AEU to support "Yes" campaign for Voice to Parliament



The Australian Education Union will affirm their commitment to the Yes campaign for the upcoming referendum on the First Nations Voice to be enshrined in the Australian Constitution at their National Conference today.

Addressing union delegates, political leaders and the media, Russell Honnery, Chair of Yalukit Yulendj (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee of the AEU) said it was a historic moment that symbolises the first step towards Australia's reconciliation with its past.

"In 2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gave Australia the gift of the Uluru Statement of the Heart and in 2018, the AEU and other education unions endorsed it. Today, we ask you to walk with us to support the Voice to Parliament.

"The United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples, article three says, 'States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous peoples concerned through their own representation institutions in order to obtain their free, prior consent.'

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have continually called for representation in decision making about their own affairs. This year, 2023 is the time to finally make this happen in Australia.

"The three fundamental changes - Voice, Treaty, Truth - are all parts of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, with Voice being the first reform. A Makarrata Commission will then support the process of Treaty and Truth," Mr Honnery said.

Correna Haythorpe, federal president, said that the AEU would work in consultation with Yalukit Yulendj to educate members and the broader community on the significance of the Voice to Parliament.

"Our union, which consists of public school, preschool and TAFE teachers, principals and support workers, overwhelmingly backs in First Nations Australians and their call for self-determination through constitutional reform," Ms Haythorpe said.

"That's why the AEU endorsed the Uluru Statement five years ago and that is why we extend our unstinting support to the Yes campaign today. And, that is why we will back this in with resources including a Voice Campaign Lead officer and project officers.

"For too long, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been ignored or had little opportunity to have their say about the policy and decision-making processes that impact their families and communities.

"The Uluru Statement from the Heart stated that a First Nations Voice to Parliament must be the starting point in ensuring that First Peoples get a say in the decisions that affect their lives and the lives of their communities.

"We cannot allow this critical opportunity to move forward towards reconciliation slip away from us. It is time to right the wrongs of the past and unite all Australians," Ms Haythorpe said.

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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