passion with which Hon Rosie Sahanna moved it and spoke on it, and I congratulate her on her passionate advocacy. However, I do not support the Voice and I do not think that the Legislative Council should either.

I will comment on a couple of comments made by members opposite before I come to my substantive point. Hon Kyle McGinn went through the history of Aboriginal advisory bodies and, effectively, past Aboriginal voices to Parliament. I did that in a previous speech when he may well have been absent. When debating a previous motion, I went through all those bodies in some detail. In bringing up that history, I got shouted at and abused, but I went through it. My point is that they were all Aboriginal voices to Parliament and they were all removed because they did not work, not because governments of either side had a problem with an Aboriginal voice.

**Hon Darren West:** You need to be factual.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** If we want to go through the details of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, I am more than happy to. Those bodies were removed by both Liberal and Labor governments because they did not work. If members want to have a good look at that, they should refer to the model removed by the Hawke Labor government and read the review done by the Labor minister who reviewed that body and the stuff around ATSIC. They might then understand that the question of Aboriginal disadvantage is much greater and wider than the very simple Voice to Parliament model.

I do not know what the outcome will be on Saturday. As politicians, we say that the polling does not count; the only poll that counts is the one on the day, but there is significant concern that this concept has been so badly put together and sold that it damages rather than improves the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. That will be the case in particular on Sunday if a significant number of Australians have voted no. The vast majority of Australians who will vote no or have already voted no will not do so out of any disrespect to Aboriginal Australians. They want Aboriginal Australians to lift. They want the best outcomes for Aboriginal Australians. People on both sides of these arguments find lots in common when they start to discuss the outcomes that they want. Those people who vote no will do so because they do not believe that the model proposed by Anthony Albanese's government will deliver the outcomes that they want.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It is interesting to note that the opposition sat silently and respectfully while government members delivered their responses. We have heard of the abuse the other way towards some people promoting the Yes campaign. They have been abused appallingly and dreadfully, and so too have people who have advocated for the No campaign, including me. I was called a racist on Monday. I have been called it many times before. The behaviour that government members just displayed in the house reflects poorly on the government. They can make a sensible point, but for them to be interjecting across the chamber as they have while I am trying to give an alternative point of view reflects on what has happened around this campaign. I did not mean to get distracted, but that was a poor demonstration for everybody who listens to us and is engaged with the debate.

The people who vote no will not vote no out of a disrespect towards Aboriginal people, a fear of Aboriginal people or a contempt towards Aboriginal people. They just do not trust the model. The model that is proposed by the federal government is untrustworthy. As I said in the Voice debate last night, yes, there are good legal voices saying that the Voice is no issue. There are also very good, respected legal voices that say there is a problem. The problem with the Yes campaign is that it is trying to run on the vibe rather than explaining precisely how it will work. When someone of the eminence of Malcolm McCusker says that there is a problem here, the dismissals are ridiculous. If I have to listen to retired Justice French's position—I have and I think it is important to listen to it—those from the Yes campaign should listen to learned alternative legal opinions that say there is a problem here. The most interesting part of this debate is the two sides of the argument. The Yes campaign has tried to straddle both sides of the fence. It has tried to market it as just an advisory voice that will have no power and will not do anything. When Aboriginal people, in particular, say that we have had six advisory voices before that have not worked, the Yes campaign says

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that the body will actually have to have more power than that. The Yes campaign is trying to straddle both sides of this argument. If the Voice is simple, easy and purely advisory, it will go the same way as all the other ones, except that removing it will be 10 times messier. If it is not purely advisory, if it is going to have the power to make significant change to life outcomes for Aboriginal people, it will have more power than the Yes campaign is saying. The problem is that the Yes campaign cannot explain which end of the argument it is actually going to run with.

The media have been quoted before. I do not necessarily think that the media are the ideal people to quote or experts in the field, but there have been numerous commentaries in the last week on the terrible Yes campaign. I think we all have to acknowledge that it has been a dreadful campaign. It has lost its way because it decided it was not going to explain how this would work. It was not going to tell everybody the detail, because the detail was, I presume, too complex for average Australians to understand. Constitutional change is incredibly difficult and complex. Australians across the board will not jump into it without knowing exactly what the outcomes will be. I think the Yes campaign has absolutely messed this up.

Here is the tragedy. I have been in various debates for yes and no; I have been out there. I did one last night; I was representing the No campaign in central Perth, and there were three representatives for the Yes campaign. One of them, an Aboriginal gentleman, said that it is all or nothing now. That is the biggest tragedy of the debate that has been presented on the Voice: the proposal by the Yes campaign that it is all or nothing. If the polling is right and this referendum fails, perhaps convincingly—I am not saying it will; I do not know—and a huge proportion of the population, particularly Aboriginal people, have been convinced that this was all or nothing, the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australia will be 10 times wider than it was before. The gulf will be increased.

The message that should be out there is that whether the Anthony Albanese version of the Voice is successful or not on Saturday, the work just begins, because this is not the only model that can be presented to the people of Western Australia. This is just the one model presented by the federal Labor Party. Yes, it consulted, but this is its model. This is the one that it presented. It is not the only model that can go forward. I think there are better models. I think there are models that would improve outcomes versus the model that has been presented by the government, which I believe will not. On Saturday, one of two things will happen: either the referendum will get up or it will not. If it does not get up, I think this government has damaged the relationship and the future of Aboriginal people with this referendum.

**HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral)** [12.22 pm] — in reply: Firstly, I would like to thank my colleagues for their support on the motion about the Voice to Parliament. Secondly, I honestly think Hon Dr Steve Thomas is so disrespectful. I respect his decision to vote no. That is fine, but he should never bring up the past. This is not about the past. This is something we want to do now. We are talking about today, tomorrow, and 10 and 20 years ahead, and all he wants to do is go back in history and talk about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and other things that did not work, as though he made any contribution to what can work. No. So what is your model? Come on, you have got all the answers.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas** interjected.

**Hon ROSIE SAHANNA:** No, I am asking you, because you are talking like you have all the answers.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas** interjected.

**Hon ROSIE SAHANNA:** I am sorry, I am closing this up now, and I just want to say that. Hon Dr Steve Thomas is not supporting it. Fine; I respect that. That he is bringing up history is neither here nor there. We are not talking about today; we are not talking about yesterday and years ago.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** Hon Kyle McGinn brought up history.

**Hon ROSIE SAHANNA:** But he did not say it the way you said it. There is a difference.

We are told not to use the word “racist” in here, and I am not going to use it, but I will talk about what I think about the no voters and the misinformation and disinformation in social media about the Voice. Does the member know what I really think? He is just translating his own fear because he sees this as a threat. This is not 20 or 30 years ago. We have smarter Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. The next generation will be coming in soon and sitting around this table. I do not feel sorry for Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I should feel sorry for his kids and grandkids coming up because they will sit around here and talk about what he has raised and taught them to say and think, not about the real thing, whereas we tell our kids about the real things. They will come to forums or chambers like this, and they will know that what has been missing in this country is the black history that they have not been told. The member will not tell it.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.