

Australia says Yes: a contemporary take on the '67 Referendum

Australians seldom vote 'Yes' in referendums, but a new exhibit in the Living Democracy gallery at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (MoAD) explores why over 90 per cent of Australians voted 'Yes' in the 1967 referendum on Aboriginal rights.

Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum celebrates the 50-year anniversary of the referendum on 27 May 1967 and has been launched to celebrate National Reconciliation Week, which runs from 27 May to 3 June.

The new exhibit has been created in partnership with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and Reconciliation Australia. It explores the journey of our most successful referendum campaign, which asked Australians to consider changes to the Constitution that would allow the federal government to make laws in relation to Aboriginal people, and enable Aboriginal people to be counted in the census when determining the size of electorates.

A highlight of the exhibition is a film narrated by Indigenous actor Hunter Page-Lochard, which adds contemporary voices to the referendum story.

Ms Daryl Karp, Director of MoAD, says that *Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum* tells the story of a nation-defining decision and why it still matters today.

"The 1967 Referendum was a major milestone in the democratic journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Fifty years later, this exhibition captures the significance of the referendum and asks what this far-reaching change means today. It reflects the hopes and dreams of the time and the journey still to take place," she says.

Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum showcases some of AIATSIS' extensive collection of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, according to Mr Craig Ritchie, CEO of AIATSIS.

"This exhibition has allowed us to bring items from two of our priceless manuscript collections to the public. These collections are an invaluable resource for charting Indigenous activism and campaigns during the 1960s and it is fitting that they are publicly available for visitors to see and engage with while we celebrate the successful 'Yes' vote of the 1967 Referendum," says Mr Ritchie.

Mr Justin Mohamed, CEO of Reconciliation Australia, says that *Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum* offers an important message about the legacy of the referendum.

"The referendum's 50th anniversary reminds us how much we can achieve when Australia collectively works towards a unified goal and how much we are still yet to do towards achieving a truly reconciled Australia," says Mr Mohamed.

Yes: The Ongoing Story of the 1967 Referendum opens on Thursday 25 May at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. Entry is free after museum admission. For more information visit: www.moadoph.gov.au

Ends

For further information, please contact media@moadoph.gov.au

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Interview opportunities

- Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy
- Libby Stewart, Senior Historian and exhibition curator, Museum of Australian Democracy
- Craig Ritchie, CEO, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies