

15 March 2024

The Hon Linda Burney MP

Minister for Indigenous Australians

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy

Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians

The Hon Marion Scrymgour MP

Member for Lingiari

Sent via email: linda.burney.mp@aph.gov.au; senator.mccarthy@aph.gov.au;
marion.scrymgour.mp@aph.gov.au

Do Not Silence the Voice of First Nations People

Dear Minister, Assistant Minister and Honourable Member,

This is a public letter, signed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders across many First Nations lands that have responsibilities to sea country.

Your government says it's committed to listening to the voice of First Nations people when it comes to issues that affect our rights and interests. We are calling on you to uphold that commitment.

We have the right to be heard on the issues that impact our lands and seas, including potential offshore gas projects. We have the right to be heard and listened to when our sacred places are under threat.

The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Legislation Amendment (Safety and Other Measures) Bill 2024 is intended to remove our consultation rights, rights to be heard over developments on our sea Country that affect our cultural heritage and songlines. Minister King has refused to listen to our voices, and now, she seeks to silence us.

We cry for the places already damaged by corporate greed, like Juukan Gorge, and Murujuga and we will not stop fighting for the places that we stand to lose. Companies like Woodside and Santos do not care about our rights, our connection to our lands or our culture.

The Albanese government has talked long and hard about listening to our voice. This is a key test whether this government will walk the talk.

Last year your government stood by our side when the referendum failed. Earlier this year your government had a lot to say about strengthening efforts to close the gap. There's been a lot of speaking, but your actions are louder.

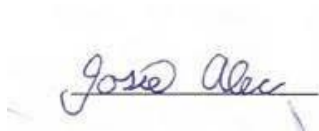
When your government says, *Always was. Always will be*, that includes the lands and seas that multinational gas companies seek to destroy with their drilling into our seas and the clearing of our lands.

This Bill is a betrayal.

International human rights law recognises our rights to be listened to. Australia signed that treaty, it promised to uphold free, prior and informed consent. Your government is breaching its own laws with this Bill.

We are calling on the Albanese government to remove the carveout in this Bill and delete Part 2 Schedule 2. The government should instead focus on finishing its review of offshore gas consultation processes and be transparent with how it will improve First Nations consultation on offshore gas projects.

Signed,



Josie Alec

First Nations Lead, The Australian Conservation Foundation



Raelene Cooper

Murujuga Traditional Custodian and Save Our Songlines Lead Campaigner



Dr Jack Pascoe

Saltwater People and the Biodiversity Council



**Tratha of Ni'Ripono
Teppethiggi/Tjngudji**

Colonial name: Nerida Brown





Stan Lui

Partner – Five Cubed Environmental
Indigenous Consultants Pty Ltd



David Kennedy

Yuin and Gumbaynggirr Elder/Loreman



Vicki Couzens

Senior Knowledge Holder
Keerray Wooroong
Southwest Victoria



Professor Liz Cameron

Dharug Academic and Researcher
Lead Counsellor Biodiversity Council

Bruce Pascoe

Yuin, Bunurong and Tasmanian People

CC. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Attorney-General Dreyfus KC, Minister Bowen,
Minister Plibersek, Minister King