

VOICE REFERENDUM — HON DARREN WEST'S COMMENTS

678. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

My knees are suffering. I refer to comments made in the Legislative Council and reiterated in the public forum by member for Agricultural Region Hon Darren West, MLC, in which he likened those considering a no vote in the upcoming Voice referendum to white supremacists, racists and as those who will be voting with Nazis. I will also remind the Premier that he has called for respectful and decent conversation on this matter. Will the Premier demand an apology from his member for the despicable comments that he, a representative of the Premier's Labor government who is clearly ignoring the Premier's call for respect, has made?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. I welcome the Speaker from the Cook Islands. I do not think you can have too many countries named after Cook!

Several members interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: I am just saying, Madam Speaker!

The characterisation that the member made about Hon Darren West's comments was, of course, incorrect. Hon Darren West was drawing attention to the fact that there are people who subscribe to those views who themselves have talked about the no campaign. He was making that association. However, it is not appropriate to raise those issues in the context of this debate. I have spoken to Hon Darren West. I said to him that the Voice campaign is an opportunity to unite the country, to step forward in an act of reconciliation, to acknowledge our First Nations people and to say that we recognise you and will continue to consult you on laws that impact you. I think that is a very reasonable proposition. Does the member opposite agree with that?

Mr R.S. Love: I am asking if you will ask your member to make an apology.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Mr R.H. COOK: For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I am simply asking him whether he thinks it is appropriate for us to acknowledge our First Nations people, recognise them in the Constitution of the country and, in that process, consult them on laws that will impact them?

Mr R.S. Love: Are you going to ask your member to apologise for his outrageous —

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. Love: Are you going to make your member apologise?

Mr R.H. COOK: Member, you were not paying attention, so I have already answered your question; I want you now to answer mine.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Point of order.

The SPEAKER: There is no need for the point of order.

Questions without Notice Resumed

The SPEAKER: I just remind the Premier that this is question time and the opposition ask the questions. There is no compulsion on anyone to answer by way of interjection if they are sitting opposite the Premier.

Mr R.H. COOK: Which is unusual, because the other side is usually very fond of interjecting, yet they are struck silent on this particular occasion—struck silent on the very reasonable proposition that Australians should unite together to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as our First Nations people, to acknowledge them in the Constitution and to consult them on laws and issues that impact on them. I think that is a reasonable proposition. I think every reasonable minded individual would agree with that. We have seen division and fear wrought right across this debate. That is a frustration that I think the whole community is feeling today, and a frustration that clearly Hon Darren West felt. But Hon Darren West has clarified his comments. I have censured him and I have counselled him in relation to his comments. He acknowledges that that has distracted us from the very reasonable proposition of voting yes in the referendum.

Again, I invite by way of interjection, because as you know, Madam Speaker, the other side is very fond of interjecting, the opposition to express an opinion about this very real proposition.

The SPEAKER: Premier, you already know that they are declining to answer your questions, which they are entitled to do.

Mr R.H. COOK: On that, Madam Speaker, I rest my case.