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## The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

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### **First Australian Catholics encourage listening and respect in final days of Voice Referendum**

Australia is home to over 135,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics, comprising the youngest and fastest growing demographic of the Church. They are represented by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops on issues affecting First Australians.

In May of this year NATSICC acknowledged that the Indigenous Voice represents a significant stride towards empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in addressing the deep-seated inequities prevalent in numerous social, economic and health indicators.

The council formed a partnership with Caritas Australia and Catholic Social Services Australia to provide education and resources that support listening and informed engagement with the referendum through the [‘One Journey, Together’ website](#). So far 18,000 people have visited the resources.

“These resources were designed to promote conversation over misinformation, something that’s still sorely needed in the coming week” said NATSICC’s Victorian Councillor Sherry Balcombe “We’re so close to such an important vote with 8% of the Australian voting public – close to 1.5m of us – still feeling like they don’t know what to do. Misinformation is also rife, and respectful, constructive dialogue is being abandoned in some forums. From social media to conversations in the community, we can only urge people to listen, and communicate with others with kindness and respect and approach all they read, see, and hear with an open heart and inquisitive mind.”

Whilst acknowledging that the proposal is not perfect and there are some with concerns and differing views, NATSICC, like most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people supports a Voice to Parliament and reiterates that it is a step forward on the journey of reconciliation.

**ENDS**