

MEDIA RELEASE

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30 YEARS AGO TODAY TERRITORIANS WERE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN REFERENDUMS – BUT.....

**Barbara McCarthy Committee Chair
Sue Bradley Committee Co-Chair**

This week marks two important milestones in the political history of the Northern Territory. One is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum on constitutional change for Aboriginal Australians. However, no Territorian had the right to vote on 27 May 1967.

The second is that 30 Years ago today, Australians living in the States voted YES to allow voters in Territories to also vote in constitutional referendums.

The vote was carried by 77% with a YES result in all States.

BUT

Even today, Territorians are not counted the same as voters living in the States when it comes to a referendum to change the Australian Constitution.

“All Territorians remain second class citizens under Australia’s constitution.” Committee Co-Chair Sue Bradley said on today’s anniversary.

To pass an amendment to the Australian constitution a majority of voters in a majority of the States must vote YES as well as a majority of all the voters in Australia.

Because Territorians are not resident in a State, the rules state that our votes are only valid in that second majority. Therefore, even if a majority of Australians vote YES, if only three of the existing six States vote YES, the proposed amendment fails.

Committee Chair and Territory MLA Barbara McCarthy said “This is an important week for Aboriginal people in the Territory looking back at 1967, but because the Territory is not a State, we are not included in that crucial first part of the rules for constitutional change.”

“It is a reminder that in the one place in Australia with significant Aboriginal representation in our local Parliament and a large Aboriginal population, we still have a long way to go to get the systems right to ensure full participation in our democracy, not just for Aboriginal people, but for all Territory residents.”

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