

Tuesday, 18 July 2017

Referendum Council report a historic milestone, momentum should not be lost on path to reform

The Australian legal profession, represented by the Law Council, is calling on the Federal Parliament to ensure momentum is not lost on the path toward constitutional reform, following the release of the Referendum Council's crucial report.

The Law Council has consistently called for constitutional reform to be pursued in line with the wishes and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, said the significance of the report's release should not be understated.

"This is a major milestone in the movement toward inclusion of Australia's First Peoples in the foundation document of our nation," Ms McLeod said.

"As the report's authors point out, this serves as a significant response to the historical exclusion of First Peoples from the original process that led to the adoption of the Australian Constitution.

"The report acknowledges the enduring legacy of colonisation and laws and policies which marginalised and excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

"The report provides a clear case for inclusion and recognition of the distinct and enduring cultures which existed for many thousands of years prior to any claim by the British in right of the Crown."

Ms McLeod noted the importance of bi-partisan leadership by the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, and the support of the parliaments of the states and territories, in advancing toward a successful referendum on this issue.

"It is critical that governments and civil society work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations, to ensure their voices continue to be heard.

"The Law Council is considering the report in full and will continue to offer its assistance in advancing the process."

Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs
P 02 6246 3715
E Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

Anil Lambert, Media
P 0416 426 722
E anil@hortonadvisory.com.au