

Mungo...



Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation Inc.

ABN: 444 16 152 998

P.O Box 1446, St Kilda South, Vic 3182

Phone: (03) 9699 8804

Mobile: 0418 675 734

Email: rosemary.rule@gmail.com

www.ppcfr.org

The Port Phillip Citizens for Reconciliation respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet, and we pay our respects to their Elders; past, present and emerging.

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FEBRUARY 2023

FROM THE CO-CHAIR

An Exciting Year Ahead

Welcome to working together during 2023 to help promote Reconciliation. As well as the very significant campaign for the Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, there's lots happening with the Yoorrook Justice Commission, the First Peoples' Assembly, commemorations for National Sorry Day on **Friday 26 May**, National Reconciliation Week from **27 May-3 June** and NAIDOC Week from **2-9 July**; details will be posted in *Mungo*. New and existing members are most welcome at our meetings and special events for what promises to be an interesting year!

We-Akon Dilinja Ceremony

From 5.45 am on 26 January, around 400 people gathered in Alfred Square, St Kilda, for A Mourning Reflection ceremony, described as an opportunity for us all to redefine what it means to be Australian. We heard from Parbinata Dr Carolyn Briggs AM, Josh Burns MP, N'Arweet Jason Briggs, Mayor Heather Cunsolo and Rabbi Gabi Kaltmann. Shauntai Batzke, Jess Hitchcock and John Wayne Parsons sang original songs and the smoking ceremonies were a fitting finale to this event, hosted by the Boonwurrung Land & Sea Council, City of Port Phillip and Australia Day Council,



one of many such reflective events and rallies held on what many feel is a contentious day for First Nations People.

Smoking ceremony in St Kilda with Willy Pepper.

Referendum

In January, I attended an extremely informative Steps to the Referendum workshop at Initiatives of Change, with speakers Thomas Mayo, Uncle Shane Charles and Uncle Glenn Loughrey as well as Emily Holm, From

The Heart Yes Campaign national field organiser, inspiring everyone there. Nicole Findlay, CEO of Reconciliation Victoria, said: *'Let's strengthen our democracy, let's come together, let's walk together. Take away any of the division that currently exists, any of the confusion and let there be a Voice, but let there be a really honest and united Voice into the future.'* There are some very credible resources available – see below – to ensure that the Yes campaign for the Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament succeeds.

St Kilda Festival

One of Australia's oldest music festivals includes a new First Peoples First day on **Saturday 18 February**. Headlining the day is Christine Anu and also featuring are artists chosen by the Archie Roach Foundation, who will pay tribute to the late Uncle Archie who played St Kilda Festival 13 times, making him the artist who has performed at the Festival the most number of times.

Congratulations

To academic and Voice to Parliament proponent Professor Tom Calma, named 2023 Australian Elder of the Year, one of 25 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander honorees who included Archie Roach, awarded a posthumous AC for eminent service to the performing arts and Indigenous rights; Belinda Duarte, AM, recognised for her significant service to the Indigenous community; and composer and educator William Barton, Queensland's Australian of the Year; also congratulations to the Victorian Government for formally apologising to Archie Roach at his state memorial service on 15 December, accepted by his sister Aunty Myrtle Evans.

Rosemary Rule

Next Meeting: Tuesday 21 February, 6.30 pm, South Melbourne Community Centre, Hall 3, Ferrars Place, (off Park Street) South Melbourne. All Welcome. Enquiries: 0418 685 734.

INDIGENOUS VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

A Voice to Parliament will give Indigenous communities a route to help inform policy and legal decisions that impact their lives. Giving First Nations People a say will lead to more effective results and embedding a Voice in the constitution will recognise the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Australia's history, and importantly will also mean that it can't be shut down by successive governments. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has put forward a possible Referendum question: *"Do you support an alteration to the Constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice?"*, aiming to put the question to Australians in a referendum in the final months of 2023 and to set up a body to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice with the power to *"make representations to parliament and the executive government"* on matters relating to First Australians. His plan centres on an amendment to the constitution that would say: *"The parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice."*

An Indigenous Voice to Parliament would ensure Indigenous people were consulted on policies such as education, health and housing. It will not be a funding body. It will not run programs. It will simply be a source of advice to government. Legal scholars say the Voice cannot extinguish sovereignty but a Treaty can. Uluru Dialogue Co-Chair Professor Megan Davis says Indigenous sovereignty co-exists with the Crown and sovereignty can't be achieved through the Australian Constitution because the Constitution is an order that's imposed upon people, and First Nations People haven't ceded sovereignty to that order. She says it would be a disaster for the Constitution to embed a fully-fledged model for the Voice because then any changes would also require a referendum. Polling on the yes or no question currently shows majority support in a majority of states – the threshold required for the referendum to succeed.

Information

The leading YES campaign organisation, From the Heart, officially launches a grassroots field campaign this month, coordinating organisations supporting an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, recruiting volunteers, door-knockers and grassroots groups with [toolkits and resources](https://fromtheheart.com.au/resources/campaign-toolkit/) <https://fromtheheart.com.au/resources/campaign-toolkit/> . Also visit Reconciliation Australia - <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/support-a-voice-to-parliament/>

Viewpoints

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says the Voice would ensure Indigenous People were consulted on policies such as education, health and housing. *"A Voice to Parliament will not be a funding body. It will not run programs. It will simply be a source of advice to government,"* he said. *"This is a chance for something positive to happen, to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in our nation's birth certificate.*

And I'm confident that Australians will take up that opportunity."

Noel Pearson, Indigenous leader and a key architect of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, referring to the Oppositions call for 'more details', says details were a matter for parliament to determine after the Referendum on the Voice. *"The Referendum is about the constitution. Legislation is for the parliament,"* he explained.

"2023 was the most important year for Reconciliation since the arrival of the First Fleet...We've got to understand what is at stake – and that is the chance for Reconciliation," he said. *"And if the Referendum is kiboshed through game playing and a spoiling game by the Opposition, we will lose the opportunity forever."*

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton has repeatedly called for more detail about the Voice, accusing the PM of being 'very tricky' for dead-batting questions about whether Labor might legislate the Voice in the event the Referendum to constitutionally entrench it fails. He has also suggested legislating the Voice before the Referendum, which Albanese ruled out, and called for the release of a draft bill, at least, which experts advising the government warned risks confusing voters.

Mr Dutton says voters will be asked 'one question' in the Referendum not 'two separate questions' about constitutional recognition and the Voice and has accused Labor of *"trying to give moral cover to the Voice through constitutional recognition"*, labeling that a 'cheap political trick'.

Prominent critics, including Warren Mundine and Senator Jacinta Price, plan to visit every state for community events against the Referendum. Lidia Thorpe, Victorian Greens' Senator, has described the proposed Voice to Parliament as a 'waste'. However, the Federal Greens have expressed broad support for the Voice, while seeking to progress Treaty and Truth processes with the Federal Labor Government.

The Australian Electoral Commission is preparing a major public education campaign around voting processes, warning of misinformation and a 'huge knowledge gap' among Australians who have never voted in a Referendum.



Keynote speakers at the Steps to the Referendum workshop: Emily Holm, Uncle Glenn Loughrey, Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah (Member for Higgins), Uncle Shane Charles, Thomas Mayo, Margaret Hepworth (Initiatives of Change).

FIRST PEOPLES ASSEMBLY AND THE YOORROOK JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Yoorrook Justice Commission will start 2023 by adding to its growing file of evidence gathered from hearings held in 2022, including the testimony of Goulburn Valley First Nations People, having paused its investigation into the injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria's child protection and criminal justice systems over the Christmas and New Year period.

It will recommence hearings in late February through to April and will release a critical issues report on that investigation in the middle of the year.

The First Peoples Assembly has created a council of Elders to guide the journey to Treaty and produced one of several videos about the Truth-telling process and why it's important for Treaty. Watch more of the animated video series via

<https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/news/treaty-animated-series>. For ongoing news, visit:

<https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/>

PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS LAWS

The Victorian State Government has committed to decriminalise public drunkenness as part of legal reforms that will replace the criminal justice response with a health-based approach. Under the changes, which will come into effect from November, intoxicated people will be taken home or to centres aimed to help them sober up instead of police stations. The proposed changes are the legacy of the inquest into the death of Yorta Yorta woman Tanya Day in 2017.

RECONCILIATION NEWS

The Reconciliation Victoria (RV) team has hit the ground running in 2023, preparing for an exciting year ahead to continue to support Voice, Truth and Treaty developments. We took part in the First Nations Voice in the Constitution - Steps to the Referendum Forum run by Initiatives of Change, providing attendees with a high-level briefing on steps and strategies we can take to achieve a YES vote in the upcoming Voice to Parliament Referendum and left us inspired and ready to support national Voice campaigns. See RV's [Voice position statement](#). Our first 2023 Maggolee webinar on **Wednesday 15 February** is an interactive online panel conversation with Victorian local governments who have formally committed to supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart as Australia heads towards a Federal Referendum for a constitutionally recognised Voice to Parliament proposed for 2023-2024. Reconciliation supporters are invited to take part of the first [Maggolee webinar](#) on 15 February to discuss the From the Heart campaign with speakers from Victorian local governments who have formally passed motions and actions to fully support the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Finally, RV is calling on our supporters to complete the [Rec Vic Measuring Stick survey](#) to help us understand community attitudes towards Reconciliation in Victoria. The evidence we collect will support RV to develop our next Strategic Plan 2024-2029 to inform how we progress Reconciliation in Victoria – take the survey and keep up to date via <http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au>.

Nicole Findlay, CEO, Reconciliation Victoria

Reconciliation Stonnington hosted an information stall at the Healing Ceremony sponsored by the City of Stonnington on 26 January, which was very well attended, with many people interested in our

information handouts. We collected signatures for a petition to Council to encourage them to support the Voice campaign, and our members circulated amongst the crowd, collecting 139 signatures. The Healing Ceremony was held after Stonnington's Citizenship Ceremony - one man was thrilled to sign our petition, telling us that it was his first act as an Australian Citizen. Auntie Di Kerr, senior Wurundjeri Elder, spoke about her family's history and her thoughts on the need for healing, and a dance troupe with many of her family members performed, inviting the crowd to join them to learn Indigenous dancing, with many participating, finishing with a yummy BBQ lunch catered by Bunji catering. Our group has been invited by Prahran Community Learning Centre, where our meetings are held, to become their partners and through them, offer some courses to the public. Our first short course of 1.5 hours will take place on **Wednesday 15 March**, offered by Keith Gove and myself. We will focus on the history of the colonisation of Victoria and the current need for the Voice to Parliament; details next month. Our next



meeting will take place on **Wednesday 8 February**, 6.00 pm; enquiries - 0438 285 588. **Ro Bailey**

Auntie Di Kerr speaking at the Healing Ceremony alongside the Wurundjeri dance troupe, which includes members of her family.

INITIATIVES OF CHANGE FORUM

Initiatives of Change Australia, in partnership with the Sustainable Architecture Forum at the Australian Institute of Architects, is hosting a Global Indigenous Dialogue. Lewis Cardinal, a Woodland Cree First Nations' leader from Alberta and project manager for Canada's first urban Indigenous ceremony grounds, will be joined by local First Nations' leaders, Yorta Yorta Elder Uncle Shane Charles and Alana Marsh, Meriam Woman and regenerative practitioner and sharer of Wayapa Wuurrk, to explore deep listening practices that nurture First Peoples' voice in place-making and the role of urban learning landscapes. **Sunday 19 February**, 11.00 am-1.00 pm, The Capitol, 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne; \$25-\$35.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/first-nations-wisdom-for-regenerative-futures-tickets-520167834997>

Part of the National Sustainable Living Festival.

TORCH 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

The Torch team have been able to support more participants and sell more artworks than ever before. They report that, in 2022, they worked with over 800 First Nations' participants in The Torch program and sold or licensed over 1,500 artworks, producing \$1.1million in income for the artists. The organisation continues to grow with 23 staff members and roles available: <https://thetorch.org.au/>

