

PUBLIC STATEMENT AND PRESS RELEASE

Senior initiated clan leader of the Yolŋu Nation of North East Arnhem Land, Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM outlines his position on Treaty and the upcoming Voice Referendum.

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Since the referendum in 1967 when balanda (non-Indigenous) voted for my people to become citizens of a country we already belong to, you have stripped our leaders of their dignity and authority, and you have made us subject to devastating laws and policies that you have forced upon us.

For decades, these laws and policies have deprived my people of their basic human rights, access to their land and waters and their God given freedom. And now you are forcing upon us a tokenistic solution to the chaos you have created using the same system that has held us hostage from the very beginning. If my people vote Yes in your upcoming referendum, it is only because we are grasping for some kind of hope, but it is a false hope.

Albanese has said many times that the “Voice” will only serve as an advisory body which ‘*may or may not*’ affect decisions, that it will have no veto power and that it will not lead to Treaty with the Crown.

So I ask, what is all of this referendum actually for? Is it to make balanda feel good? Is it to distract us from the prize that many Elders have been fighting for most of our lives, Treaty? You cannot cherry pick who you consult with and then say it is what all Indigenous people wanted. Most people in remote communities have no idea what this “Voice” is about.

The result of this referendum will only reflect what the majority non-Indigenous population of Australia think is right for us.

In my 78 years living and working in both worlds, I have witnessed the Australian Government continuously hand pick Indigenous people that behave like the Master Slave, mirroring what the Government says, while they ignore the voices of clan leaders and community members who challenge them and the system they are operating under. This is nothing less than dictatorship and the continuation of the dividing and conquering of my people.

The Yes or No approach you are forcing upon the country divides people into conflicting camps while distracting them from what the real problems are. Your proposed “Voice” cannot represent the views of all First Nations across Australia because our experiences and needs are not all the same. Centralised decision making has never worked for us and fails all of humanity. That is why we need our original clan-based leadership and decision-making processes, that we have used for tens of thousands of years, to be recognised and respected.

I question this referendum and the value of the “Voice” that it offers, so I will be voting No.

But because of this, you cannot categorize me beside people like Jacinta Price or some of the racist voices also saying No. They have their own reasons. This is so much more than just a Yes or No situation. Where is our right to choose Neither?

If you have really been following Indigenous rights and the policies affecting my people, you will see that Yes is not a step forward in the right direction. It is another step toward the assimilation of our culture and the demeaning of our sovereignty and our Law. It is also important to see that voting No won't mean a 'missed opportunity' because the “Voice” offers nothing meaningful in the first place.

Stop treating us like children and forcing inappropriate solutions upon us, that are propped up by mainstream propaganda and funded by corporations that have never cared for our self-governance, our liberty or our freedom.

We don't need a saviour. My people have their own pride, their own authority and their own dignity that comes from our Maḍayin system of Law.

If the Government is serious about listening to our voice, they should accept the invitation I have put to them for almost 20 years - To meet in a neutral space with the political leaders of our sovereign governments and begin the overdue process of real dialogue and negotiation.

Please also view Dr Gondarra's video statement here: <https://vimeo.com/865504609>

For more information on Dr Gondarra's life and legacy, you can watch the soon to be released award-winning independent documentary *Luku Ngarra: The Law of the Land*.

For more information, please visit www.lukungarrafilm.com



Transcript of Video Statement, as told by Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM.

Video Statement: <https://vimeo.com/865504609>

Colonial of the government does not satisfy us. It's not the system of government for us. It's got nothing to do with us.

And yet, you invite us to become citizen of this nation and the country and the subject of the law. And yet you ignore our law. Our rule of Law. So that we can follow your law.

We are not part of the choice. We were not part of the decision. You done it. To satisfy you, not us. As a result, we are sitting with them under that service, from what is in their law system. Laws that they put down to set our paths.

Every Prime Minister that has been elected into this government and the parties are still failing Aboriginal people, the Yolŋu people, the First Nation.

I call for Treaty. Treaty Now as Mandawuy sang, Yothu Yindi '*Treaty Now*'. And never been happen in his lifetime when he hoped to see Treaty through Yothu Yindi.

There must be an understanding that we are a sovereign nation. And that system is already there, a different format of election. You know, Yothu Yindi is a term that we use, we allocate responsibility to each other. Yothu (child clan) becomes in power, later there will be ngandi (mother's clan) will become in power. So the system is there for self-government.

It is time that we create a new platform, a new legal space for two governments to come and sit and talk. This is our way, this is just like our law. When I ask for another clan nation, '*come and let us sit and talk together*' and consider the law. And we debate that law for a solution in the Ngärra (sacred law chamber) or in Dhuni (the space of political leadership) or in Makarr-gärma (the publicly accessible space). So that all Yolŋu know what is happening. This is our way.

And this new Prime Minister is saying all this, saying all sort of things. Telling us this is what he is going to do. Telling us! this is what he is going to, and his government. And his words were a strong words by saying, '*My government will be welcome for Yolŋu voice in the Parliament*' instead of saying my government will be happy to sit and talk to the law minded political leaders, to all the Djirrikay and Dalkarra (senior law men of all clans). We didn't hear that.

Where are you leading us?

Are you leading us into freedom?

Are you leading us into self-government?

Are you leading us to become independent nation?

Are you leading us where we have our own choice?

And we live with that choice.

Are you recognise and respect and honour our leaders?

What's there for me and my people?

Where are you leading us?

I tell you, you are leading us into destruction.