

June 19, 2014

The Hon. Members,
Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Peoples
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Subject: Our objection to language used in the January 2012 Report of the Expert Panel, and which presumably would be used if changes are made to our nation's Constitution.

In the APPENDIX 2 of your Report, under 'Recommendation 5,' is stated:-

That a new 'section 127A' be inserted, along the following lines:

Section 127A Recognition of languages

- (1) The national language of the Commonwealth of Australia is English.
- (2) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are the original Australian languages, a part of our national heritage.

We object to the statement that (quote) "The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages **are the original Australian languages**, a part of our national heritage."

Our objection is based on the following rationally-inarguable realities:-

1. Language per se has nothing to do with the land occupied by a people and everything to do with being the most obvious representation of the culture – or lack thereof – of a people.
2. The word "our" used in the statement clearly is meant to include *all* present-day Australian citizens.

Indeed, were the statement to be considered as the truth, then, apart from the English language, Italian, Greek and Chinese languages should also be named as part of 'our' national heritage – a self-evident proposition that thus, obviously, is nonsense.

Therefore, to assert that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are part of "our" heritage is simply false. Those languages have, always will be and will

forever be part of the heritage of *only* the peoples so named.

3. It is manifestly false and misleading to use the term “original **Australian** languages” as a description of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

It is not argued that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages *existed* prior to the arrival of white settlers.

But they existed - without any meaningful progress whatsoever over a period of some 30,000 or more years - in a land that inarguably was NOT the “Australia” to which is being referred in the statement.

The land they had inhabited for a very long time was *yet to become* “Australia” solely as a direct result of the European settlers, which is an outcome that, given the lack of progress and development over the preceding 30,000-plus years, can rationally be presumed would not have happened had white settlers not arrived about 200 years ago.

4. Those languages existed but, prior to arrival of white settlers, a country – more accurately, *a nation* - today known as “Australia” very definitely *did not exist*.

The country – and more accurately relevant, the *nation* – today known as “Australia” has, for the entirety of its 226 years of existence, *never* had any language other than English as part of its national heritage.

5. The “Australia” developed over the past 226 years was built on a solid foundation of not only the English language, but also the English cultural values, moral standards and work ethic, all of which the English language most fundamentally and primarily represents.
6. To recognise that “*The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are the original **Australian** languages, (and) a part of our national heritage*” without equally recognising the vastly greater and far more important, valuable historical contribution made by English-speaking peoples to the establishment and development of “Australia” as it is known and recognised today constitutes egregiously wrongful and unacceptable racial and cultural discrimination, more particularly so if such dishonest and wrongful discrimination is to be enshrined and historically cemented into the Australian Constitution.

For all of the above reasons, we therefore respectfully request that no terminology either directly or indirectly suggesting that the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are part of the heritage of “Australia” – and certainly not part of the

heritage of 'white' or 'English-speaking' Australians - be used.

Additionally, there is regular use of the term "First Australians" to describe the Aboriginal peoples of this land. That term is, for the very same reasons stated above, manifestly false and misleading.

Indeed, to many people the expression is, because of its deceptive dishonesty, egregiously offensive.

Aborigines were not 'Australians' before the white settlers arrived and created 'Australia' with their diligence, determination, sacrifice and hard work.

In fact, only *after* Aborigines had at least to some extent adopted many of the principles and values of those white settlers – a process that took well over 100 years - could they then have been truthfully considered to have become 'Australians.'

Therefore the white settlers inarguably were, the "First Australians" by a margin of at least 100 years.

As an extension to the above, it is our personal view that the entire concept of "Recognition" as has been proposed, is severely misleading and discriminating against past and present Caucasian (white) Australians.

Indeed, it amounts to a treasonous betrayal of the memory of those English-speaking persons of earlier "*Australian*" times – i.e. no more than 226 years ago - who made the enormous sacrifices and took the great risks that have been *the only reason* for the successful development of "Australia" as it is today known.

Should your committee persist in wrongfully and discriminatingly seeking to create a division – very obviously along racial lines, which means such actions and decisions would be nothing less than *outright racism* – amongst the citizens of Australia today, then we would expect at least a similar formal recognition, also enshrined into our constitution, of those white settlers who were solely responsible for having laid the cultural, financial and moral foundation-stones of the nation today known as "Australia.

In closing, I suggest to you that, yet again, the intentions of the proposal being considered are another clear example of irresponsible, reckless and in fact socially-harmful, divisive government meddling, driven by 'feel-good' and 'politically-correct' motivations, that will merely serve to further foment cultural alienation and separation between various groups within Australia.

Additionally, the planned changes to the constitution will do exactly nothing to improve the well-being and progress of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

This ‘Recognition’ initiative is yet again a classic example of woefully-misguided, leftist/liberal governments (whether Labor or Liberal) attempting to fix problems by applying solutions that will (a) be costly and (b) completely ineffective simply because the ‘fix’ yet again *does not even remotely address the true causes of the social and financial problems being experienced by those peoples.*

Furthermore, the Australian nation is, socially and culturally, now on a most serious downward slide. Crime, violence, drug abuse, alcoholism and mental health problems – to mention but a few, and aside from the nation’s collapsing economic well-being – are proliferating.

Yet our leaders relentlessly continue to literally fiddle with money-wasting ideological stupidities while, metaphorically, our Rome is very clearly burning.

In the 1960’s author Donald Horne, in his book, *The Lucky Country*, wrote that Australia has been lucky to have done so well, given that it was a nation that had been relentlessly managed by fools.

The reality is that nothing has changed.

Except for one thing.

The luck, abused and wasted for so very long, is finally running out.

And our nation’s leaders appear to be the very last to either know or be willing to recognise it.

Respectfully yours,

Peter Forde
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