

Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

19 July 2023

Most Reverend Archbishop Julian Porteous
Catholic Archdiocesan Centre
Tower Road
Newtown 7008
julian.porteous@aohtas.org.au

Dear Archbishop Julian

The Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament

You will remember that we wrote to you in February of this year regarding the upcoming referendum saying that

we are hopeful that there will be a formative message from our Church leadership encouraging the faithful to give serious consideration to supporting the referendum proposal as a matter of justice.

Your response, above the signature of Michael McKenna, was that such a formative message is not justified as “we must be clear on what is being proposed” before any message is appropriate.

We now have more clarity but find ourselves in the situation where the “No” proponents are conducting an energetic campaign largely structured around generating fear and spreading misinformation. Letters to the editor are claiming that a “Yes” vote will result in apartheid and the maxim “If you don’t know, vote ‘No’” is gaining momentum without the education to help people “know”.

A case in point is a recent news report in *The Guardian* (and in *CathNews*) that Professor Greg Craven was quite deliberately misquoted as having concerns about the Voice (as he initially expressed before some changes were made), when he is now an outspoken and strong advocate. Professor Craven reports that he contacted “No” advocates asking that he not be quoted in the official AEC document for the “No” case, but his request was ignored. See the link [here](#).

Concerned Catholics Tasmania sees this referendum on the Voice as a moral decision and clear matter of justice. We feel that it would be a sad and embarrassing day for our country if this referendum were to be lost because of misunderstanding spread by those who are claiming lack of clarity and detail, when they well know that such matters will be dealt with in the appropriate time, and after debate in our democratic spaces.

We now write to seek your leadership of the Archdiocese in this matter. A number of your episcopal colleagues have spoken out in favour of the Voice, as have senior leaders of other churches. It would be disappointing if the voice of the Church in Tasmania is not to be heard, within our parishes and also publicly in the media. We should not expect everyone to agree; some will say that this is no business of the Church. However, many will welcome a clear and truthful statement that helps them make their own informed decisions.

CCT is keen to know your position and look forward to your timely response and reasoning for same. As always in non-confidential correspondence, we will make this letter and your response available to CCT members.

We trust that your time with the youth of our Church will be enriching and encouraging for you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Chen', written in a cursive style.

Susan Chen

Chair Concerned Catholics Tasmania