

DENMARK FESTIVAL OF VOICE

Statement by Member for Warren–Blackwood

MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren–Blackwood) [12.52 pm]: For 20 years, in my hometown of Denmark, Denmark Arts' Festival of Voice has been bringing people together to celebrate all things vocal, not just music and song—of which there is no shortage—but the strength and power, and beauty and resilience of the human voice. One of only two dedicated vocal festivals in Australia, the Festival of Voice brings together choirs, storytellers, poets and musicians.

The Friday night opening event was powerful, with Indigenous storytelling, dance and song on a huge handmade sand mandala under a blanket of stars. It was a truly memorable evening when community came together to celebrate culture, arts and storytelling. On Saturday morning, around an open fire, it was my honour and pleasure to spend time with Aunty Carol Pettersen, a Menang–Gnudju elder, as we talked with the community about the upcoming referendum to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice into the commonwealth Parliament. A few tears were shed as Aunty Carol shared her personal stories and made a strong point of encouraging open, honest and, most importantly, respectful conversations in the lead up to the Voice referendum.

There is no doubt the arts bring people together. The Festival of Voice brought a weekend of energy and ideas, generosity and goodwill. I congratulate Denmark Arts for organising yet another fabulous Festival of Voice. I give special thanks, once again, to our Noongar elders for their cultural guidance and wisdom and, of course, to all the dedicated volunteers for their time, energy and passion for this event