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MEDIA RELEASE

YES - A VERY LIBERAL THING TO DO

The Southern Women's Action Network (SWAN) held its second Voice Public Forum in Rosebud last Tuesday, featuring former Liberal ACT Chief Minister, Kate Carnell AO. The main theme of her speech was that it is “a very Liberal thing to do, to vote YES on 14th October”.

The well attended event also included Peter Aldenhoven, CEO of Willum Warrain Aboriginal Gathering Place and Mornington Peninsula legal expert Bryce Paterson.

Ms Carnell commenced the event with an outline of the question being asked at the referendum, declaring “fundamentally there is nothing to worry about”. She emphasised that “as a Liberal who believes in good policy, not wasting taxpayer money, and promoting personal responsibility, to vote YES is the sensible thing to do”.

Peter Aldenhoven told the audience that at least 80% of First Nations people support the Voice. He stressed that it is needed because if we look back on our past Government policies, including assimilation, the stolen generations and the NT intervention, they have done enduring harm and it needs to stop. The Voice offers new “hope, change, opportunity and possibility” he said.

In one of many poignant moments at the public meeting, Mr Aldenhoven quoted Indigenous footballer Michael Long: “This is an offer of love - we hope mainstream Australians can embrace it - we don't want rage”.

The audience appreciated lawyer Bryce Patterson providing a legal context for understanding the referendum, noting that “it is but 95 extra words in a near 12,000-word document. It would not lead to a raft of litigation, and it would have no power to make laws. The Parliament would make the laws, as it must under the Constitution”.

All speakers and the MC emphasised what a simple, non-threatening change is requested. Each made it clear that on 15 October, the day after the referendum, a YES result will mean absolutely no change to the lifestyle of 97% of the population. For the 3% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population it will mean a significant change and an opportunity to have a say in what impacts their lives.

A robust Q&A chaired by Professor Melissa Castan, Director of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Monash University, concluded the event.

QUOTES

Erica Churchill SWAN Facilitator

“It was a very successful and informative evening. There were many positive comments afterwards thanking SWAN for hosting an excellent discussion, with participants feeling more able to discuss the referendum with family and friends.”

“It was especially powerful to hear a Liberal woman, a local Indigenous leader and a legal expert outline clearly how the Voice would work and how important issues like education, health and housing for Aboriginal people would be better delivered, ensuring Government funds would be much more likely to have a lasting impact”.

It has been disturbing to hear so much misinformation still being spread. SWAN has worked hard to make sure accurate information is being provided to the people of the Mornington Peninsula”.

Diane McDonald SWAN Committee member

“I was very moved by Peter Aldenhoven's response to the question about if the referendum failed. He said it would be ‘a bitter pill to swallow’ if mainstream Australians voted against government listening to the voices of Aboriginal people. I think everyone at the public meeting went away thinking deeply about the issue”.

Maureen Donnelly, SWAN member

“What impressed me about the public forum is knowing that there are many Liberals who believe strongly in the Voice and will be voting YES. They believe it is the right thing to do”.

Erica Churchill
Facilitator
Southern Women's Action Network

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SWAN acknowledges the Bunurong / Boon Wurrung people, the Traditional Custodians of these lands and waters where we meet. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present. In line with our commitment to social justice, SWAN unequivocally supports First Nations People in their campaigns for sovereignty, self-determination, treaties and truth-telling.

Website: <https://swanwomen.org.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/spwswan/>

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