

## Indigenous Voice

I do not agree with the proposal to introduce a separate indigenous voice to government. To me this smacks of identity politics, the special treatment for one group of Australians over the rest. As our anthem states "we are one and free". If we have a separate voice for aboriginals, then why not one for Somalians, Vietnamese, Italians etc? This is just the politics of grievance.

Division is death, setting up one group against others is just wrong. More than ever, in these difficult times, we should be looking to strengthen Australian not divide it.

Why is a separate voice needed? I have read Marcia Langtons article in the Australian, dated Jan 9, but I am not persuaded of any special, extraordinary need. Aboriginals already have a voice in government through the vote, just like all other Australians.

A voice at local, regional and national levels would involve setting up a huge bureaucracy, with accompanying large costs. It would also effectively become a third chamber, after the house of Reps and Senate. Government is already unwieldy enough without an added level of bureaucracy. If Aboriginals want a greater say in government then join a political party or stand for election.

Who would speak for the various indigenous groups? I understand there are hundreds of different tribes throughout Australia, we already see how difficult it is for any group to engage with an Aboriginal group and get a firm single response. There is no common voice. To get a representative voice separate indigenous elections would be called across the nation, again at huge time and cost. The proposal for equal quotas for male and female reeks of left wing identity politics. It sounds good but doesn't work, all it does is push out the best candidate in favour of the "right" candidate.

Regarding funding, we have seen time and again how indigenous groups are mismanaged and funds are squandered. (ref ATSIC and numerous YPG land groups).

Why are Aboriginals disadvantaged? Are they disadvantaged? I am sorry but I do not understand why a separate voice would help their plight. To me it appears that, on the contrary, Aboriginals are afforded every special treatment, with endless government funding and hand outs. Most of this appears to be wasted. I am not stopping any person in Australia from getting ahead. To me Aboriginals are not oppressed or disadvantaged. I consider all Australians as equals, I admire any Australian who makes good, whether they are Somalian, Italian or other.

If the argument is that remote Aboriginal groups do not have necessary services, such as medical and education, and they don't have employment opportunities, then in my view they either put up with this reality or do something about it. So there needs to be a recognition that the government cannot afford to build police stations, schools and hospitals in every remote district. And if people want these services and opportunities they need to move to be closer to them.

As background to my view and comments I want to tell you my little family history. My grandfather lived at Cobden, VIC and worked on the road gang at the Heytesbury Shire all his life. He worked as a wood merchant in his spare time to make a bit of extra money. My father worked on dozers before working himself through night school to become an estimator at Ford. I have been fortunate enough to make it through Uni, (only just, I am a C grade student) and only due to free fees during the Whitlam years. I took a punt and set up my own business 20 years ago, and it has supported our family of three kids.

I am proud to say that all of us earned every cent we got and none of our generations ever took the dole. So I have a very big problem with any groups looking for "special" treatment, or free handouts from others.

To me this proposal is not about getting a better deal for indigenous peoples, it is all about identity politics, grievance and rent seeking. Time for our indigenous to get over themselves and join with all Australians to make our great nation ever better.