

**STATEMENT BY THE FRIENDS OF THE NOEL BUTLIN ARCHIVES CENTRE  
IN SUPPORT OF THE VOICE.**



Australian National University

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Aboriginal rights rally, MUA archives, NBAC N409-124-01.

We, the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, add our collective voice to the myriad other voices supporting constitutional change in this country. We affirm the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we embrace its call for truth telling and reconciliation, and we support the call by Indigenous communities for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. We do this mindful of the Archives that the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre are pledged to protect. A national archive, including business and labour records from all the states and territories, this vast deposit holds up a mirror to history. It contains the evidence that pastoral companies dispossessed Aboriginal peoples from their lands and accumulated enormous wealth by the exploitation of an often unpaid Aboriginal workforce; it highlights systematic discrimination against First Nations peoples by laws, customs and cultural practices that effectively disenfranchised them; it demonstrates the way

that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people faced and still face disadvantage and injustice. At the same time, the archival record held by the Noel Butlin Archives Centre chronicles First Nations connection with land, place and language. The records of colonisation are also a source for reclaiming familial and cultural links. They attest to struggle and resilience. Struggles for justice and recognition in the past, including the successful referendum in 1967, were supported by a wide cross section of Australians. They suggest the way a nation can move beyond its painful and divisive past and hold up an example we might follow today.

In 1901, the Australian Constitution was founded on principles that silenced First Nations Australians and excluded them from the Commonwealth. That great wrong has left a terrible legacy, as history – and the archival record – has shown time and again. This referendum offers a chance to change the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It will enshrine a constitutionally protected Voice – a voice that will offer First Nations communities a meaningful say in the laws that affect them. The Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre believe we must heed the lessons of history. We believe now is the time for change.

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