

Chapter 1

Introduction

Role of the committee

1.1 On 2 December 2013 the 44th Parliament agreed to re-establish the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to progress towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition.

1.2 The resolution establishing the committee in the 44th Parliament states that:

- (1) a Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples be appointed to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to progress towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition, and in conducting the inquiry, the committee:
 - (a) work to build a secure strong multi-partisan parliamentary consensus around the timing, specific content and wording of referendum proposals for Indigenous constitutional recognition; and
 - (b) consider:
 - (i) the creation of an advisory group whose membership includes representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to assist the work of the committee;
 - (ii) the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians; and
 - (iii) mechanisms to build further engagement and support for the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all sectors of the community, and taking into account and complementing the existing work being undertaken by Recognise;
- (2) the committee present to Parliament an interim report on or before 30 September 2014 and its final report on or before 30 June 2015.¹

1.3 This is the first interim report by the committee to the 44th Parliament. In preparing this interim report, the committee sets out possible options for constitutional change and issues that have been raised with and considered by the committee so far.

1.4 In considering draft wording on constitutional recognition and other matters related to its work, the committee has met with a range of advisers, and has received private briefings from RECOGNISE, RECOGNISE THIS and the National Congress

1 The Hon Mr Christopher Pyne, Leader of the House, Minister for Education, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 21 November 2013, p. 969.

of Australia's First Peoples. The committee thanks the people and organisations that have already so generously provided their time and views to the committee.

Structure of the interim report

1.5 Chapter 2 of this interim report discusses options and outlines issues put to the committee in considering the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians and draft forms of wording on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1.6 Chapter 3 outlines the committee's intended process for further informing itself, deepening its understanding of community views and reporting to Parliament on steps to progress constitutional recognition.

1.7 Appendix 1 provides background on the work of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition in the 43rd Parliament, and the work of the committee so far in the 44th Parliament. It provides a brief overview of policy activity at the Commonwealth level so far in 2014.