



CHRISTIANS  
FOR EQUALITY

# Why vote No? Here are 7 reasons why

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# 1. It will divide our country by race

As Christians, we believe that we are all created alike in the image of God. And that our nation's rulebook should reflect this truth.

Christianity, through Paul of Tarsus, introduced what was to the ancient world a very radical idea – that people were equal regardless of race.

***“...there is **neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)*****

The Jews uniquely always believed this because God told their patriarch Abraham that his offspring were to be a blessing to “all nations”.

Jesus of Nazareth himself told his disciples to take his good news to “all nations”, meaning people groups. One of the first Christian converts recorded was an African from Ethiopia.

The book of Revelation in chapter 7 verse 9 paints a picture of “every tongue, tongue, tribe and nation” standing before the throne of Christ.

We could go on.

Enshrining a voice to Parliament for one group of Australians would violate the Biblical principle of racial equality. It puts racial separation in the Constitution by giving a voice to one group, based on race, that no other group has or will have. It will create an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ mentality leading to resentment.

Instead of our country being one people, we become divided into two, where one racial group has an extra say on issues of policy and legislation.

***In the words of former Prime Minister John Howard, “we must remain one people, living in one **nation** under one law which applies with equal force to all of us”.***





## 2. The Voice is not about forgiveness

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is the foundational document calling for a Voice to Parliament.

This statement, in the words of Christian commentator James Jeffrey, reads more like a document seeking “revenge for historic sins rather than seeking forgiveness and reconciliation”.

**The proposal for a Voice does not include forgiveness as an essential element.**

Stephen Chavura asks the question about whether “there can be reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians without Indigenous forgiveness. It is very hard to see how there could be reconciliation in any Christian sense without forgiveness.”

Constantly referring to Indigenous Australians as victims, and non-Indigenous Australians as ‘perpetrators’ will do nothing to achieve reconciliation in this nation.

As James Jeffrey says:

*“Relentlessly demanding apologies without the prospect of forgiveness is no way to achieve unity amongst Australians”.*

**As Christians, any pathway forward for our nation must involve a coming together of all people, with forgiveness of past wrongs and a commitment to moving forward together as equals.**

The Voice takes the opposite approach and enshrines Indigenous Australians as forever victims.



### 3. There is no such thing as one Indigenous ‘Voice’

#### **There is no such thing as one Indigenous “voice”.**

The Voice lumps all Indigenous Australians into one homogenous group and assumes the Voice can speak as one entity.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott said recently that the Voice will force all Aboriginal Australians to be “unanimous about everything”.

No one expects Indigenous Australians to think the same or have the same priorities and policy positions, yet we are being asked to put in place a voice that speaks for all of them.

Even in the Parliament right now, Indigenous senators like Jacinta Nampijinpa Price and Lidia Thorpe both oppose the Voice – and their opposition is for completely different reasons.

This is a racist approach that characterises people according to the group they belong to, rather than as unique and unrepeatable individuals, each made in the image of God.





## 4. The Voice wrongly assumes our democratic system can't help Indigenous people succeed

The Uluru Statement from the Heart refers to “the torment of our powerlessness”.

As Christian academic Stephen Chavura argues, “the Uluru Statement disgracefully tells Indigenous Australians that they are powerless over their own lives and destinies unless there is this Voice. What a horrible thing to say to a whole generation of Aboriginal Australians”.

It embeds into the Constitution the idea that one group of Australians cannot ever succeed or have a say over the laws and policies that affect them unless they are given a special Indigenous only race-based body over and above the existing democratic system.

**Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price objects to the Voice because it assumes that just because people are Indigenous, they are automatically disadvantaged.**

Mark Powell argues that the Uluru Statement of the Heart “infantilises people with an Indigenous background in such a way that they do not become responsible for

themselves”. And that it “seeks to project all current social problems that exist within Indigenous communities onto how they were treated by Europeans. This means that Aboriginal people are merely victims of previous injustices”.

As Warren Mundine argues:

*“If the Yes pamphlet was being sincere it would tell people the truth: neither symbolic recognition nor a great big new bureaucracy, as outlined in the Calma/Langton report, are capable of solving the problems facing many Aboriginal people. Only economic participation can do this: kids in school, adults in jobs, people able to create businesses and own their own homes. That isn’t achieved with a magic wand. It’s achievable only through hard graft and political courage.”*



## 5. It undermines 'recognition'

Australians overwhelmingly support reconciliation, as well as recognition in the Constitution.

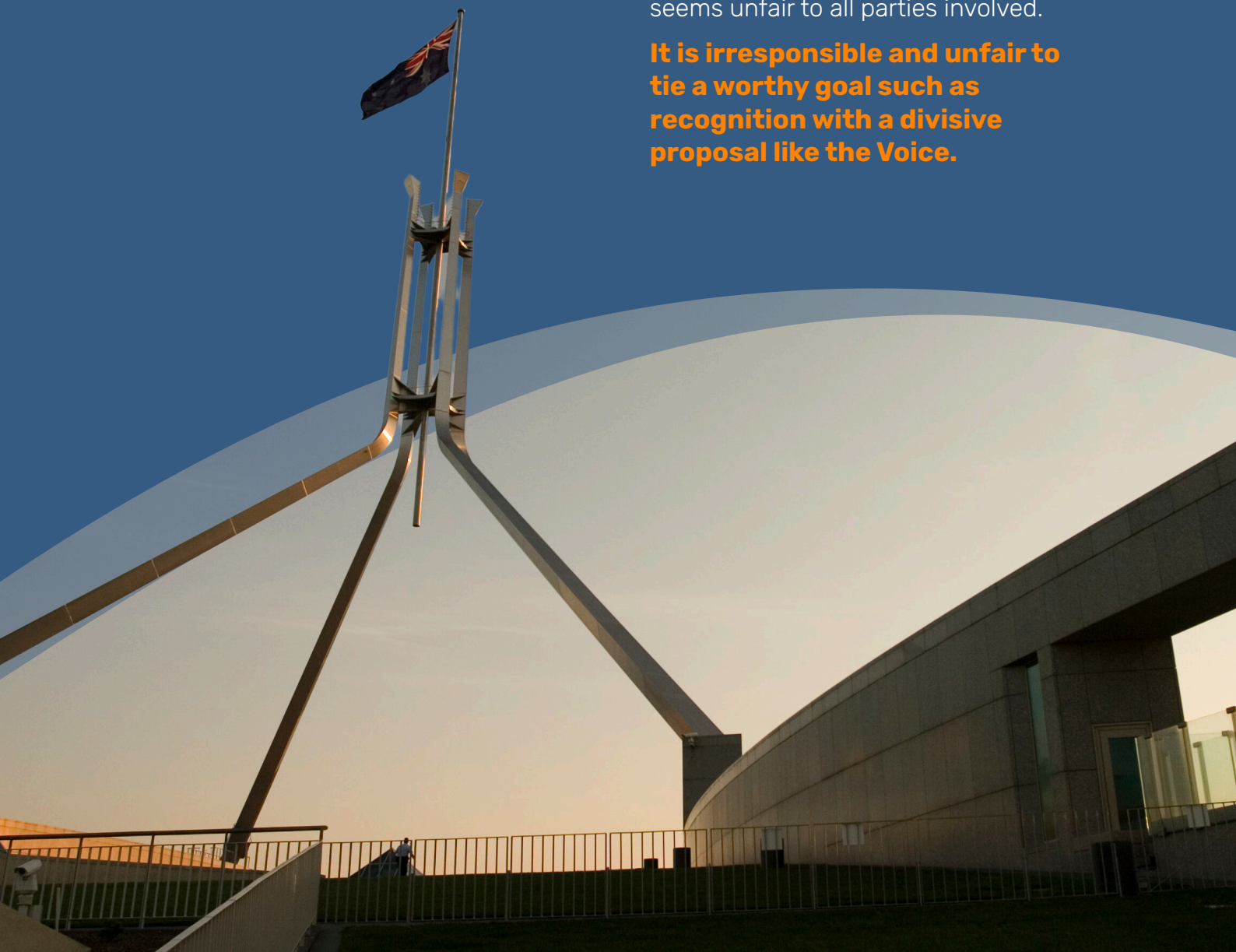
However, politicians and activists in Canberra have broadened the scope beyond mere recognition, tying it intricately with the concept of the Voice.

Rather than appealing to Australians to amend the Constitution to acknowledge Indigenous Australians

as the First Peoples of our land, we're being asked to establish an indeterminate entity with vague powers. This entity would have a certain degree of supervision over the Executive Government and the Public Service, leaving its operation largely to the discretion of Canberra politicians.

The referendum now makes the recognition of Indigenous Australians dependent on the approval of the Voice. This conditional approach seems unfair to all parties involved.

**It is irresponsible and unfair to tie a worthy goal such as recognition with a divisive proposal like the Voice.**





## 6. Indigenous do have a voice in our democracy

**To say that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't have a voice is simply not true.**

Currently, there are 11 democratically elected Indigenous parliamentarians, including Minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney.

There is a national body – the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), which has as its unique objective:

*“The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) vision is to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, recognised and empowered.*

*We recognise each First Nations community is unique. We work in partnership with community to make sure policies, programs and services meet their unique needs.*

*We work to support the Minister for Indigenous Australians.”*

The NIAA has a budget of \$4.5 billion and a staff of 1400. This is on top of the \$30 billion spent annually by government on indigenous issues.



## 7. Incorporating Indigenous spirituality into the Constitution

As Dave Pellowe argues in his essay in “The Spirit behind the Voice”, “the Uluru Statement from the Heart must be recognised as a religious as well as political manifesto. Note the typically religious words like “Creation”, “spiritual”, and “scared”, and religious ideas of supernatural origins and destinations before and after this life, as well as articulated beliefs in spiritual ties to the land”.<sup>1</sup>

**In reality, the Uluru Statement from the Heart is seeking to embed Indigenous spirituality into the Constitution.**

Mark Powell argues that “one of the most significant problems with the Uluru Statement of the Heart is its promotion of Indigenous spirituality (pantheism) in such a way as to confuse the traditional delineation between Church and State. In arguing that ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations’ the statement defines ‘sovereignty’ in an explicitly religious way”.

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[1] The Spirit Behind the Voice – The Religious Dimension of the “Voice” Proposal, Edited by Gabriel Moens AM and Augusto Zimmermann, Connor Court Publishing, August 2023, p. 5.

