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Referendum rejection profoundly disappointing, constitutional reform must advance

The Law Council of Australia has expressed profound disappointment at the Federal Government's decision to reject the Referendum Council's recommendation for a referendum into the creation of a representative body to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations a Voice to the Australian Parliament.

The Law Council also criticised the failure by the Federal Government to identify any further process through which constitutional reforms and reconciliation with Australia's First Nations will be advanced.

Law Council President, Fiona McLeod SC, said the manner of the announcement was deeply disappointing and misrepresented the outcomes from the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Referendum Council's [Final Report](#).

"It is disappointing the government has not adopted the recommendation put forward by the Referendum Council to hold a referendum seeking to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations a Voice to Parliament," Ms McLeod said.

"The suggestion that a Voice to the Australian Parliament amounted to a 'third chamber' is not a conclusion that could reasonably be drawn from the report of the Referendum Council. Its abject rejection must be deeply confusing and hurtful to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that participated in this process, in good faith."

The Law Council last week announced its full and unqualified support for the recommendations of the Referendum Council and confirmed it remains committed to seeing their implementation.

"The package of reforms proposed by the Referendum Council are to be an important step forward in the process toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations' self-determination, a fundamental and non-derogable principle of international law," Ms McLeod said.

"As a nation, we must continue to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine the next-steps on the path to reconciliation.

"The government must keep faith with the important expression of self-determination, put forward in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and adopted by the Referendum Council," Ms McLeod said.

The Law Council will continue to push for the adoption of the Referendum Council's recommendations by the Australian Parliament and a new process to bring this matter to a referendum of the Australian people.

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