

Additional comments by Labor Senators

Reference to 'race'

1.1 The question of 'race' as a 'concept' and 'term' is used widely in parliamentary language, legislation and in the construction of entities with 'race' as part of their nomenclature. The issue of 'race' is a concern to Labor.

1.2 The use of the term 'race' has the capacity to reinforce negative perceptions of others from different cultures. This matter ought to be seriously considered by us and we ought to consider ways by which the leadership of the parliament could begin to change attitudes around the use of the term race in our multicultural society.

1.3 The Australian Labor Party notes that, in the 2012 Final Report of the Expert Panel on Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution,¹ the Expert Panel proposed the removal of s. 51(26) and s. 25 of the Australian Constitution because of their reliance upon 'race' as an 18th Century concept, and the embedded racist thinking that governs their construction.

1.4 Race is used in other applications and has been the basis or cause of much discrimination in Australia as a consequence. The constitutional changes recommended by the previous Expert Panel, and the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples,² have not been proceeded with so the Australian Constitution remains racist.

Leadership and education

1.5 Leadership from the parliament is a big factor in multiculturalism. This is on an individual basis but also as an institution. The recommendations of the committee report, particularly **Recommendation 6** and **Recommendation 11**, underpin this as a matter of concern.

1.6 Labor senators support the evidence provided by witnesses in chapter four which points to the role of education in moving away from the narrow term 'race' in official parlance. This may also be necessary in broader public discourse.

1.7 The consequence of this may raise complexities but a greater good is served by removing 'race' from official parliamentary use. Parliamentarians' lead on the unacceptability of the use of race may begin to encourage the non-use in other contexts especially in the public domain where it is often used in a harmful or hurtful manner to persons of other cultures within our multicultural society.

1 Final Report of the Expert Panel on Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution, *Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution*, 15 January 2012, pp. 137–156.

2 Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, *Final Report*, June 2015, pp. xi–xvi.

1.8 Whilst Labor supports the intent of recommendations of the committee, a detailed consultation process would be required to identify the most cost effective means to practically implement these recommendations.

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