

PEARLS AND IRRITATIONS

John Menadue's Public Policy Journal

What will it take for Peter Dutton to say 'YES' to the 'Voice'?

By Bishop Philip Huggins

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Obviously if the Hon. Peter Dutton were to change his mind and offer bipartisan support for the "Voice" Referendum, its prospects would be immensely improved.

The history of successful referendums tells us this. The current conflicted public discourse tells us that if both leaders were from now on, seen together, warmly and thoughtfully supporting the referendum around the country, this would create a wonderful and unifying momentum for 'yes'!

So what would it take?

The Hon. Peter Dutton would be well aware of these sentiments.

He would also be aware, after the sadness last week regarding Stan Grant, that the current public discourse is releasing more racism towards our First Nation people, including those who are in the media.

It might be that thinking ahead to an Australia in which these current trends persist and spread actually causes the Federal Leader of the Opposition to change his mind.

Not because all his reservations about the "Voice" are resolved but because he comes to see that the direction in which the nation is heading actually now needs united political leadership over this matter.

He may not want to be and feel responsible if, over this generational plea of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, our Australia actually becomes more divided, more hurtful and unhappier, racism more vivid.

Nothing stays the same. Circumstances change. What might have seemed reasonable at one moment in time can come to look unreasonable, even wrong, as events unfold.

In our personal lives, we may all have moments in which we have changed our minds, responding to a fuller understanding of truth and to changes in circumstances.

This is adult life. Mine anyway. Life is complex. We feel better about ourselves, more at peace, when we make such changes.

When he started out as Leader of the Opposition after the last Election, this matter of the referendum may not have seemed as significant as it has become. Holding various reservations and differentiating himself from the Government may have seemed quite reasonable grounds on which to oppose a 'yes' vote.

That is no longer the case.

.... Last week, Pearls and Irritations, carried a piece: 'On National and International Unity: Living Together with a more Sympathetic Imagination. With many others, my past week has involved, as foreshadowed in that piece'

'Prayer for Unity', around the biblical text 'Do good; seek justice' [Isaiah 1.17]

Those prayers and meditations prompt me to earnestly hope that the Hon. Peter Dutton will change his mind.

It might well be, THE most significant thing he ever does!