

VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

Statement

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [5.20 pm]: I rise to make a brief but particularly important statement and to respond briefly to a comment made yesterday as part of the debate. Hon Dr Steve Thomas brought forward a motion that expressed his desire not to support the referendum on the Voice to Parliament.

I think that being part of a democracy has great value. I have a very profound respect for the privilege of being part of a democracy in which people get to vote and respectfully discuss and identify views. We are probably losing the art of debate in many contexts in our lives. The concept of debate is to consider each other's thoughts and views, roll them around and consider the merits of the arguments. However, I believe that if a leader puts forward a position, it must come from a very informed position. I feel compelled to bring up this particular statement because Hon Dr Steve Thomas talked about the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He mentioned that one member did not have time to read all its many pages and was probably going to jump to the one page that suited his purposes. He said that of that member. It is really important to know that it is a single-page document. If someone is going to argue against the Voice, which this beautiful statement advocates for, I ask that they please read the statement. If a member makes the argument for saying no, please deliver it from an informed and educated perspective that has rolled around and considered both sides of the argument.

For the benefit of those who have not read it, it is particularly important that this statement is read out in this place. I plan to do that right now. The Uluru Statement from the Heart reads —

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a *spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.