

Media release

Drive for justice and self-determination must continue despite referendum result

Date of release 15 October 2023

The efforts to achieve fairness, truth and better futures for First Nations peoples will continue despite last night's referendum result, according to the CEO of Australia's peak Indigenous business organisation, Supply Nation.

Supply Nation's CEO, Kate Russell said the result of the referendum, while profoundly disappointing, was not unexpected.

"There is no way to sugar coat this. Last night's No vote was devastating to the vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this country, however, we were under no illusion of how difficult the task would be," she said.

Ms Russell said the referendum would not halt the pursuit of justice, self-determination and equality of opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Last night was the rejection of a particular model of reconciliation and closing the gap, but it won't silence the whispering in the heart of Australians for change," she said.

Ms Russell said First Nations people now need to re-group and develop a positive alternative agenda to achieve their aims.

"Last night's No vote won't grow Indigenous economic opportunities, it won't create jobs, make us safer, increase education and it definitely won't promote greater understanding amongst the broader community," Ms Russell said.

"I thank the millions of Australians who stood with us and voted Yes. Last night's result reinforces that we need to build our own futures," she said.

"By growing the First Nations economy and securing a thriving Indigenous business sector, we secure our survival as distinct, self-determining peoples."

Ms Russell paid tribute to the many First Nations leaders who put their hearts and souls into campaigning for the Voice.

"People like The Hon Linda Burney MP, Thomas Mayo, Ken Wyatt AM, Professor Tom Calma AO, Professor Megan Davis, Pat Anderson AO, Marcia Langton AO, Noel Pearson, Rachel Perkins, Dean Parkin, Tony McAvoy SC and many others worked tirelessly to advance the cause of our people. It's important they know they retain our gratitude and respect," Ms Russell said.

"We will take the time we need to reflect and heal, and then, it's time to get back to work, because last night's vote maintains the status quo and that's not where any of us want to be," she said.

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