

MEDIA RELEASE

21 August 2014

Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people is back on the Federal Government's agenda and the Joint Select Committee appointed by the Australian Parliament to research, consult and prepare a report for the Parliament sat for one day in Katherine in August to consult and take evidence. Evidence was heard from Local government and a number of Indigenous organizations in the region.

Roper Gulf Regional Council's Director of Council Services and Infrastructure, Sharon Hillen addressed the Committee and told them that Roper Gulf Regional Council supported the move to recognize Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander in the Constitution and the repeal of racially discriminating clauses from the Constitution.

If the Parliament accepts the Committees report and recommendations, appropriate wording will be prepared and a Constitutional Referendum will be held.

Everyone on the electoral roll can vote.

A majority of voters and States voting "yes" is required to pass the referendum.

This could be as important a referendum as the historical vote in 1967 which recognized Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander as Australians.

Stay tuned for further news on these important proposed changes to the Australian Constitution which have important implications for Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Peoples and all Australians.

An interim report from the Joint Select Committee outlining the process, arguments and recommendations of an Expert Panel was released in July this year and can be viewed or downloaded at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Constitutional_Recognition_of_Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_Peoples. This provides a good background and provides and the recommendations of the Expert Panel.

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