



MENZIES FOUNDATION BACKS YES VOTE IN VOICE REFERENDUM

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If there is any debate that needs to rise above partisan politics, it's this year's historic referendum on the First Nations Voice.

From the outset, the Uluru Statement from the Heart invited all Australians to walk together to build a better future by establishing the Voice. Yet the closer we get to the referendum, the more divisive and confused the debate risks becoming.

Perhaps this is not surprising, as individuals turn their minds to the questions at hand and the consequences for all Australians. But in the experience of the Menzies Foundation, this is precisely the wrong way to tackle complex issues like the referendum and the systemic Indigenous disadvantage it seeks to address.

In complexity, the anchor that ensures solutions are found and progress is made is the identification of a shared purpose underpinned by the values and principles that enact that purpose.


Often referred to as the 'north star', purpose galvanises action, creates the imperative and provides the context to reconcile what matters most. It is the thing that shapes who and what we want to become.

In this debate, the Uluru Statement is that anchor – and installing a First Nations Voice in the Constitution a step towards its purpose of a 'fuller expression of Australia's nationhood'. The Voice provides the foundation to develop a new form of partnership with Indigenous Australians, built on trust and an aspiration to work respectfully and collectively for the 'greater good'.

That is why the Menzies Foundation is endorsing a yes vote in the Voice referendum.

We stand with our First Nations people to ensure that their voices have a definitive platform from which to re-imagine a stronger, better Australia. We urge all Australians to rise above the political debate, to embrace the higher purpose behind the Voice and to consider the role all of us can play in bringing it to fruition.

With the wording of the referendum question now settled, and with the exhaustive work that has gone into the form and purpose of the Voice over more than a decade, we believe Australians now have enough information to make a considered decision on whether the Voice should be enshrined in the Constitution, leaving future parliaments to determine its membership, functions, powers and procedures.



Inspired by the legacy of Sir Robert Menzies, the non-partisan Menzies Foundation was established in 1979 to create opportunities to support the next generation of Australian leaders. In 2018, the Foundation unveiled a catalytic strategy to address pressing leadership challenges and contribute to the development of a leadership movement that encourages Australians to clarify their purpose, build leadership capability and contribute to the 'greater good'.

Improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians continues to be one of the key leadership challenges of our time.

In partnership with the Menzies Foundation, the Maganda Makers Business Club is a Kimberley Indigenous women led grassroots initiative that champions and supports Kimberley Indigenous Women in Business ('maganda' is the Jaru word for 'tomorrow'). This initiative reinforces growing international evidence that building platforms focused on women's economic empowerment provides the bedrock for women to help themselves, support their families and build stronger, more resilient communities.


The Foundation has seen first-hand the importance of First Nations people having the opportunity and agency to be instrumental in designing, developing and implementing community-led solutions.

The insight and power of the Indigenous women who lead Maganda Makers is a compelling affirmation of the importance of ensuring that Indigenous voices are elevated to become instrumental in shaping a new future for Indigenous Australia.

Our work with the Maganda Makers attests to the challenges of addressing leadership challenges in a 'VUCA' world – one characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

We should not expect the path ahead to be easy – stepping into the uncertainty and complexity of an unknown future requires the elucidation of a clear purpose, and the ambition, desire and intent to build trusted relationships in order to navigate the challenges of working in complexity.

The Menzies Foundation believes that there is strong alignment around the Voice and our National purpose – there is a clear sense that something must change and that the life outcomes of too many Indigenous Australians are unacceptable. There is a growing recognition that elevating the voice of Indigenous Australians is an important step towards building a more trusted and collaborative future for all Australians.



Turning away from this purpose, and the consequent polarisation and distrust between Australians and our First Nations People is too high a price to pay. Despite the lack of certainty and concerns about future obstacles, if we blink at this time, we will lose the impetus and opportunity for a different future.

We ask Australians to think deeply about our national purpose including the values and principles that we believe in and the standards we should seek to uphold. We have our north star – it is in Australia’s interests to build a stronger, deeper, shared and aligned constitutional foundation that rightfully elevates the contribution of our First Nations people over 60 millennia. This anchor is underpinned by a deep respect for Indigenous culture and provides the basis for a trusted and more deeply collaborative relationship for all Australians.

The Menzies Foundation endorses the yes campaign and asks each Australian to join us and commit to a national purpose defined by our collective responsibility to each other and the greater good.

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