

SUBJECT: MAYORAL MINUTE - THE VOICE REFERENDUM
FROM: The Mayor
EDMS #: 23/493467

As many of you will already be aware, Australians will have their say in a referendum on Saturday, 14 October 2023, about whether to change the Australian Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The Voice would be an independent and permanent advisory body, providing advice to the Australian Parliament and Government on matters that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This referendum has been a popular topic of conversation of late, with lots of opinions being shared in the media and on social media as well.

Supporting our local Aboriginal people and respecting our heritage is something we are incredibly proud of here in Camden, and wherever possible we should seek to work closely with our Aboriginal elders to ensure better outcomes. A recent example of this was when Council staff worked alongside local Elders and an indigenous scholar to update Council's Aboriginal Protocols Policy. This piece of work goes a long way in guiding Council's interactions with the local Aboriginal community; appropriately acknowledging the traditional owners of our lands and waterways; promoting inclusive best practice; and promoting a greater understanding and acceptance of general cultural awareness.

Personally, I will be voting yes in the upcoming referendum as I believe it is the right thing to do. I have had the opportunity to do my own research and speak to local Aboriginal elders about the referendum.

I respect that everyone has their own views and opinions on this matter and I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you all to put careful thought and consideration into making an informed decision.

While the Commonwealth Government continues to lead this process and disseminate information on this matter, our priority should be ensuring our community has access to this information so they can make their own informed decision on which way to vote.

Council regularly provides information to our community on a number of initiatives and matters through our libraries, website and social media, and this will be the case for the Voice to Parliament Referendum information.

I would like Council to commit to doing everything we can at a local level to ensure our community is informed, understands what's happening and feels empowered to make their own decisions on the matter.

With this in mind, I would like to propose that Council make available Council venues, for both local Federal Members, should they wish to hold open public discussion, on the proposed changes in the lead up to the referendum.

Additionally, I ask that Council write to both local Federal Government Members and offer Council's support in making Council venues available and disseminating information to our community on the Voice to Parliament Referendum.

RECOMMENDED

That Council:

- i. note the information;**
- ii. make available Council venues, for both local Federal Members, to facilitate open public discussion on the proposed change in the lead up to the referendum, if they require; and**

write to Federal Member for Macarthur, Dr Mike Freelander MP and Federal Member for Hume, Angus Taylor MP to express Council's commitment to making Council venues available and helping them disseminate information to the Camden community on the Voice to Parliament Referendum.