




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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ADJOURNMENT

Indigenous Australians, 1967 Referendum

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy and Minister for Small Business) (11.15 pm): Later this month Australia will mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum that altered the Australian Constitution. The outcome saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our country's first nation's people, counted for the first time in the census and regarded as Australian citizens. The yes campaign represented a turning point in our collective history. It was a time when Aboriginal rights were being hard fought for and when the stories of historic and contemporary trauma—stolen generations, institutional abuse, violence and brutality—were being articulated to educate and ensure a better Australia.

The 1967 referendum was always more than just about the right to be counted; it was about the right to be treated with dignity in your own country. Aboriginal women like Faith Bandler and my own aunt Oodgeroo Nunukul, a strong Quandamooka woman, were at the coalface of this campaign, and they fought hard, as they had all their lives, against oppression, racism and sexism to help make this a better place for themselves, me, our children and those children to come.

Today when I meet young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women I see a look of determination to uphold the gains made during those times of hard-fought-for rights. When I get the chance to catch up with Aboriginal and Torres Strait women who are my friends, colleagues, mums, educators, professionals, elders and community workers, I see a sense of pride—a strength that is borne from understanding where we have come from, places admittedly often filled with pain, racism and sexism, and I see a commitment to making sure that the future our daughters and nieces inherit will have fewer of those kinds of places.

It is these same women who stand up and call out any signs of a society that is slipping back to the times of pre 1967 to a time when it was the norm to exoticise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; a time when Indigenous people were regarded as inferior. When Aboriginal men today are having bananas thrown at them on the football field or being called apes and gorillas among other racial slurs, it is these women who do not dismiss these acts as trivial or humorous. They stand shoulder to shoulder to defend and rally in support of Indigenous rights. They do that because they understand that you cannot leave the door open for the rest of society to believe that any of that is okay.

We have seen football codes do the same when they rally to say no to racism, and, as we focus on the prevention of domestic and family violence, no to negative and harmful perceptions of women. I stand with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men and non-Indigenous men and women who never leave the door open for anyone to think that racism and sexism is ever okay.