

## MEDIA RELEASE

### 120 MULTICULTURAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES SUPPORT INDIGENOUS REFERENDUM

\*\*\*EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY, 31 May 2023\*\*\*

A growing nationwide alliance of multicultural groups has stepped-up for “YES” in the Voice referendum, issuing a powerful Joint Resolution urging “all Australians to work together to ensure referendum success”.

“Let us co-operate across differences of politics and diversities of culture and faith, to heal our country and unify the nation.”

FECCA’s CEO, Iraqi-born Mohammad Al-Khafaji confirmed “resounding support” for constitutional recognition among ethnic communities.

“It is only right that we want to see the special place of Australia’s First Peoples recognised in the Constitution through Voice, so they have a say in decisions made about them and better outcomes can be achieved.”

“Multicultural communities feel strongly about reconciliation. Many of us come from countries where we too have experienced exclusion and disadvantage” Al-Khafaji said.

“Australia has offered many of us great opportunity. And this is our chance to give back to Indigenous people.”

Filmmaker Rachel Perkins, co-chair of Australians for Indigenous Constitutional Recognition, said “it is terrific that multicultural Australians are so willing to support Indigenous people to create a better future for ourselves. Their statement tells me that together we can forge a better nation.”

Signups via [multiculturalforvoice.org](https://multiculturalforvoice.org) have been rapidly accelerating in recent months. The growing list includes Indian and Chinese community organisations, Sri Lankan, Italian, Irish, Iranian, Greek, Vietnamese, Filipino, Sikh, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Pacific Islander community groups – to name just a few.

The Joint Resolution describes a constitutionally guaranteed Voice as “modest, practical and fair”.

“As leaders of diverse multicultural community organisations, we endorse the Uluru Statement and its call for a First Nations voice guaranteed by the Constitution”, it says.

Polls show that those who speak another language at home are more likely to support the referendum, demonstrating strong levels of good will for this cause amongst Australians of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

President of the Chinese Community Council of Australia (Victoria), Jimmy Li, whose organisation has signed the Joint Resolution, said “as a proud Australian with Chinese heritage, I believe it is our responsibility to actively contribute to the creation of a more just and inclusive society for all, including honouring and supporting First Nations people. That means backing a Yes vote, to support the First Nations’ Voice to Parliament as a crucial step towards recognition and reconciliation.”

The multicultural Joint Resolution is a community driven initiative, supported by the Radical Centre Reform Lab at Macquarie University Law School and Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA).

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Dr Shireen Morris, Director of the Reform Lab and a constitutional lawyer of Indian and Fijian-Indian heritage, said “the success of this referendum is the responsibility of all Australians of all backgrounds. There is massive empathy among migrant communities for the plight of Indigenous peoples, and that is driving this growing support.”

“As migrants and descendants of migrants, we love this country which has given us so much opportunity. This is the best democracy in the world. But we also know the history. Our great nation was built off the back of Indigenous losses.”

“As multicultural Australians, this referendum is our chance to give back to Indigenous people. To stand with Indigenous Australians for the simple yet profound recognition they seek: an advisory Voice in their own affairs.”

The multicultural Joint Resolution follows nine national organisations representing Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh Australians issuing a similar Joint Resolution supporting the Voice referendum in May last year.

Chin Tan, the Race Discrimination Commissioner who is of Malaysian-Chinese origin, and who was an appointee of the former LNP government, also backs the referendum. Tan wrote in *The Guardian* that a YES vote would be “a powerful act of national unity.”

Some multicultural leaders are also commending the decision of Julian Leeser MP to resign from the Shadow Cabinet to campaign for a YES vote. Hindu Council adviser, Vijai Singhal, said “I know that many Australian Indians – and migrants more broadly – will back him in his moral stance on the upcoming Voice referendum.”

President of the National Sikh Council of Australia, Sadar Ajmer Singh Gill, also supports a YES vote. “I say to the politicians withholding support for Indigenous peoples’ modest request to have a guaranteed Voice in their own affairs: Sikh Australians are watching. Migrants, multifaith and multicultural communities are watching,” Gill said. “We are watching and we vote.”

### **Joint Resolution of Multicultural Community Organisations in support of the First Nations Voice Referendum**

*In 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples asked Australians to walk with them towards a better future.*

*Through the Uluru Statement from the Heart, they asked for constitutional recognition through a constitutionally guaranteed voice in their own affairs.*

*As leaders of diverse multicultural community organisations, we endorse the Uluru Statement and its call for a First Nations voice guaranteed by the Constitution.*

*This reform is modest, practical and fair.*

*We call on our political representatives to lead this referendum in the spirit of bipartisan and broad cooperation.*

*We commit our steadfast support, and urge all Australians to work together to ensure referendum success. Let us co-operate across differences of politics and diversities of culture and faith, to heal our country and unify the nation.*

multiculturalforvoice.org

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