



## **THE VOICE REFERENDUM:**

A National Weekend of Prayer,  
Reflection and Meditation

**SEPTEMBER 8-10**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **National Multi-faith Coalition promote a National Weekend of Prayer, Reflection and Meditation on the Referendum.**

A powerful multi-faith alliance of Australia's major religions has been formed and will coordinate the **National Weekend of Prayer, Reflection and Meditation** this weekend to celebrate the opportunity for recognition and reconciliation offered by the impending Voice to Parliament referendum.

On 27 May 2022, the fifth anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, nine leaders from key religious peak bodies came together at the *From the Heart and Soul* event to sign a Joint Resolution that called on a bipartisan action to hold a Referendum on a First Nations Voice.

The peak bodies were the Anglican Church of Australia, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the Australian National Imams Council, the Australian Sangha Association, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Hindu Council of Australia, the National Council of Churches in Australia, the National Sikh Council of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia.

In February 2023, the same peak bodies sent an open letter to all Parliamentarians requesting that they support the Voice.

With the campaign for October 14's Referendum on Indigenous Recognition and a Voice to Parliament now officially under way, the multi-faith alliance has coordinated the **National Weekend of Prayer, Reflection and Meditation** to celebrate **the wonderful opportunity for recognition and reconciliation** offered by the impending landmark vote.

56 years on from the momentous 1967 referendum, the weekend's reflections will commence at **11am on Friday September 8** as representatives from Australia's Buddhist community embark on a **56-hour meditation**, concluding on **Sunday September 10 at 7pm**.

Across the weekend, **services across faiths and the nation** will reflect on the Referendum, focusing on themes of **unity and reconciliation**.

Faith leaders are also holding media events around the country to explain to the broader community why they believe the Referendum offers our country such a great opportunity for **hope and healing**.

**Sydney:** Friday September 8 at 11am - Emanuel Synagogue, Woollahra  
**Melbourne:** Friday September 8 at 11am - City Mosque, West Melbourne  
**Perth:** Friday September 8 at 11:30am - Wesley Uniting Church, Perth  
**Adelaide:** Sunday September 10 at 10:30am - Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar, Allenby Gardens

Media are invited to attend. At each event, 3-4 leaders from Australia's major religions will speak on the Referendum and take questions. Media are also invited to capture footage of key services at which prayers and reflections will be offered. Footage will also be supplied of the **56-hour Meditation**.

**Attributable quotes:**

**Reverend John Gilmore, President of National Council of Churches in Australia:**

Together and individually we want to create some moments where we can be present to God and in those moments seek and discern as communities and people where God is guiding us in considering the invitation contained in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. As people of faith – this is what we must do.

As people of faith, we believe that supporting a 'Yes' vote will serve as a meaningful and faithful expression of these important shared values reflected in our various faith traditions. Supporting a 'Yes' vote will help all Australians be part of the one human community, will further reconciliation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and will affirm the dignity of all people in this land.

**Venerable Mettaji, (on behalf of the Australian Sangha Association):**

It is so important that all Australians are equally heard and supported, especially on matters and policies that affect anyone's life. The First Nations people have asked for this right and it should be granted with care, respect and good faith.

This moment is above politics: the Australian Sangha Association believe it is a moral imperative to ensure a constitutionally guaranteed Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Adel Salman, President, Islamic Council of Victoria:**

Muslims have a long and rich history with the indigenous peoples of this land we call Australia, pre-dating European settlement by hundreds of years. Trade, cultural exchange, and intermarriage were the hallmarks of this history, and what underpinned it all was respect, trust, and shared values. Given all of this, it is natural that Muslims would feel a particular affinity for the First Nations peoples and identify with their struggles against dispossession, injustice, and disadvantage. The Islamic Council of Victoria supports the Uluru Statement from

the Heart which provides a pathway to truth, reconciliation, and self-determination. And a necessary step is recognising the Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution.

**Jillian Segal, President, Executive Council of Australian Jewry**

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry was one of the first groups to support the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart in which Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples called for constitutional recognition of their status as Australia's First Nations and for a constitutionally guaranteed First Nations Voice. There is a clear moral imperative for constitutional recognition of Australia's First Nations. Many multicultural and faith communities which usually align with different sides of the political spectrum have united to support a clear majority, even though not all, of Australia's First Nations people, in backing the referendum.

ENDS

**Available for separate interview:**

Reverend Sharon Hollis, President, Uniting Church in Australia  
 Venerable Chokyi, Australian Sangha Association  
 Adel Salman, President, Islamic Council of Victoria  
 Rabbi Ralph Genende OAM, Senior Rabbi, Jewish Care Victoria

**Speaking at each event:-**

**Sydney**

Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, Emanuel Synagogue  
 Mohan Singh Pooni, Australia Sikh Association  
 Marianne Gizycki, Rigpa (on behalf of Australian Sangha Association)  
 Dr Robbie Lloyd, Justice and Peace Office, Archdiocese of Sydney

**Melbourne**

Adel Salman, Islamic Council of Victoria  
 Very Reverend Dean Andreas Loewe  
 Rabbi Ralph Genende, Director, Jewish Life, Principal Rabbi to the Australian Defence Force  
 Sherry Balcombe, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry

**Perth**

Reverend Sharon Hollis, President, Uniting Church in Australia  
 Venerables Chokyi and Mettaji, Australian Sangha Association  
 Abdullah Khan, Islamic Schools Association of Australia  
 Harry Gill, Sikh Community WA

## **Adelaide**

Daljeet Bakshi, Sikh Society of South Australia

John Lochowiak, Chair, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

Venerable Drolkar, Australian Sangha Association

Chirag Trivedi, Hindu Council of SA

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