

**LETTERS TO EDITOR
HOT MEDIA TOPICS – THE VOICE**

Letters To Editor –1July 2023 and 20244

In the boxes below are letters from 1 July 2023 and in 2024 to the Editor of the Canberra Times, Canberra City News and The Australian about hot media topics, such as the debate about the referendum on The Voice.

M.R. Flint
Principal, Australian Logistics Study Centre
1 January 2024

<p>The Editor Canberra City News Proud Canberrans on Voice I refer to Sue Dyer’s letter (26Oct23), waxing lyrically about the ACT being, the only jurisdiction in the country to poll a positive vote on the Voice and quoting First Minister Barr as saying it was due to “the fact that Canberrans took the time to engage with the issues”. Bunkum! I predicted to a letter to the Media, before the referendum, that the ACT could be expected to vote about 63 or 64 per cent for the Voice, in line with the way they vote Labor/Greens in elections. Ms Dyer and others may pat themselves on the back for being so much more clever than the rest of the country, but maybe it just shows again the Truman’s World that is Canberra. M. Flint Erindale Centre 30Oct23</p>
<p>City News[Published 26Oct23] Proud to be a Canberran After the referendum result was called (“All states vote ‘no’ to the Voice, except ACT”, citynews.com.au, October 14), the chief minister said he had “a sense of pride in this community” and that the “yes” majority ACT vote was linked to “...the fact that Canberrans took the time to engage with the issues”. Using social media, most of our federal Labor representatives only very briefly acknowledged this powerful vote by so many Canberrans who inquired and agreed to the need for constitutional change. Via a local ABC interview transcript on his website, Fenner MP Andrew Leigh recognised that “...there is a lot of goodwill, particularly here in Canberra where more than 60 per cent of Canberrans voted yes.” Senator Pocock’s thoughtful and balanced October 15 statement went further, including recognition and valuing of the ACT vote in a constructive way: “We must take the resounding yes the ACT delivered overnight with the utmost seriousness and do something with it... We have to find a path forward. It can’t wait another generation. The work must continue.” Those who were proud to be Canberrans on the evening of October 14 will be watching both main parties closely for meaningful and impactful responses between now and the next federal election. Sue Dyer, Downer</p>
<p>Canberra Times[Published 25Oct23] Where’s the detail? Doug Hurst’s letter (October 23) contains a splendid list of headlined actions he claims the “no” advocates offered during the campaign. But, as Doug probably said in one of his many letters throughout the campaign, where’s the detail? Mark Westcott, Farrer</p>
<p>Canberra Times[Published 25Oct23] Time to move on Eric Hunter (Letters, October 23) needs to get over it. The nation voted a resounding “no” to defeat a referendum proposal which would have divided us by the colour of our skin. Bob McDonald, Weetangera</p>
<p>Canberra Times[Published 25Oct23] ‘Yes’ campaign at fault Groups of anonymous Aboriginal leaders are criticising everyone but themselves for the “no” vote. They should get behind Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, Warren Mundine, and others to find out (forensically), what has happened to the resources being spent on Indigenous programs. Peter Still, Glenore Grove, Qld</p>
<p>Canberra Times[Published 23Oct23] Yes’ to big government There is a widespread view in the ACT that Canberra alone got it right in the referendum because Canberrans are better educated and more caring.</p>

<p>I have another view. As home to both the federal and territory public service the majority here believe more government is the answer to most things, including what is best for Aboriginal people. That's despite evidence suggesting too much government of Aboriginal people by land councils and such is part of the problem. Giving Aboriginal activists a special place in the constitution would not fix anything. The "no" advocates offered viable actions. They included an audit of where the billions spent each year went, law enforcement to reduce the disgusting violence against women and girls in remote communities, measures to improve kids education, emphasis on more self-reliance instead of welfare and treating all Australians equally whatever their history. The majority liked it and voted accordingly. It's called democracy. Doug Hurst, Chapman</p>
<p>The Australian Voice Loss Greg Craven does a fair job (Australian, 16Oct23) in identifying why the Yes campaign for the Voice failed. In my mind the two primary reasons were the sheer 100% hubris by the PM and the intransigence of the aboriginal elite, to which the PM buckled. However, it surprised me that, throughout the long campaign, there had been virtually no mention of another major cause, ie the unethical, even dishonest, approach by the PM from the outset, namely initially tax deductions only for the Yes case, initially no Yes/No pamphlets, initially no Solicitor-General's report, no by-partisan convention, a flawed ballot paper in respect of ticks and crosses, but most deceptive being that the ballot paper question addressed only the first of the three statements to be put into the Constitution. M. Flint Canberra 16Oct23</p>
<p>The Canberra Times Kenny's Lament What a strange lament by Mark Kenny about "fake balance" (whatever that means) in reporting of the Yes and No cases for the Voice (Canberra Times, 8Oct23). He almost had me in tears with him. There he is, still accusing the No case of falsehoods and alarmist hyperbole but never itemising them; claiming the opposition was out for a political win as if Albanese's leadership was not shamelessly unethical from the start; and, as an "avid ABC lover" (surprise, surprise) he then attacks the Media (other than the ABC I presume) for its poor coverage, even though the Media has been saturated by Yes case messages to simply vote Yes, as if that was all its proponents had to do or say. to the point of nausea. M. Flint Erindale Centre 8Oct23</p>
<p>Managing Editor [Not published but cited in an email to all Canberra Times readers by the General Manager of the Canberra Times, 20Oct23] The Canberra Times Your email on the Voice Thank you for the opportunity to reply to your paper's Yes position on the Voice. Given that you have left-wing journos like Mark Kenny who have been busy pushing the Yes barrow, it really is unnecessary for your journal to add a Yes-biased editorial. However, I do understand that you have to cater for the most left-voting constituents in the country (63-64 per cent), dominating this undefeatable Socialist Republic of the ACT. You might like to get a balanced view of the Voice by reading my presentation to Probus Canberra on 11Sep23, posted on my website www.alogstudycentre.com.au/media M. Flint Erindale Centre 13Oct23</p>
<p>Canberra Times One-eyed Insulting Yes campaigners Mr Albanese has chosen to praise Ray Martin rather than to condemn him for calling No voters dinosaurs and dickheads. Mr Shorten, on 2GB today (6Oct23), also refused to condemn Ray Martin's injurious comments. Sounds about right for this PM and Labor generally. Now No voters are branded from the top as dickheads, as well as racist and stupid. What they walk past is the standard they accept. Labor would do well to heed Abraham Lincoln's famous aphorism "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time." M. Flint Erindale Centre 6Oct23</p>
<p>City News One-eyed Voice Ken Watt (Letters 21Sep23) is correct in respect of valid ticks but invalid crosses on the Voice ballot paper, now upheld by the High Court. Past practice, 20 plus years ago, is no excuse to continue an unfair practice.</p>

<p>However, valid ticks but invalid crosses are just the last of several unethical measures by the Prime Minister to stack the case against the No campaign - initially tax deductions only for Yes camp; initially no Yes and No pamphlets: initially no Solicitor-General's advice to be published; no equal Government funding of both cases, as in past referenda and, worst of all, a single question on the ballot paper addressing only the first of three parts to be written into the Constitution, ie, "A proposed law to alter the Constitution to recognise ... the Voice. Do you approve of this proposed alteration." Unfortunately, a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications of implementation. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>As has been said, the standard you walk past is the standard you accept.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 22Sep23</p>
<p>Canberra Times</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>It is a fairly balanced but not completely unbiased article against the No case by Karen Barlow (Canberra Times, 17Sep23). It is patently wrong to say that the Voice is only about giving advice to government.</p> <p>The words 'advice' or 'advising' are not mentioned anywhere in the proposed wording of the change to the Constitution but of which S129 (ii) say clearly: (ii) "the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples". 'To make representations' is vastly different to giving 'advice'.</p> <p>Nor is it correct, as is common to Yes advocates, to say that "race is already in the Constitution in S51 (xxvi)" which empowers the government to make laws in respect to "the people of any race ...". The catchcry implies that race refers only to aborigines, but the section is applicable also to the myriad other races now in Australia, including the white Anglo-Celtic folk.</p> <p>However, the final insult of a highly unethical Yes campaign, led by the Prime Minister, is that the referendum will ask a single question, namely, "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" which implies that the referendum is only about S129 (1), recognition of ATSI peoples in the Constitution, quite contrary to the serious ramifications of sections 129 (ii) and 129 (iii) of the proposed wording for the Constitution, dealing with implementation of a Voice. Unfortunately, a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>M. Flint Erindale Centre 17Sep23</p>
<p>City News</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>The PM and Yes proponents of the Voice often say that the Voice is only "advisory", implying that the Voice would not have any more to say than it can already. However, it is patently wrong to say that the Voice is only about giving advice to government.</p> <p>The words 'advice' or 'advising' are not mentioned anywhere in the proposed wording of the change to the Constitution but of which S129 (ii) say clearly: (ii) "the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples". 'To make representations' is vastly different to giving 'advice'.</p> <p>Nor is it correct, as is common to Yes advocates, to say that "race is already in the Constitution in S51 (xxvi)" which empowers the government to make laws in respect to "the people of any race ...". The catchcry implies that race refers only to aborigines, but the section is applicable also to the myriad other races now in Australia, including the white Anglo-Celtic folk.</p> <p>That said, the final insult of a highly unethical Yes campaign, led by the Prime Minister, is that the referendum will ask a single question, namely, "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" which implies that the referendum is only about S129 (1), recognition of ATSI peoples in the Constitution, quite contrary to the serious ramifications of sections 129 (ii) and 129 (iii) of the proposed wording for the Constitution, dealing with implementation of a Voice. Unfortunately, a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>M. Flint Erindale Centre 17Sep23</p>
<p>The Australian</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>Chris Kenny is patently wrong (Aust, 16-17Sep23) in saying that the Voice is only about giving advice and doubly wrong of accusing Senator Price of lying, in saying that the Voice would not be advisory, and that "This is a blatant falsehood, disproven by the very wording of the proposed constitutional change."</p> <p>The words 'advice' or 'advising' are not mentioned anywhere in the proposed wording of the change to the Constitution but of which S129 (ii) say clearly: (ii) "the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the</p>

<p>Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples". 'To make representations' is vastly different to giving 'advice', and Kenny is disingenuous in saying otherwise. However, the final insult of this highly unethical Yes campaign, led by the Prime Minister, is that the referendum will ask a single question, namely, "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" which implies that the referendum is only about S129 (1), recognition of ATSI peoples in the Constitution, quite contrary to the serious ramifications of sections 129 (ii) and 129 (iii) of the proposed wording for the Constitution, dealing with implementation of a Voice. Unfortunately, a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 16Sep23</p>
<p>The Australian The Voice</p> <p>In a recent presentation about the Voice to a social group in Canberra, I concluded with the following statements: The referendum will ask a single question, namely, "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" which implies that the referendum is only about recognition of ATSI peoples in the Constitution, quite contrary to the second and third parts of the proposed wording for the Constitution, dealing with implementation of a Voice. Unfortunately (but counted on by the Yes proponents), a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>The acid test for the referendum is whether a Voice enshrined in the Constitution would make any difference to 'closing the gap'. The answer is a clear no, given that the means already exist in the NIAA and its 1,300 staff under Minister Burney's control, with a charter that reads exactly like what that of a Voice would look like. Minister Burney and the Government simply need to do their job. They do not even need new legislation to do so.</p> <p>When all debate is boiled down, there is simply no need for a Voice to be entrenched in the Constitution.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 13Sep23</p>
<p>City News(Published City News, 20Sep23)</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>In a recent presentation about the Voice to a social group in Canberra, I concluded with the following statements: The referendum will ask a single question, namely, "A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?" which implies that the referendum is only about recognition of ATSI peoples in the Constitution, quite contrary to the second and third parts of the proposed wording for the Constitution, dealing with implementation of a Voice. Unfortunately (but counted on by the Yes proponents), a great many voters will simply read this as "Do you agree with recognition of aborigines in the Constitution", in complete ignorance of the ramifications. No other information will be provided on the ballot paper and the question is therefore misleading by deliberate omission.</p> <p>The acid test for the referendum is whether a Voice enshrined in the Constitution would make any difference to 'closing the gap'. The answer is a clear no, given that the means already exist in the NIAA and its 1,300 staff under Minister Burney's control, with a charter that reads exactly like what that of a Voice would look like. Minister Burney and the Government simply need to do their job. They do not even need new legislation to do so.</p> <p>When all debate is boiled down, there is simply no need for a Voice to be entrenched in the Constitution.</p> <p>M. Flint Erindale Centre 13Sep23</p>
<p>The Australian Marcia Langton's Voice</p> <p>Two points more about the Voice.</p> <p>Marci Langton at the Press Club (Aust, 7Sep23), like Minister Burney before her (Aust,6Sep), is a perfect advertisement to vote No to the Voice. Both have effectively admitted that they currently have the means to 'close the gap', through the 1,300 staff of the NIAA, under the Minister's control, with a charter that reads exactly like what that of a Voice would have, complemented by the myriad aborigine advisory groups already existing around the country; even new legislation to do it is not needed. And Mr Pearson (Aust, 7Sep23) is on a flogging to nowhere with his latest ploy to tell 'soft' No voters the truth about the Voice because he, the PM and Yes proponents cannot afford to tell the truth of what the real ramifications of the Uluru statement would be. Have you listened to Thomas Mayo and his like?</p> <p>An enshrined Voice is simply not needed to 'close the gap'.</p>

<p>M. Flint Canberra 7Sep23</p>
<p>The Australian Minister Burney's Voice Minister Linda Burney's article urging people to vote Yes on the Voice (Aust, 6Sep23), is a perfect advertisement for the No campaign. She laments the lack of progress in 'closing the gap' and claims that a Voice in the Constitution would fix that. Sorry, Ms Burney but you already have the means to 'close the gap' in the NIAA and its 1,300 staff under your control, with a charter that reads exactly like what that of a Voice would look like. Just do your job. You do not even have to have new legislation to do it and to coral effective advice from the myriad, existing ATSI organisations. In contrast. Maurice Newman's article (also 6Sep23) is right on the money. M. Flint Canberra 6Sep23</p>
<p>The Australian The Voice Troy Bramston, like so many Yes proponent commentators is deluded (Aust, 5Sep23) - yet another Yes campaigner denying, decrying and deriding the opposition. The Yes campaign, completely politicised by the PM from the outset, boils down to "It's a great idea. Trust us". Trust who – the Albanese government? Who's kidding whom? M. Flint Canberra 5Sep23</p>
<p>The Editor The Australian One-eyed Voice Sorry George Williams (Aust, 4Sep23), but the Voice referendum is rigged. Yet another Yes campaigner denying the No concerns (Nothing to see here!). He should have a another look at the unethical strategy of the Prime Minister to stack the case against the No campaign - initially tax deductions only for Yes camp; initially no Yes and No pamphlets: initially no Solicitor-General's advice to be published; no equal Government funding of both cases, as in past referenda; valid ticks but invalid crosses on ballot papers, and worst of all, a single question on the ballot paper addressing only the first of three parts to be written into the Constitution, ie, "A proposed law to alter the Constitution to recognise ... the Voice. Do you approve of this proposed alteration." As has been said, the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. M. Flint Canberra 4Sep23</p>
<p>The Editor The Canberra Times One-eyed Voice I often feel sorry for ideologues like Mark Kenny (Canberra times, 3Sep22) who are so one-eyed they can't think straight. Once again his comments, like the others from the Yes campaign, comes down to a few basics: it's a great idea, get a warm fuzzy feeling, there is nothing to worry about whatever concerns the No camp may raise. Go deny, decry and deride the opposition. But ask and demand from the Yes proponents what more effect a Voice would have on the plight of aborigines, the claimed fundamental reason for a Voice, over the reported \$30 billion a year already being poured into those communities now and the apparent failure of the NIAA (1,300 staff) to be make any headway in 'closing the gap'. And have a close look at the unethical strategy of the Prime Minister to stack the case against the No campaign - initially tax deductions only for Yes camp; initially no Yes and No pamphlets: initially no Solicitor-General's advice to be published; no equal Government funding of both cases, as in past referenda; valid ticks but invalid crosses on ballot papers, and worst of all, a single question on the ballot paper addressing only the first of three parts to be written into the Constitution, ie, "A proposed law to alter the Constitution to recognise ... the Voice. Do you approve of this proposed alteration." As has been said, the standard you walk past is the standard you accept. Luckily Mr Kenny is preaching to the converted. M. Flint Erindale Centre 3Sep23</p>
<p>The Editor The Australian Congratulations to Warren Mundine for his valid list of countervailing myths of the No campaign, to those about the Yes campaign, posed recently by Chris Kenny (Australian, 30Aug23). Kenny's list was and is wrong, which I had critiqued in a recent letter to the editor (not published). Warren Mundine is spot on the truth. Thank you also for the informative article by Susanne Andrews "Voice will make most of local community experience". It is a perfect example of why a Voice enshrined in the Constitution is not needed.</p>

<p>M. Flint Canberra 30Aug23</p>
<p>The Editor The Australian As usual, Greg Sheridan and Robert Gottliebsen get it right in their columns (The Australian, 29Aug23). The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) should publish its legal advice in respect of use of ticks and crosses on referendum ballot papers. Just because nothing has changed in 30 years is no excuse for the AEC. The use of ticks but invalid crosses is confusing, bad administration and certain to give a biased result. Neither the governing act nor the official AEC booklet (arrived in mail 25Aug23) mentions anywhere therein the use of ticks or crosses. They provide only for the words ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or Y and N to be used by voters. Robert Gottliebsen is also right in saying that woke CEOs of companies will rue the day they backed the Yes campaign and now should donate also to the No campaign to compensate. They have no right to abuse shareholder funds for political purposes. M. Flint Canberra 29Aug23</p>
<p>The Editor The Australian The Gospel of the Voice according Chris Kenny The Australian is trying hard to be balanced in putting both sides of the Voice cases (clearly absent in leftist Media) in giving so much print space to Chris Kenny to continually make his case for a Yes vote. (Weekend Aus 26-27Aug23). But Kenny gets more and more desperate each try on his defence of the Voice. His article boils down again to a repeat of the oft-stated unsupported assertions and opinions of Yes advocates, ie. that ‘there is nothing to see here; nothing to fear; the Voice would be just an advisory body’; no need to worry about what a supportive government like Labor or the High Court may decide. He identifies eight myths (actually straw men) that he then tries to demolish. Myth 1. Race is mentioned but not defined anywhere in the constitution. S51 xxvi provides for the Commonwealth to make laws for “the people of any race...”. But are we not all a race of one kind or another? Myth 2. He says the Voice will have no legal power, to be only an advisory body. Essentially true but ignores a willing government like Labor to implement its representations and the Media ruckus if ignored. Myth 3. The Uluru statement is more than a page long. Even the aboriginal advocates have said so. The Uluru statement is not an innocuous document. It harbours a future of exactly what its advocates say it does – Voice, treaty, truth. How can Kenny deny what the aboriginal authors are writing and saying themselves? Myth 4. He is advocating that a Voice is necessary to do what \$30 billion plus per annum is already trying to do to close the Gap. A Voice would just make things worse. Myth 5. The voice is indeed an elite forum, being led by part-aboriginal academic, parliamentary and community leader elites, supposedly on behalf of our most disadvantaged cousins in remote communities. Where are the full-blood aboriginal bodies? The Government refused to meet with at least one such delegation we know of. Myth 6. Kenny is in error. The 1999 referendum posed two questions, both related only to the establishment of a republic. There was no question about aborigines. Myth 7. Kenny is in error. He proposed wording of part iii of the referendum question is that “The Parliament shall make laws with respect to matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, ...” It does not apply <u>only</u> to the Voice, as stated by Kenny. Any matter affecting all Australians also affect aborigines. Myth 8. Kenny implies that the Voice is needed to ‘close the gap’. Nowhere have I yet read anywhere how the Voice will help do that. There is currently a whole industry and a Federal Government department under the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, of 1,300 public servants, who are supposed to be closing the gap. Where is there any sound argument that a Voice would do any better, with a yet larger and more expensive bureaucracy? M. Flint Canberra 26Aug23</p>
<p>The Editor The Australian Voice Subterfuge?</p>

So, is this another dirty trick by a deceitful Labor government in the Voice referendum? First there was tax deductibility only for the Yes case. Then there were to be no information pamphlets to voters, luckily both decisions being reversed after heavy criticism. Media reports now imply that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) will allow on ballot papers, ticks instead of the word 'yes' but will invalidate crosses used instead of the word 'no'. How sinister and deceitful, if not unlawful, is that?

The official AEC booklet (arrived in mail 25Aug23) provides only for the words 'yes' or 'no' to be used by voters and does not mention anywhere therein the use of ticks or crosses. I understand that that is consistent with the law governing referendums.

So, if this misleading information about ticks and crosses is true, there should be an immediate legal challenge to what the AEC and Labor Government is intending. It would be a very sad day if the required, absolute impartiality of such a body as the AEC is compromised in favour of a Government policy. The AEC should immediately clarify its position on this matter or, thus, remain tainted and compromised, not to be trusted ever again.

If a Coalition government attempted to pull such a stunt, the Leftist media would be outraged and squealing like cut pigs. So where is the leftist Media outrage over this apparent major transgression?

And any voter who endorses this possible subterfuge by the Government should hang his or her head in shame.

M. Flint
Canberra
25Aug23

The Editor

CBR City News [as published City News, 6Sep23]

Voice Subterfuge? Yes to tick but a cross is a no

So, is this another dirty trick by a deceitful Labor government in the Voice referendum? First there was tax deductibility only for the Yes case. Then there were to be no information pamphlets to voters, luckily both decisions being reversed after heavy criticism. Media reports now imply that the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) will allow on ballot papers, ticks instead of the word 'yes' but will invalidate crosses used instead of the word 'no'. How sinister and deceitful, if not unlawful, is that?

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M. Flint, Erindale Centre
25Aug23

The Editor

The Australian

Voice and health

The article on the Voice by Health Minister Mark Butler (Australian, 24Aug23) is 100% waffle and hardly worthy of a Year10 student paper. He should know better than to tote such rubbish that the Voice will do for aboriginal health what his department should be doing already.

In respect of differences in life expectancy and chronic conditions like rheumatic heart disease, where is there any mention of the real effects of genetic differences engendered by 60,000 years of total isolation as probable causes of these differences? How on earth could the Voice do better on controlling trachoma than should be happening now under his watch?

This was pure Voice propaganda by our Labor Health Minister and weak as water at that.

M. Flint
Canberra
24Aug23

The Editor
The Australian

The pathetic Voice

The article by Douglas Murray ‘Sorry but can we please stop the guilt trips?’ (Weekend Australian, 19-20Aug23).about guilt- branding of Australians over the plight of the Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people is enlightening and a very welcome comment on a sad stage of our history. Although an Englishman, accusable of bias, he is not some sickophantic (sic) Australian leftist journalist trying to justify his country’s irrational attitude against the Voice.

Let’s face it. Without colonisation, by England or other, aborigines would still be living as they had for their claimed 60,000 years of being here - the same year 60 000 times with no change. What did aborigines achieve in all that time?

No wheel, no bow and arrow, no permanent housing, no rag trade, few utensils, the most basic cuisine, no manufacturing other than spears, woomeras, nulla-nullas, boomerangs and woven baskets. But to be fair, the aborigines had serious disadvantages. They were condemned to a hunter/gatherer existence and a survival lifestyle. There was no beast of burden, so no draught animal to permit serious agriculture or conveyance of person or material; no metals, just stone and wood; no tools except those makable of stone and wood; and no wheel, abandoned if it had been ever invented. Most of the country at their entry point in the North-West was barren and uninviting. But lifestyles remained hunter/gatherer even after reaching the fertile East and South. In having to walk and personally carry belongings everywhere, one can easily understand why things that had to be toted were absolutely minimal. In short, for 60,000 years their greatest achievement was to actually survive in this essentially difficult land. One way or the other, they had managed to master fire to their advantage.

Colonisation with European knowhow has turned this country into a rich nation and a powerhouse to the world because of its many resources, exploitable because of Western knowledge and social structures.

Now the aborigines claim it all as if they had built it. \$30billion a year into the aborigine industry, ownership of more than 50 per cent of the land mass and mining royalties are obviously not enough (where is the money going?). Australians comprise an extremely tolerant society but are being sorely tested by a government only too happy to sustain the guilty tag being applied to its citizens by self-appointed elite representatives of the ATSI peoples.

In short, there is absolutely no benefit to the nation for the Uluru statement, and all that it implies, to be set in constitutional concrete. Aborigines should be grateful for colonisation but gratitude is not endemic to the human condition. None of them would want to revert to pre-colonial living. Enough is enough!

M. Flint
Canberra
20Aug23

Canberra Times.....[Published 17Aug23]

Fraudulent scare campaigns are nothing new in Australian politics

In the 1950s it was the "reds under the beds". After Mabo John Howard warned of a nationwide "land grab" by Indigenous Australians.

And now the "no" campaign is in the running for first prize when it comes to panicking the country.

"No" campaigners say if the "yes" case gets up Australia will be divided along race lines and that non-indigenous people will become second-class citizens.

"Dutton's doubters" also claim the Voice is legally risky and potentially very costly.

The referendum is on a very simple question: "[There is] A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?"

It does not mention a treaty or Makarrata commission.

These matters will be discussed and debated by the Parliament.

Peter Dutton has said he does support a community and regional voices but only if they are legislated.

Indigenous Australians need the Voice to be in the constitution however because they have been betrayed by government's shutting down representative organisations on several previous occasions.

ATSIC is the most high-profile example.

What First Nations' people want is a seat at the table.

It's widely recognised we get better and less costly results when all the stakeholders sit down together to talk.

That's what Peter Dutton aims for in his own party room discussions.

Why does he find it so hard to understand Indigenous Australians want the same right?

It's called inclusion and democracy.

Tony Morrissey, Chifley

Editor's Comment: Another Yes supporter in denial of what the Uluru statement actually means.

Canberra Times.....[Published 9Aug23]

Continuity crucial to a Voice

<p>The First Nations people of this land were unable to elect representatives until 1962. The constitution excluded First Nations people from the census until 1967. Since 1967 the Commonwealth government can make and has made laws specifically directed at our First Nations population.</p> <p>Our First Nations population has no direct input in the creation and implementation of legislation affecting them. The Minister for Indigenous Australians is appointed by the government and may or may not have broad support and connections in the First Nations population. First Nations MPs are expected to represent all their constituents. First Nations constituents are generally a minority in their electorate.</p> <p>A Voice to parliament will provide advice relating to the creation and implementation of legislation that affects the First Nations people. Institutions like the proposed Voice have existed before at the pleasure of the government of the day. However, these institutions have been and are changed or abolished by the government of the day. The lack of continuity is detrimental. Including a Voice in the constitution will provide continuity for such an institution and will contribute to the creation of better legislation affecting and directed at the First Nations population of this land.</p> <p>Bram van Oosterhout, O'Connor</p> <p>Editor's Comment: Another Yes true but deluded believer.</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 9Aug23]</p> <p>I can't wait to see the letters to the editor</p> <p>ERIC Hunter, a regular correspondent to this publication and "The Canberra Times" (CT), was recently extolling the virtues of the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, and promoting the "yes" vote for the Voice in a letter to the CT.</p> <p>Well after Burney's incompetent and abysmal performance in parliament on August 1, where she refused to answer a simple straightforward question from the coalition, Mr Hunter might like to review his opinion of her.</p> <p>Hunter and the Voice "yes" brigade must now be getting nervous as it is looking more than likely it won't get up. I can't wait to see their letters to the editors if this happens!</p> <p>Linda Burney has a good mate in the Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen, who wants to cover the landscape with windmills, solar panels and transmission lines, rather than keep coal and gas going for reliable base-load power and seriously promote adopting the nuclear option.</p> <p>I thought this might make sense, given we are committed to acquiring nuclear-powered submarines. His virtue signalling will ruin our economy, and have practically zero effect on the world's climate.</p> <p>Again, I can't wait to see the letters to the editors when we start having blackouts/power rationing by following Bowen's policy.</p> <p>Bob McDonald, Weetangera</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 9Aug23]</p> <p>How's the recycling of coal-fired power plants going?</p> <p>Ken Murtagh (Letters, CN July 27) wrongly assumes that Australian taxpayers will pay for "between \$7 and \$9 trillion of capital commitments by 2060" to achieve net zero as reported in the recent Net Zero Australia report.</p> <p>The report itself makes it clear that: "Most of those funds will come from business, and some from households. Exports will be paid for mostly by overseas customers."</p> <p>Like most naysayers opposed to renewables, Mr Murtagh overlooks Australia's general recycling problem and singles out wind turbine blades.</p> <p>How's the recycling of coal-fired power plants and their toxic sludge going, I wonder?</p> <p>Recyclable wind turbine blades were made in Denmark two years ago.</p> <p>Ray Peck, Hawthorn, Victoria</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 9Aug23]</p> <p>Hunter's misguided letter could change my vote</p> <p>I had to think hard as to whether it was worth responding to Eric Hunter's letter on the Voice (CN July 27) because of all the errors in it. First of all I did not "complain", but simply made observations.</p> <p>Second, it was Albanese who took the running on promoting the Voice in a way that politicised it and Dutton simply responded in a way that most of us knew he would.</p> <p>Third, I did not suggest that politicians, big business and sporting bodies should not comment, but said that this is more an issue for the people to determine, and finally, why mention the Murdoch press at all?</p> <p>The Murdoch press is not worth reading, let alone taking any notice of, but those who do are not worth pursuing to change their views.</p> <p>I am not the only one who thinks the government has messed things up, with many senior journalists saying much the same thing as me. And I had the advantage of attending many ATSIC meetings over a number of years as a delegate for a Commonwealth mega department and saw at first hand the internal working arrangements of our First-Nations representatives.</p> <p>The bullying tactics of some politicians are likely to derail the process just as Hunter's misguided letter could possibly change my own vote.</p> <p>Ric Hingee, Duffy</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 9Aug23]</p> <p>Stuck with an arrogant, uncaring government</p> <p>Dr D Mackenzie (Letters, CN July 27) is very concerned about global heating because of record heatwaves in Europe and North America, but not of the record cold temperatures and rainfall in Australia in the last few years.</p>

<p>He doesn't approve of the Liberals' proposals to reverse the cessation of Canberra's gas supply introduced by Labor, but does not explain how we are going to replace that reliable fuel source we get from NSW. Maybe he is another one of those gullible Labor lovers that thinks ACT gets all its energy from renewable sources, if you believe our laughable government. Maybe he is proposing we build a nuclear power plant so ACT can get clean, safe, instant and reliable energy. As he has the abbreviation Dr before his name, maybe he is joining the long list of scientists that are realising that we can't meet any net zero goals without nuclear energy. Dr Mackenzie reveals all in his last paragraph when he says he has been a lifelong Labor voter because his father was. This is the problem, especially in Canberra, where we have these voters that just vote Labor because their family did or because they are rusted on Labor voters. If this is the attitude we will be stuck with an arrogant, incompetent, uncaring and smug government for the rest of our lives. Ian Pilsner, Weston</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 9Aug23] If only we'd gone nuclear in 1970 Glad to report at least agreement with Dr Douglas Mackenzie's revelation in Letters, CN July 27, that our tram plans are pure folly. An additional bridge on Commonwealth Avenue will be an insult to its minimalist form, worthy of the capital. More disturbing, however, is his reference to a heated northern hemisphere, which is occupied by 88 per cent of the world population. Mackenzie's consistent support for unachievable renewables for electricity generation by 2050 could only come from a rusted-on government disciple, incapable of considering what we could have had if the Jervis Bay nuclear plant had been completed in 1970. Ken Murtagh, Hughes</p>
<p>Canberra Times Voting for the Voice? What sheer hypocrisy and desperation from Crispin Hull (article, 8Aug23). He leads off by saying the No campaign is using every dirty trick in the book (not listed) and adds that the Yes campaign does not have to join in the deceit. What does he call the PM initially refusing to allow tax deductions only for the Yes campaign, if that is not deceit? What does he call the PM having to be dragged kicking and screaming to allow both Yes and No campaign pamphlets to be published by the electoral commission, if that was not deceit? I could go on. The PM has been nothing but deceitful in this referendum. Then Hull exposes his desperation in effect saying that a successful referendum now needs 16-year-olds to be given the vote. What a joke. Is this man serious? M. Flint Canberra 8Aug23</p>
<p>Canberra Times[Published 5Aug23] Anthony Albanese has bungled the Voice campaign and should go I have noticed every time the topic of the Voice is raised it leads to me being attacked on the basis of my values and personality, not the topic being discussed. My wife is an advocate of the Voice. I'm trained in constitutional matters, policy and procedural fairness. I have strong reservations about the model being put forward. But I believe the reason for the inability of my wife and myself to communicate on the topic is because Anthony Albanese has done a terrible job advocating for the Voice. To me, it feels like Anthony Albanese just wants everyone to "trust him". In fact, the general population have been provided so little information on what the Voice will look like, how it will function, the limitations on the power, or case studies of how it can benefit Aboriginal communities that Anthony Albanese's lack of detail is directly causing civil and personal divisions to take the place of reasonable, informed discussion. The Voice should be a topic of minority rights vs majority rule. Definitely a topic missing in the Australian constitution. But Albanese hasn't clarified the topic being debated. He has made the topic racial and mishandled this fundamental reform. He should stand down and let a true leader take charge; someone who can encourage people to engage in the civil and informed debate necessary for a democracy. Greg Adamson, Griffith</p>
<p>The Australian Who's Voice? So many articles on the Voice this weekend in the Australian (5-6Aug23) - by the PM, Van Onselen, Kenny, Langton (these clearly for), Bramston, Shanahan, Kelly and an editorial (these reporting factually). Is the Yes camp saying anything new? No, it is still saying it is the right thing to do and, in Langton's case, still denigrating No supporters and accusing them of egregious lies but with zero examples and as if the No camp is pristine and pure. The Yes camp is still peddling too how the Voice will be just 'Advisory'. Therein, of course, lies the crux of disagreement. Why does the Voice have to be in the Constitution if just advisory? PM Albanese and Labor would be a very willing partner to the Voice and would accede to its every demand, at great cost to 96 percent of Australians. Another fatal flaw in the Yes case is as mentioned in a few places, that being the valid progress being made in education and jobs for aborigines in Arnhem land, adding significantly that this group happens to own mines and has the independent financial means to achieve positive results. Education and meaningful employment comprise the only sure route for indigenous peoples off the reserves and happily integrated. The Voice enshrined in the Constitution, as proposed, is divisive and would benefit only the part-indigenous elite.</p>

<p>M. Flint Canberra 5Aug23</p>
<p>The Australian Indigenous Billions The Australian would be doing a great service to its readers if one of its journalists would research and report an account of exactly where all the billions of dollars have gone every year and over the years on indigenous causes, instead of simply asking the question. The astronomical figure of \$30 billion a year has been often reported. There needs to be some accurate account for this figure and soon. M. Flint Canberra 3Aug23</p>
<p>City News[Published 26Jul23] Do the right thing? But we've done it for decades <i>Are we not entitled to know why the billions of dollars spent rectifying Aboriginal disadvantage has failed before being asked to spend billions more?" asks reader MICHAEL BOYLE, of Chapman.</i> On March 2, "CityNews" published questions from me to help clarify issues surrounding the Voice. So far the questions have not been answered. The Uluru Statement, from which the Voice emanated, also advocates for a treaty/treaties, truth talking and an unspecified form of sovereignty. It is reasonable to see constitutional acceptance of the Voice as preparing the way for treaties and sovereignty that may have their own constitutional implications separating the Aboriginal communities from mainstream Australia. While being pushed by activists as a logical progression to compensate Aborigines for past wrongs, the debate on those issues has barely surfaced. There is a strong argument that all matters flowing from the Uluru Statement should be addressed as a "package", not singly. Arguments over the Voice have become increasingly heated, even vituperative, and highly emotional on the "Yes" side, whose disagreements over the nature of the Voice between activists and proponents remain unresolved, confusing further how a constitutional Voice would operate. The Voice, once added to the constitution, would decide its own priorities and how it would function. In organising the operation of the Voice the parliament/executive may make administrative decisions based on the advice from the Voice, but the functions of the Voice would be protected by the constitution. At present there is neither knowledge nor decision on how the Voice will be organised to perform its yet unspecified functions. Given the range of Aboriginal interests and concerns across Australia, dissent from the view of the Voice across some communities is inevitable. Presumably, those opposed to the advice of the Voice will have the same rights as everyone else to make their views known and have them processed by parliament and the executive in the same manner as would be accorded to the Voice. If this is the case, why does the Voice become a constitutional necessity, unless advice from the Voice is to take precedence over all other advice on indigenous concerns including those Aborigines who present dissenting views? What the rest of us think may not be a consideration. A major appeal of the "Yes" case is for Australians to do the right thing, get on the right side of history, protect our international reputation and remedy the wrongs of the past. These emotional appeals might have weight if they reflected the whole story. Australians for generations have done the right thing as legislatures, institutions and individuals sought to overcome identified forms of disadvantage intended to "close the gap". The allegations in the Uluru Statement do not reflect the situation of today. Any successful attempt at permanently overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage must be based, firstly, on a realistic appreciation of the cause of the problems, and secondly, a practical appreciation of what can be done to overcome them. The Voice campaign is strong on emotional, rhetorical assertions presenting a one-sided picture, but less enthused about debating material inimical to its argument. This, plus the extended agenda of the Uluru Statement that is very much to the fore in the minds of "Yes" activists, has damaged the "Yes" case significantly. In these circumstances the procession of public figures endorsing the Voice is as likely to increase people's doubts about the Voice as it is to reassure them. There are other factors that cause doubts about the veracity of the "Yes" case. The question of who qualifies as an Aboriginal is becoming an issue following the inexplicable rise in the indigenous population revealed in the last census. Attempts to inculcate the referendum with an ambience of guilt flowing from deeds long past as though the current situation concerns only Aborigines and Celtic-Anglo-Saxons is dubious, especially as Australian citizens of today come from all over the world and are sympathetic to the plight of those Aborigines still disadvantaged. They are not associated with the persecution of the Aborigines yet they will, as far as equal representation to parliament is concerned, experience discrimination. In the present circumstances, where there is continuing, legitimate doubt over so many core issues of the referendum, it is common sense to vote "No", even if only to send the proposal for the Voice and all its implications back to the drawing board. Are we not entitled to know why the billions of dollars spent rectifying Aboriginal disadvantage has failed before being asked to spend billions more? Ironically, the activists already have a powerful voice.</p>

Julius Caesar, more than 2000 years ago, said it best in the Catiline conspiracy when he told the Senate: "All men who decide on difficult issues ought to free themselves from the influence of hatred, friendship, anger and pity. For when these intervene the mind cannot readily judge the truth, and no-one has ever served his emotions and his best interests simultaneously".

The principle is as true now as it was then.

Michael Boyle, Chapman.

City News[Published 26Jul23]

Vote 'yes', but answers could take another generation

The 1838 Myall Creek Massacre.

"Surely we now have a duty (and the decency) to erase any lingering sense that white Australians are superior to a particular minority because of different skin tones and heritage," writes reader **Eric Hunter**, of Cook.

In a recent TV interview, former PM Tony Abbott claimed the outcome of the 1838 Myall Creek Massacre was "normal" when seven white men were sentenced and hanged for murdering 28 Aboriginal men, women and children.

In truth, it was the only known case where any justice was handed out.

Furthermore, no subsequent killings were investigated because of the public outcry over the Myall Creek hangings. The facts of this and other misrepresentations, such as ignoring the context of what Anthony Albanese actually said about governments being "very brave" if they went against the Voice, are readily accessible for anyone who cares to look. Why hasn't Mr Abbott?

No wonder lesser mortals think it's okay to repeat unchecked, misinformation, contradictions and sometimes outright lies, all clearly designed to denigrate indigenous Australians. Don't we have a right to expect our political leaders and media especially will check the facts? And that brings us to the elephant in the room.

The "Yes" campaign has steered away from it, but some on the "No" side now claim they're being accused of "racism" by "Yes" advocates. Since they've raised it, could it be a case of self-identification? The often vicious trolling only fuels the fires of suspicion.

Perhaps it's time to let in the light behind the elephant.

I was born before World War II and grew up in both country and city. Some of my earliest memories are of frequently hearing the "n" word around our kitchen table in rural Queensland. Later, in suburban Melbourne, the pejorative was "Abo". We claimed, "It's only a joke", and were annoyed when the subjects didn't see it that way.

In the '50s, in the country Victorian town where I worked, the local Aboriginal community lived on the river bank (they were rarely allocated public housing). Some caring townspeople helped out with food and second-hand clothing, while the local police sergeant spent many hours helping build and maintain a camp vegetable garden. But he was sneered at: "they're all bloody useless, so why bother", he was told.

I remember when a local businessman's search for an office receptionist turned up an ideal candidate. But she was Aboriginal and it soon became clear to him that if he gave her the job, there would be an outcry and probable loss of business. I knew him very well; a man of great integrity who always deeply regretted having to reject her in favour of a white applicant.

What we rarely ask is how many times that young black woman and others like her still don't get the job simply because of their colour, and how much it's impacted their lives?

Stan Grant showed us that, despite his success, he has been badly affected by a lifetime of racist attacks. Yet, he has been the one vilified for "speaking out of turn". We should be asking "why"? Instead, we persist with the cry, "they've only themselves to blame" or that "we're all equal now and the Voice will create inequality". Authoritative evidence to the contrary is, as usual, right in front of us.

Racist attitudes don't disappear overnight – they've existed for millennia. Even today, I have to remind myself who and what I am – a privileged, old, white man whose black contemporaries, if they're still around (and most probably aren't because of their lower life expectancy), were highly unlikely to have had similar opportunities for a healthy, reasonably well-educated and comfortable life.

Closing the gap data continues to show many still don't.

Voting "Yes" in the referendum won't immediately provide all the answers – it could take another generation. However, there's evidence that when disadvantaged people are listened to and their lived experience acknowledged through appropriate action, positive results come faster and more effectively than when they are ignored (and can result in monetary savings). The "No" advocates seem eager to ignore the billions wasted on non-local, white-inspired non-solutions that have too often ended up scapegoating local indigenous workers (as with ATSIIC).

The referendum is simple: constitutional recognition of our unique indigenous heritage, allied to an independent legislated advisory body whose sole job is to gather and consolidate on-the-ground knowledge from indigenous Australians about what they think will best help them.

It will go to the executive government and parliament for consideration, just like any other advisory body. Parliament, through the government, will decide which recommendations are taken up. Critically, the constitutional amendment provides a strong obligation to justify all decisions publicly, whatever they may be.

Surely we now have a duty (and the decency) to erase any lingering sense that white Australians are superior to a particular minority because of different skin tones and heritage, not to mention the scientifically refuted and offensive perceptions of differing levels of "inherent capability" that still lurk in some minds.

I wonder: would we be enduring this unjustifiable acrimony if, when the British turned up, they had discovered our First Australians were also white skinned?

Eric Hunter, of Cook

City News[Published 26Jul23]

<p>Is Murdoch included in Ric's complaints? I don't see Ric Hingee complaining that Peter Dutton has "hitched his wagon" to a "No" vote and thus politicising it (Letters, CN July 13). Why does Ric also suggest it's "an issue for the people, not politicians, sporting groups, big business"? It's still a democracy I thought and open to anyone or any group to become involved. Does Ric include the Murdoch "big media businesses" in his complaints about who's involved? Is he also concerned about them spreading mis-information and denigration every day of the week? Is that not "telling people how to vote" and worse, by using unethical journalism? Eric Hunter, Cook</p>
<p>The Australian The Voice pamphlets As reported in the Australian (18Jul23), reasons given for the Yes case are the same old platitudes we have been hearing from the Government for a year now. It still boils down to "it's the right thing to do" and there's nothing to see here at risk. Except for the first one, the other seven reasons given are a joke, no? Who in their right mind would believe that it would save money, make the Government work better or bring the country together? M. Flint Canberra 18Jul23</p>
<p>City News[Published 26Jul23] Closing the Gap Much has been written recently about our failure to 'Close the Gap' for our indigenous brethren. I am afraid that much of the media falls into the same old mantra trap that the ongoing, seemingly intractable problems of the Australian and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples (but primarily the full-blooded cohort thereof), are all the fault of the colonists and their descendants to the present time. But, where is any discussion on the responsibility of the ATSI people themselves for their lot? Where is there any discussion of the genetic realities of 60,000 years of isolation from the rest of the world. Do they bear no responsibility for their poor health, lower mortality rates, poor education, incarceration rates etc? Lack of progress in 'closing the gap' for full-blooded and near-full-blooded ATSI peoples is no great surprise. How could it be, as long as they are continuously stuck (willingly?) in a welfare state? Quite some years ago when I first researched the 'gap' problem, I reluctantly came to a few conclusions which, unfortunately, still hold today. The first was that closing the gap by any significant measure was basically intractable while these people remained in a welfare-dependant state. The second was that their situation would not change much unless they integrated with the rest of the population through education and work, as most, if not all, of the part-aboriginal cohort have done. In any modern society, education and work are essential to wellbeing and self-respect. In short, unless the ATSI peoples integrate, or even forced to integrate, the 'gap' will never be closed, despite the billions of dollars expended every year. M. Flint Erindale Centre 14Jul23</p>
<p>The Canberra Times[Published 13Jul23] Voice not dangerous M Flint (Letters, July 7) is wrong to suggest that the Voice is dangerous. The Voice will be able to provide advice to the Parliament and the government. The government will listen and, weighing all relevant advice, try to make decisions that benefit First Nations people and are in the interest of all Australians. Advice from the Voice, like advice from other quarters, does not compel the government to act contrary to the public interest. Linda Burney said the Voice's priorities will be health, education, jobs and housing. Over time, it may provide advice on truth telling and treaty. Advice on these matters will capture grassroots First Nations peoples' views. Vicki Ratliff, Red Hill</p>
<p>The Canberra Times Self-identifying indigenes It is a complete mystery to me why Australians as white as I am, choose to self-identify as an indigene person and deny the greater part of their DNA. Why? Is it out of some sense of pride, virtue-signalling or simple greed? Pride in what, in respect of aboriginal heritage? 60,000 years of living the same year 60,000 times? I am a quarter German but it has never crossed my mind to identify as a German – simply Australian through and through and proud of what this country has achieved. These self-identifying aborigines would not even exist except for colonisation of the country. I challenge any of them to explain to readers what their claimed level of aboriginal heritage is and to describe why they so self-identify. The accepted definition of an indigenous person is far too loose and even open to corruption. There needs to be a much stricter definition, for example, exclusion of anyone beyond quarter-cast. 13Jul23</p>
<p>The Canberra Times[Published 13Jul23] NIAA and the Voice Letters by Janet Hunt and by Katy Skinner (Letters, 12Jul23) reveal more political bias than logic. What do they think the 1,300 people in the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), chewing up \$4 billion a year, have been doing? Sitting there waiting for</p>

<p>an indigenous group like the Voice to tell them what to do? I hope not. That said, the Voice, enshrined in the Constitution, is all about entrenching permanent political power by some 3% of the population. If the referendum is successful, logically the NIAA would be a ready vehicle (under Minister Burney) although it would be restocked with true Voice believers in greater numbers and cost, unable, in reality, to achieve more than it does now</p> <p>Minister Burney needs to explain why the Voice is needed in the Constitution when the NIAA exists under her portfolio. She needs to explain what the NIAA has been doing for the past 14 months under her watch. She and the NIAA should do their job now.</p> <p>M. Flint Erindale Centre 12Jul23</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 12Jul23]</p> <p>If Voice fails, blame look-at-me Albanese</p> <p>If the Voice and the referendum fail, and it isn't looking too good at the moment, I put much of the blame on Albanese. He has pushed the issue so hard, and hitched his wagon so firmly to a "Yes" vote, that it politicised the whole issue. This is an issue for the people, not politicians, sporting groups, big business, local councils and the like who risk getting people's backs up at being told what to do.</p> <p>Dutton was always going to vote "No" and Albanese's "look-at-me, look-at-me" approach to not only this, but the visit of the Indian Prime Minister and numerous other appearances at sporting events and high-profile functions, make him an irresistible target for Dutton.</p> <p>This could easily result in people voting "No" as a comment on Albanese's pompousness rather than on the merits of the vote for First Nations People.</p> <p>Ric Hingee, Duffy</p>
<p>The Australian [and Canberra Times]</p> <p>Would the Voice 'close the gap'?</p> <p>Recent reports say that successive governments have failed to make any significant progress in 'closing the gap' in respect of indigenous peoples, which is really the most important thing Australia could do for these people. The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), created May2019, employs 1,300 persons with a 2022–23 budget of \$4.2 billion per year, with a charter to do exactly what Minister Burney wants the Voice to do. So, why the Voice if the means already exists in the NIAA? One can easily conclude then that there must be ulterior motives for the Voice other than 'closing the gap', given the NIAA and numerous complimentary indigenous organisations already in place for that purpose. One need only to read and think about the ramifications of the basic requirements of the Uluru Statement to see why, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •"We seek constitutional reform to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country." •"We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. •"We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history. <p>M. Flint Canberra 10Jul23</p>
<p>The Canberra Times</p> <p>NIAA and the Voice</p> <p>Letters by Peter Toscan and Charles Meszaros about the role of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) (Letters. 9Jul23) ask a very pertinent question. The NIAA employs 1,300 persons and, with a 2022–23 budget of \$4.2 billion per year over the forward estimates, with a charter to do exactly what Minister Burney wants the Voice to do. One must then ask why another bureaucracy for the Voice under the same Minister is needed. One can easily conclude that the NIAA and Minister Burney are not doing their job. So, why does it still exist, chewing up billions every year? Minister Burney has some explaining to do. Either the NIAA should be shut down or made to deliver the goods to ATSI people on the ground.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 9Jul23</p>
<p>Canberra Times [Published 9Jul23]</p> <p>What's the point?</p> <p>I note that Linda Burney already has a list of agenda items for the Voice to deal with if when it gets up and running. Perhaps Ms Burney can tell us how this differs from what the National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA) does for her people. This agency was established around May 2019 and according to its website has the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lead and coordinate Commonwealth policy development, program design and implementation and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; To provide advice to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians on whole-of-government priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; To lead and coordinate the development and implementation of Australia's Closing the Gap targets in partnership with Indigenous Australians; and To lead Commonwealth activities to promote reconciliation

<p>Peter Toscan, Amaroo</p>
<p>Canberra Times [Published 9Jul23] What about the NIAA? The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is committed to improving the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It has a budget of around \$4 billion and a staff of around 1150. The Agency sits in Prime Minister and Cabinet under the highest agency in the government. Is not the NIAA accountable for doing what the Voice is proposing? How will the Voice improve on what they do? Charles Meszaros, Dunlop</p>
<p>The Australian The Voice After quite some time passionately pleading the Yes case, it seems that Chris Kenny is now wanting to have two-bob on each way on the Voice [With the greatest respect, 'Yes' voice camp needs to think like a conservative, 8Jul23], in offering his five-point plan to Mr Albanese. The first point is OK except he cannot resist his pennyworth, implying that the No case is talking "nonsense that this would embed race in the Constitution or change the way the whole country is governed." In his third point he continues the Government fiction that the "voice will be advisory only, without any power of veto or direction; and its structure and operations will always be directed and controlled by the parliament." Who believes that? In the fourth point, he urges Albanese to trust voters to understand draft legislation for the Voice that "can all be remodelled and refined by parliaments in the future." How come if the whole purpose of enshrining the Voice in the Constitution is so that is cannot be changed by later governments? While taking a swipe at the Coalition position, his fifth point also ignores the reality of permanence of the proposed change to the Constitution. He ends by urging proponents to "engage intelligently with the electorate instead of expecting them to go 'with the vibe' or follow the lead of the elites." Very good advice, but Albanese and the aboriginal elite cannot afford to tell the truth behind the Voice, that it is Trojan horse for implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. M. Flint Canberra 8Jul23</p>
<p>The Australian Canberra Times Canberra City News The Quarterly Essay on the Voice I have managed to plough through the quarterly essay on the Voice by Professor Megan Davis—all 66 pages. It is well drafted but far too long before getting to the nitty-gritty. The bulk is a recapitulation of the journey so far to the Voice referendum, with the perfunctory references to the slaughter and massacre of aborigines by the white invaders, like the Myall Creek massacre of 28 unarmed aborigines (but neglects to mention that seven of ten whites tried for the murders were hung). There is appropriate if unnecessary academic, philosophic padding here and there. She includes the oft-cited claim of 60,000 years of occupation of Australia by aborigines as if it has any relevance. One can legitimately asked what aborigines achieved except survival through 60,000 of the same year. Lack of progress in 'closing the gap' by successive governments of both persuasions gets a mention. Justiciability, in recourse to the High Court, is dismissed as 'miniscule and exaggerated.' I agree that the Voice would not be bothered with minor issues. It would go for the jugular instead, starting with replacing the Governor General with a Voice nominee. She eventually gets to the real messages of his essay on what the Voice is actually about. She makes it very clear that the Voice is only the first of a three-step process, namely "the sequence of the Uluru reform – Voice, Treaty and Truth. She makes clear the vital importance of the Uluru Statement as the manifesto of the ATSI peoples on how they would prosecute it aims through a Voice entrenched in the Constitution. She repeats the mantra that sovereignty has never ceded by the aborigines and talks about reconciliation – being all about truth and justice. Yet, what is truth to the ATSI people but a verbal history of Chinese whispers handed down through the generations? She speaks of justice and repair but what is justice to the ATSI peoples if not eventual reparations? For Ms Davis, the Voice would be a legitimate institution and about being heard, not just being listened to. However, there is precious little in her essay on how the Voice would improve things for ATSI peoples on the ground in remote communities. On this point, an important argument against the Voice is the existence of the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), a federal government body that employs 1,300 persons and claims to work "in genuine partnership to enable the self-determination and aspirations of First Nations communities. We lead and influence change across government to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a say in the decisions that affect them. Our vision is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, recognised and empowered." Does this not sound like what a Voice would be doing? With 2022–23 budget of \$4.2 billion per</p>

<p>year over the forward estimates, where is this money going? Apparently, it has been having no effect, otherwise the pursuit of the Voice. The NIAA could simply change its name to the Voice with as little effect.</p> <p>She decries the No case as “cynical, regurgitating old slogans, misinformation, dog whistling”, and being “pessimistic, frightened, reliant on much misinformation and hyperbole...”</p> <p>But, as many like myself have concluded, after diligent study of the referendum, the Voice is all about power for the part-aboriginal elite – academics, politicians and bureaucrats - and will do little more than being achieved now for those for whom the Voice is meant to exist, namely the well-being of full- and near-full bloods having to exist on welfare existing in remote communities.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 7Jul23</p>
<p>Canberra City News.....[Published 7Jul23]</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>I congratulate the Canberra Times and sister media for a comprehensive and apparently unbiased survey about the Voice (very welcome after the grossly biased surveys by the ACT government, especially on light rail). However, the Editorial (5Jul23) then puts it vote behind the 53 per cent of Canberrans intending to vote Yes, against the 57 percent elsewhere who would say No. The Editorial calls for the “... government to put more flesh on the bone’, implying lack of detail but not offering any itself to justify a Yes vote. Please note that Catch 22 for Mr Albanese and promoters of the Voice is that the Government cannot afford to give more detail and tell the truth behind the Voice and, in particular, the vital importance of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Every voter should read the Uluru Statement because it is far from an innocuous document. It is the manifesto of the ATSI peoples on how they would prosecute it aims through a Voice entrenched in the Constitution.</p> <p>Voters should also take the time to read what shakers like Thomas Mayo are saying how they would implement the Voice, even to the extent of reparations for 235 years of unpaid rent.</p> <p>I urge all voters to do their homework on the extremely important issue. See the articles about the Voice on www.alogstudycentre.com.au/media</p> <p>By the way, Mr Albanese is on a tiger’s back of his own making and does not how to get off.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 5Jul23</p>
<p>Canberra Times.....[Published 3Jul23]</p> <p>Voice a Farce</p> <p>The Indigenous Voice is a farce; a total waste and just superficial at a time when the country is battling high inflation and a housing crisis. Is this an attempt by Albo to distract the voters?</p> <p>Mokhles Sidden, Strathfield, NSW</p>
<p>The Canberra Times</p> <p>The Voice</p> <p>So, James Blackwell says that “False Voice ideas need to be stopped” (article, 1Jul23). How might he suggest that be done? By censorship, as now being proposed by the Albanese government? And who decides what is the ‘misinformation and outright lies’ he accuses Yes supporters of? A newly created misinformation police force?</p> <p>He sympathises with Stan Grant but ignores how Grant was continually using the ABC to harangue its viewers about the Voice and aboriginal causes.</p> <p>Blackwell rants about ‘the falsehoods, fearmongering and outright lies’ by opponents to the Voice but offers no evidence, only accusation.</p> <p>He says the Yes campaign is “playing with facts” while the No campaign is “peddling falsehoods”. Does he believe Thomas Mayo is dealing in facts? If so, he would be confirming the apprehensions he accuses No supporters of.</p> <p>Like all rusted-on supporters of the Yes case, Mr Blackwell is loud in accusing No supporters as misinformants, liars and racist but Yes advocates as angels with ‘nothing to see here’.</p> <p>What a sorry rant to read in the Canberra Times. I’m sorry Mr Blackwell but you may be a proud Wiradyuri man, but a very one-eyed, deluded one.</p> <p>M. Flint Canberra 1Jul23</p>