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VOICE REFERENDUM A BETRAYAL OF 1967 LEGACY

“Holding a referendum on an Indigenous voice to parliament on the anniversary of the 1967 referendum is a backwards and retrograde step which will destroy the progress to racial equality started in 1967 and divide Australians by race forever,” said Morgan Begg, Director of the Legal Rights Program at the Institute of Public Affairs.

It was [reported](#) today that a meeting of Indigenous delegates in Yarrabah in Queensland, over the weekend, proposed that a referendum on the issue of a constitutionally-enshrined voice to parliament be held on either 27 May 2023, or 27 January 2024. The first option (2023) coincides with the 56th anniversary of the 1967 referendum.

“To complete the work of the 1967 referendum – and to honor that legacy – a referendum should be held to *remove* the remaining references to race in the constitution to make Australia one and free. Race has no place in Australia's constitution,” said Mr Begg.

In 1967 Australia showed it was one of the least racist nations the world had ever seen. Over 90 per cent of voters said ‘yes’ to racial equality by removing divisive references to race in the Australian Constitution so that Indigenous Australians could be counted as equals.

“Putting references to race back in the constitution under the guise of an Indigenous voice to parliament is a complete repudiation of the spirit of 1967.”

“Inserting an Indigenous-only body into the constitution would be illiberal, divisive, undemocratic, and violate the egalitarian principle of racial equality under the law.”

“The dignity of Indigenous Australians demands that they be treated the same as non-Indigenous Australians, which means being included and represented in shared institutions, such as the Commonwealth Parliament.”

“The government must not ask Australians to divide themselves by race. Even just asking the question will forever divide Australians on racial grounds.”

“All Australians are equal. The legal status of Australians should not be determined by skin colour or racial background,” said Mr Begg.

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