



CONCERNED CATHOLICS CANBERRA GOULBURN MEDIA RELEASE

Time for Catholic bishops to stand up and call for YES vote

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Now more than ever Australia's Catholic bishops should be standing up and declaring support for a Yes vote in the Voice referendum.

'It's time Australia's bishops follow the spirit of the Gospel and the Church's teaching tradition on this issue instead of sniffing political moods,' the chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, Francis Sullivan AO, said today.

'In the midst of so much misleading and prejudiced criticism from No campaigners, the bishops should be showing leadership and calling on Catholics to support Yes as a positive and Christian path for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.'

Mr Sullivan said the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has so far adopted a supine posture. It has stated it will not tell Catholics how to vote in the referendum. 'Instead, we ask all Australians to seek out information on the referendum proposal, especially from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,' the bishops conference said.

But Mr Sullivan said the bishops appeared to be ignoring their own pronouncement by failing to follow the urging of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) which has advocated a Yes vote.

NATSICC has said 'just as the churches strongly supported the 1967 referendum, we hope that Catholics, along with other people of faith, will support the YES campaign'.

'We, NATSICC, feel that the referendum is too important to fail. The consequences for our people and the whole nation would be devastating.'

'The bishops' timidity is also at odds with their previous endorsement of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* which referred to the disempowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and of their hopes for a better future for their young people,' Mr Sullivan said.

'The bishops conference statement advised Catholics to 'let love guide you in making a decision that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to find justice.

'As our former chair, Emeritus Professor John Warhurst AO, has written in *Eureka Street*, 'effectively, despite these fine sentiments, the Catholic bishops appear to be wiping their hands of the referendum choice and have chosen to stand above the fray. This is a strange choice and a missed

opportunity to demonstrate that the Catholic approach to justice defines *the Voice* as a moral question.

‘Many Catholic organisations and a wide range of business, sporting, faith and community organisations’ support the YES case.

‘Catholics will receive lots of advice explicitly outlining how they should vote, but none from their own church leaders,’ Professor Warhurst wrote.

‘It is not too late for the bishops to assert their leadership and stand up and urge a YES vote for what is right and what most Indigenous leaders have appealed for: a Voice to Parliament,’ Mr Sullivan said.

Read Professor Warhurst’s article [‘In the chorus of YES why aren’t the bishops joining in?’](#)

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