



Rob Oakeshott MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR LYNE



MEDIA RELEASE

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OAKESHOTT SAYS IT'S TIME TO RECOGNISE THE FIRST AUSTRALIANS

INDEPENDENT Lyne MP Rob Oakeshott will urge the Parliament to put a referendum question as soon as practical to the Australian people on constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As a member of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians, Mr Oakeshott, who sought the referendum in his 'supply and confidence' agreement with the Prime Minister, said he supported the recommendations made today by the panel.

"This is about making sure our Constitution is fair for all Australians, and removes racism from our nation's foundation document. The race-based provisions of the Constitution are not fair, and reflect a different time when racism and intolerance were accepted in late 19th century Australia. Now is the time to correct this," Mr Oakeshott said.

"By removing Section 25ⁱ, for example, Australia would not be writing race into the Constitution but, rather, we would be writing race out of the Australian Constitution.

"This is also an opportunity for recognised Australian legal doctrine to be reflected in our Constitution.

"It is universally acknowledged that our lands, now known as Australia, were at the time of European settlement occupied by a diverse group of people, languages and cultures. Acknowledging this is simply a reflection of common truth and common Australian law.

"Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, cultures and heritage are something we should not only be proud of, but should celebrate as being a unique point of difference from the rest of the world.

"Pride in this long and rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history should be shared and owned by all Australians, not just the 3 per cent of Australians who are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent today.

"I congratulate all the panel members on their work, particularly the co-chairs Pat Dodson and Mark Leibler.

"A lot of reflection, thought, consultation and discussion went into the make-up of these final recommendations. It is now over to the major political parties in the search for bi-partisanship, and over to the Federal Cabinet to show leadership in putting the question to the Australian people. I hope for both," Mr Oakeshott said.



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The Independent MP said a referendum question along the lines of the recommendations made by the Expert Panel, along with on-going tax reform on the back of the October Tax Forum, were his two 'stand-out issues' for 2012.

"I will be doing what I can to make both happen," Mr Oakeshott said.

ENDS

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ⁱ **Australian Constitution - Section 25 - Provisions as to races disqualified from voting**

For the purposes of the last section, if by the law of any State all persons of any race are disqualified from voting at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of the State, then, in reckoning the number of the people of the State or of the Commonwealth, persons of the race resident in that State shall not be counted.

Australian Constitution - Section 51 – Legislative powers of the Parliament

(xxvi.) The people of any race, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.