



## YMAC officially endorses “yes” vote

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Thomas Mayo presenting to YMAC’s Board and Yamatji and Regional committee members. Picture: Marg Bertling



YMAC Deputy Co-Chairperson – Yamatji Region, Deborah Oakley, Thomas Mayo, YMAC Co-Chairperson – Yamatji Region, Mr Peter Windie. Picture: Marg Bertling

The Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) has officially endorsed the “yes” vote in relation to the referendum question on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

It comes after a previous YMAC commitment to supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which called for a Voice to Parliament as one of its actions.

The resounding yes endorsement follows YMAC’s Board and Yamatji and Pilbara Regional Committee members meeting in Karratha on Ngarluma Country with Mr Thomas Mayo, a member of the Federal Government’s Referendum Working Group and Referendum Engagement Groups, to discuss details of the referendum.

Mr Mayo gave a detailed presentation covering the long history of First Nations Australians’ fight for recognition, details and reasons behind the referendum question and wording of the constitutional amendment, and principles identified by the Referendum Working Group to guide implementation, if the referendum is successful.

“It comes down to two simple questions,” Mr Mayo said. “Do we want recognition as the first peoples, and our continuing connection to our Country, and do we want a right to have a say about the decisions being made about us?”

YMAC Co-Chairperson – Yamatji Region, Mr Peter Windie, said recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution and creating a Voice to Parliament was a vitally important step to move forward.



“It will better enable us to shape our future and give First Nations peoples the means to speak on decisions that impact our lives,” he said.

“Those who say there are already Indigenous voices in Parliament are wrong – they are only there while they remain elected and there’s always a possibility, after each election, there won’t be any Indigenous representatives at all.

“And just because Tasmania elects a First Nations person to Federal Parliament, that’s not going to help with issues in the Mid West or Pilbara.

“By committing to a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, it means there will always be First Nations representation no matter what the outcome of an election might be.”

YMAC Co-Chairperson – Pilbara Region, Miss Natalie Parker, says the Voice to Parliament would be a positive move for real and practical change that could lead the way in overcoming disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

“We need to be involved in the decisions about us to ensure our concerns and ideas – and potential solutions – are heard by government,” she said.

“No one understands the issues better than us, as we are the people having the lived experience.

“The ‘one solution fits all’ approach doesn’t work, given the diversity of our mobs in all parts of Australia and that’s something we’ll be able to better get across with the Voice.”

Mr Mayo added: “We have reached a point as a people where we can have confidence in ourselves that we can deal with issues such as representation.

“In the past, structures such as ATSIC have been dismantled by government before we even had a chance to improve things. We would have sorted it eventually if we’d been given the time.

“With a Voice – and time – we can make a difference and improve things as time goes on. The important thing now is to get it in the Constitution.”

As part of its commitment to endorsing the yes vote on constitutional recognition and the Voice to Parliament, YMAC has been sharing details on how to enrol to vote in the referendum, as well as how to enrol to vote and how to update enrolment details.

The referendum will be a key agenda item at both the Annual On-Country Bush Meeting at the Yule River Meeting Place on 12 and 13 July in the Pilbara, and the Yamatji On-Country meeting in Geraldton, scheduled for 20 and 21 September.



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Mr Mayo will attend both meetings to further discuss the referendum with the broader Aboriginal community.

*All quotes to be attributed to YMAC Co-Chairperson – Yamatji Region, Mr Peter Windie, and YMAC Co-Chairperson – Pilbara Region, Miss Natalie Parker (as outlined above) and Mr Thomas Mayo where indicated.*

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#### **About Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation**

Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation (YMAC) is the Native Title Representative Body (NTRB), delivering native title and other services across the Pilbara, Mid West, Murchison and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. YMAC is run by a First Nations board of directors, representing several native title groups, each of whom have their own language, culture, traditions and protocols. YMAC services include native title claim and future act representation; heritage services; executive office, community, and economic development assistance; land administration, and natural resource management support.

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