

Recipients of this Letter of 12 July 2024 are listed at the end.

During NAIDOC Week we focussed on the First Peoples of our land in our prayer and thinking.

Our reflections helped us to further consider the outcome of the Voice Referendum. of 2023 We were deeply disappointed in the result and join with you and all those who feel the same.

One of the prayers that touched us included these words:

“Renew and encourage our disheartened spirits,
restore our peoples to flourishing,
overflow us with vision, guide our paths,
give us comrades for the journey.”¹

Renewal, restoration and guidance are certainly needed for the journey ahead. And what a powerful example all Australians have in the ways the First Nations peoples have responded to the defeat of the referendum.

You gave us all yet another example of honourable resilience in the face of rejection. This of course is in keeping with over two centuries of heroic responses to the systemic ignorance and fear that has characterised mainstream Australian attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We too were disheartened. We believe that Australia as a nation will never really flourish until we all begin to listen and learn from the peoples of the First Nations.

Our path towards true humanity needs continuing guidance, and comrades for the journey are essential, that is, people from all the communities that make up Australia.

We remain deeply disappointed that political machinations conspired to instil fear and mistrust in the voters of Australia. The level of disinformation was a disgrace to a people who claim “fairness” as a national trait.² We have considered the lies that were told and recognise that similar lies are being used worldwide to support the political aspirations of those for whom power is the ultimate goal.

We also acknowledge that the timing of the referendum was questionable, given the history of the fate of referenda when bipartisan support is lacking.

At the present time we are encouraged by the superbly generous efforts being made by First Nations peoples to move positively along the path towards change. NAIDOC Week’s theme of “Walk together to keep the fire burning” weaves again the strong threads of identity, language, mutuality and honour that characterise the cultures that have existed here for millennia.

We thank you for your example of peace and goodwill in the face of endemic injustice. You are true teachers and we want to continue to learn from you.

Yours sincerely,

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¹ <https://www.commongrace.org.au/prayer-keep-the-fire-burning>

² <https://www.gtcentre.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Expert%20Analysis%20Yes%20No%20Pamphlet%2028%20August%20FINAL.pdf>

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Marion Scrymgour, MP Marion.Scrymgour.MP@aph.gov.au	ALP Done	Lingiari (NT)	Tiwi Islander , Miyartuwi (pandanus) yiminga (skin group), and links to Central Australia
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Senator Malarndirri McCarthy Senator.McCarthy@aph.gov.au	ALP Done	NT	Yanyuwa and Garrawa
Senator Jana Stewart senator.stewart@aph.gov.au	ALP Done	Vic	Mutthi Mutthi and Wamba Wamba
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Senator Lidia Thorpe senator.thorpe@aph.gov.au	IND Done	Vic	Djab Wurrung, Gunnai, and Gunditjmara

Peter Dutton
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