

The First Nations Voice Referendum

Walawani: Mayor, Councillors, and council staff.

We have come here today to respectfully ask Councillors to consider three simple questions.

These questions seek your support for the First Nations Voice Referendum - expected to be put to the Australian people later this year.

We believe this referendum provides an historically unique opportunity for the three levels of government in Australia to be united in helping to change our country for the better.

The three questions we are asking Councillors to consider are based on understanding, engagement and support:

Question 1:

To support local people's understanding of the referendum question, would Council consider undertaking a series of community information sessions on the Voice Referendum?

- Ideally, these sessions should be presented by First Nations people with an understanding of the invitation that was provided to the Australian people by the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Question 2:

To support local people's engagement with the referendum question, would Council consider providing information about the Uluru Statement from the Heart on Council's website?

- Ideally, the information provided on the website would reference respected sources such as the 'Uluru Statement' web page from the Indigenous Law Centre at the University of NSW and the 'Uluru Statement: a quick guide' available from the Australian Parliamentary Library.

Question 3:

To promote the health and well-being of First Nations people, would Council consider passing a motion in support of the First Nations Voice referendum question?

This referendum represents a unique opportunity for Australian people to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and, importantly, to lay a strong foundation for the coming generations. The Uluru Statement from the Heart represents the largest consensus of First Nations peoples around a proposal for historical recognition and future consultation.

It asks Australians to walk together to build a better future by establishing a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission for the purpose of treaty making and truth-telling.

We are here today as a First Nations woman and a Second Nations man to represent the hundreds of young people and their families we see through headspace Batemans Bay – a local service promoting the health and well-being of our region’s young people. Around 1 in 5 young people we see through headspace identify as First Nations people.

We know the trauma that has been experienced and continues to be experienced by First Nations people.

- A 10-year gap in life expectancy exists between first and second nations people
- Suicide rates are twice the national average and jump to three times for those under 25 years of age.
- Over half of all young people in youth detention are First Nations but make up only 6% of the Australian population
- Child mortality rates for First Nations children are twice the rate for Second Nations children

We want to see an engaged and informed local discussion around this historic opportunity that is being presented to our community.

We want to support a local dialogue that will enable people to feel connected with the cultural history of our region stretching back over 60,000 years.

We want to create an opportunity for local people to come together in a respectful manner to explore how a Voice to the Australian Parliament will create better outcomes for current and future generations.

We want to see the Eurobodalla Shire Council lead the way by demonstrating that local communities can participate in a genuine, respectful, and deliberate democracy.

Councillors, we want to walk with you towards a better future.

We are grateful for the opportunity to raise this issue with you today and look forward to hearing the responses to our questions.

Thank you.

Dianah Riley and Paul Spooner

headspace Batemans Bay

Contact: 0434 771 510 or paul.spooner@headspacebatemansbay.org.au