



On Sunday, 10 April 2022, First Nations delegates, including Senior Leaders and Youth, met on Gunggandji Country at Yarrabah with Alfred “Pop Alf” Neal OAM, the last surviving member of the Lantern Movement and a leading campaigner of the 1967 referendum. Two referendum campaigns came together at the Tree of Knowledge, on the Yarrabah shore where many activists used to gather under the light of hurricane lamps to strategise. It is where the 1967 referendum was planned.

Of the two campaigns, the first was the old 1967 referendum campaign, in which First Nations people sought to be counted. Pop Neal is one of the last surviving activists of this campaign, the most successful referendum in Australia’s history.

The second was the new 2023 referendum campaign, in which First Nations people now seek to be heard through a constitutionally enshrined Voice to the Parliament. We are asking the 47th Parliament to put this question to the Australian people in the next term of parliament.

We came together at Yarrabah to make this statement:

YARRABAH AFFIRMATION

We are united behind the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We are committed to seeing the constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice as the first step in the roadmap of the Uluru Statement.

Our First Nations youth inspired the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the campaign for structural reform. We are inspired by our Youth gathered here who make our future bright.

In 2017, we left basecamp at Uluru, and started our trek across this vast country. We invited the Australian people to walk with us in a movement for a better future. A majority of the Australian people have accepted the invitation. Each day, more Australians are joining.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart has touched the hearts of Australians.

It has been 15 years since Prime Minister John Howard committed his Coalition Government to putting constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to a referendum of the Australian people.

Every prime minister since — Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard, Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison — maintained the commitment to constitutional recognition.

The question was what, how and when — and we have been working hard on these questions for five years.

The “what” was decided at Uluru: First Nations people want constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament.

The “how” is near completion. The work is done. We will soon submit our proposed wording for constitutional recognition of a Voice.

The “when” is in the stars. From all points of the southern sky we can see alignment in the 47th Parliament.

27 May next year will be the 56th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the 6th anniversary of the Uluru Statement. It is the coincidence between the overwhelming success of 1967 and the historic consensus of the Uluru Statement.

Who would have thought that history and the future would coincide and give us such a day? There is great premonition in this.

Early 2024, Saturday, 27 January is the day after Invasion Day/Australia Day. These are propitious dates. The time is now right. The stars will soon align.

The politicians were not ready for Uluru in 2017. But now the Australian people are.

We call on all sides of politics to support our call.