

OPPOSITION LEADER PETER DUTTON INVITED TO MEET ON COUNTRY

9 February 2023

In Canberra today a delegation of Indigenous people from remote, regional and urban Australia has invited Opposition Leader Peter Dutton to visit their places to work with them on achieving bipartisan approach on constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians through Voice.

“We came to Canberra seeking a multipartisan approach but have been unable to secure time with Mr Dutton, so we urge him now to come to us,” Chair of Empowered Communities, Ian Trust said.

The Empowered Communities representatives have met this week with a diverse range of politicians from all sides who have opened their doors to hear from our communities about the importance of a new and enduring partnership that will enable dialogue between local communities and governments.

“We remain hopeful that Mr Dutton will hear us. There appears to be a willingness to consider taking a bipartisan approach on constitutional recognition of our people, I hope he is genuine. We want a productive partnership,” said Fiona Jose, the Cape York representative.

In the letter urging Mr Dutton to engage the Empowered Communities the delegation said:

“The 2023 referendum is of utmost important to us, our lives and futures, as it is to the future of the Australian nation. We would like to extend an invitation to you to come and speak with us on country in our regions.

“We can tell you from experience, the current system is broken. It is difficult for those on the ground to get their voices heard in the current top-down, one-size fits all approach. It is Indigenous families and communities on the frontline across our regions that must drive change and action to implement local solutions to local problems, with the support of our government partners. Together we can increasingly attack entrenched disadvantage. It is in our regions and communities where real change must occur.

“Some of our work provides important learnings demonstrating why constitutional recognition through Voice is the change we need.

“As a country, we’ve learnt a lot to inform the Voice model to be set out in legislation, after a successful referendum, which will ensure it is better from the outset than past efforts that sought to give Indigenous people a say.”

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Empowered communities regions are North East Arnhem Land, Cape York, Inner Sydney, Goulburn Murray, East and West Kimberley, Central Coasts NSW, Far West Coast- SA, and Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Lands. These regions have been working in a pragmatic partnership with the federal government and corporate collaborators, with bipartisan support, since 2015.