




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 12 October 2023

ADJOURNMENT

First Nations Children, Voice to Parliament

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (6.19 pm): As of last night, 7,000 people have voted in Mansfield, about one-seventh of the adult population. Over the next two days, those who are still deeply considering their personal values will make one of the most important decisions in Australia's short history. Their vote has the potential to redefine the path and thus the future of First Nations people of this country. Like on that day in 1788 on Possession Island sadly defined the experiences of 235 years that followed for First Nations peoples, the outcome of the vote this Saturday will define the next 235 years.

During my career, I have witnessed every day the impact of colonisation on First Nations children. The 2023 NAPLAN results identify that one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children require additional educational support, whilst one in 10 non-Indigenous children require this same intervention. This is not because First Nations children are less intelligent. On average, First Nations children attendance rates are 10 per cent less than non-Indigenous peers. This is not because they do not want to go to school. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more than 20 times more likely to be suspended, excluded from school and incarcerated than their non-Indigenous peers. It is not because they are inherently more belligerent, naughty or obstructive. The fact that First Nations children are less likely to attend university, gain employment, nor live as long as their non-Indigenous peers is not because they do not dream to. In fact, my experience over 30 years has taught me that First Nations children want what all children desire—to be successful, to set goals, to be loved, to feel proud of their achievements, to make their families proud and to positively contribute to this world.

Sadly, because of decisions made by those in power, white and privileged, over 235 years, they have been marginalised beginning their life from a less privileged position than the majority of us. One of the greatest barriers to First Nations children's success at school is the impact of enduring racism on their self-efficacy, self-belief and self-worth. These factors alone significantly impact their educational outcomes, not to mention hearing and resultant speech-language issues, rheumatic heart disease, foetal alcohol syndrome, undiagnosed learning difficulties and socio-economic issues, which all impact their academic outcomes.

A Latin slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the groups affected by that policy: nihil de nobis, sine nobis—'Nothing about us, without us.' I will be voting yes this Saturday.