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TIME TO UNITE BEHIND A VOICE FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

In May 2017, 250 First Nations leaders met at Uluru and called for a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament.

After more than a decade of debate about what form Constitutional Recognition should take, representatives of First Nations people described what it looked like to

them.

They told Australia that while the 1967 referendum meant they were counted, the next referendum should ensure they were heard.

The *Statement from the Heart* is one of the most significant documents produced in the history of Reconciliation and, from day one, Labor has been determined to accord the Statement proper respect and thorough consideration.

If elected in 2019, a Shorten Labor Government will move quickly to agree a process together with First Nations people to make the Voice a reality – including a pathway to a referendum.

Labor supports a Voice. We support enshrining it in the Constitution. This is our first priority for Constitutional change.

We thank the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People for their work. Labor senators and members have sought agreement where possible, despite the Government's persistent rejection of the Voice.

Twelve months ago when Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull dismissed the proposal for a Voice out of hand, Labor promised to continue to work with First Nations people to make it a reality.

Today's report is part of that process. But we acknowledge there is more work to be done.

We recognise that winning a referendum will require leadership. It will require courage. It will require encouraging all Australians to make the unfinished business

of reconciliation their own.

If we work together in a genuine process of partnership, we can unite the Australian people and make a Voice for First Nations people a reality.

We urge the Government to drop its needless opposition to this proposal, ditch the misleading scare campaign about 'third chambers' and work with Labor to get this done.

We are prepared to work with the Government, but we will not wait for them.

It is time to work together to meet the challenge laid down in the Statement from the Heart.

Labor will work in partnership with First Nations and the broader Australian community to achieve that.

And we will seek to bring that same spirit of partnership to Closing the Gap and to establishing a Makarrata Commission for agreement-making and truth-telling.

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