




Speech By
Linus Power

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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ADJOURNMENT

Voice to Parliament

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (6.27 pm): Recently I received an email about an upcoming bill. It was one of those auto created ones where you get a mass of them. It was from a woman named Joan. I looked up my notes and I had received similar emails and calls from her regularly complaining about a bill we were debating. In fact, I had rung Joan four times. Each time I explained why I disagreed with her, so I reluctantly dialled her number again knowing that I was going to cop it again.

I had fully read up on the bill, so we ended up having a decent discussion, but we agreed to disagree, although some of the points and concerns from her perspective I properly understood, and I hope she understood mine. However, at the end of the conversation she said something to me that seemed the strangest thing. She said, 'Linus, you do a great job.' I said, 'Why would you say that? Every time we speak we completely disagree.'

Opposition members interjected.

Mr POWER: I note there are some members opposite who disagree with Joan like I did. She said, 'At least you listen and you respond to what I say.' That is our job really—listening to all, processing it, thinking and taking it in. Sometimes I get new ideas from the most unusual people. I value that part of my job.

I urge everyone here to reach out to someone whom they would not normally hear from and would not normally agree with on anything. Joan's words also made me reflect on the national debate we are having now—the process of thinking about how we listen to those who have not been heard for over 200 years of our nation's history.

I love Australia but I know our nation is much better when we listen, when we hear the voices of those who have not been heard. Proverbs tells us that we are entrusted as community leaders to 'be a voice for the voiceless'. Even the Old Testament recognised that hearing—truly listening—is required, not just to elites and kings but to those who society has given no voice at all.

In Australian history the voiceless have been the first people of our great nation. We grow as a nation knowing the history of our first people and the history of their interactions. Recently I was deeply moved by Archbishop Coleridge, who said, 'Only a heart of stone could allow the Indigenous people to become aliens, exiles and refugees in their own land.' He went on to say, 'We also need to listen to Indigenous peoples, in order to learn from them and learn to love them, not to see them as "the other".'

These are powerful words of faithful reflection and they create a challenge for us, a challenge as elected servants of the people. Too often those who have all the voice, the money, the education, the organisation—the peak bodies—monopolise all of the voice. They have all the say and leave no space for others. It is too easy to only listen to those who are like you. I challenge us all to do better.

For the people of Logan, this is why I am voting 'yes' at this referendum, to recognise Aboriginal people and create a space where we will listen to those who have never been given such a space. I know from having spoken to so many that not all agree with me, but that is what democracy is about—listening to those who do not agree with you and listening to those who have not been given a voice.