



ATTORNEY-GENERAL

CANBERRA

09 MAY 2014

837/1304; MC14/06326

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair, Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Jensen

I refer to your letter of 12 February 2014 to the Hon Alan Tudge MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, regarding a referendum for constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. Your correspondence has been referred to me as the senior responsible Minister for this matter.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are the first inhabitants of this nation, and the Government commitment to recognise them in our Constitution presents an historic opportunity to acknowledge their unique culture and history, and their enormous contribution to this nation. A successful referendum would be a unifying moment for the nation, similar to the 1967 referendum and the National Apology.

The "Boomerang Petition" addresses the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. The Government is committed to releasing for public comment in late 2014 a draft constitutional amendment to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

A Parliamentary Joint Select Committee has been established to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to progress towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition, including consideration of the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians. The Committee is chaired by Mr Ken Wyatt AM MP, the first Indigenous member of the House of Representatives, and its deputy chair is Senator Nova Peris OAM, the first female Indigenous federal parliamentarian. The Committee will submit an interim report to the Parliament by the end of September 2014.

A review required under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Act 2013* commenced on 27 March 2014 to consider support for Indigenous constitutional recognition. The review panel includes former Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party the Hon John Anderson AO, Deputy Director of the 'Recognise' campaign, Ms Tanya Hosch, and Mr Richard Eccles, Deputy Secretary at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The responsible adviser for this matter in my Office is Mr James Lambie who can be contacted on (02) 6277 7300.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours faithfully

(George Brandis)