



Victorian Council of Churches

(Inc.A0036552E)

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PUBLIC STATEMENT on the VOICE TO PARLIAMENT REFERENDUM

To all Victorians

In November 1986, during his Alice Springs address to Australia's indigenous people, Pope Saint John Paul II said, *The Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.*

What is true of the church is also true of the broader Australian society. Australia will never be the nation it can become until the contributions of her First Nations people are joyfully received and celebrated. For this to happen, they must be recognised, listened to, and respected.

Later this year, in the referendum on the Voice to Parliament, Australians will be voting on one mechanism intended to do just that – to recognise, listen to, and respect our First Nations peoples.

This proposal had received very broad support from the leaders of Victoria's Christian churches (see link below for compilation of responses). The Victorian Council of Churches wholeheartedly reiterates that support and we urge you to vote 'yes'.

While we recognise that this proposal is a matter for prudential judgement and that people of goodwill can come to differing decisions, the core values of recognition, listening, and respect remain central to a Christian understanding of our nation and our world. However people choose to vote, these must not be disregarded or forgotten.

On behalf of the Victorian Council of Churches, I urge all people of faith, when deciding how to vote, to listen, to consider carefully, and to pray, so that Australia may truly become the nation God wants it to be.

In the peace of Christ,

Rev. Dr. Joseph Leach
President of the Victorian Council of Churches
(<https://vcc.org.au/faith-leaders-statement-from-the-heart>)