




Speech By
Hon. Craig Crawford

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2022

MOTION

Voice to Parliament

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (11.50 am): I have never heard such a disjointed and rambled response from an opposition in my time in parliament. They still cannot work out whether they are voting yes or no to this motion. I support this motion. It is disappointing to hear the federal National Party jumping the gun by formally announcing that they will not support a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament, before the question has even been drafted. Believing that the Voice to Parliament will not support efforts in closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage shows how disconnected the federal leadership of the National Party is when it comes to Indigenous policy development and implementation.

Of course we need to be working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the ground to develop policies and programs that will affect them. In fact, in order to change the levels of disadvantage experienced by First Nations people, having legislation, policy and programs informed by them is critical. In order for us as governments to facilitate a positive future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we need to have their voices informing change at the highest levels. This means informing the parliament.

Parliament needs to hear their voices for their future development and how we all get there together. It is not good enough to only have the voices on the ground. This has been the process for years and all of the Closing the Gap data and evidence tells us that this has not worked, because government has not listened to the voices on the ground. In fact, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are constantly telling me that they are sick and tired of telling governments the same things over and over again, with the policies and programs of the day not reflecting the input they have provided over and over again. If as a country we are going to improve the life outcomes for our country's First People then we need to have their voices heard and respected in parliament—collective voices who support our First Nations MPs.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is not the voice of one or two Aboriginal people who have had their ear to the media; it is a call to action by First Nations people from across our country to enshrine a Voice to Parliament in the country's national Constitution. Isn't it about time we started to listen to the First People of this continent, particularly if our goal is to close the gap? Isn't it time we recognised more than 65,000 years of Australian history, the need to address the impacts of the last 250 years on First Nations people and the critical requirement of all decisions affecting them at all levels? I call on all members of this House to engage in this nation-building dialogue and to hear the collective voices of First Nations people. I am proud to support the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.