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MDAS calls on community to have their say

The distribution of clear information is critical to the referendum discussion.

With the release of the proposed amendment to the Constitution now finalised, Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) Chief Executive, Ms. Darlene Thomas, says the Organisation will be encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Mallee to learn about the Voice and to vote when the opportunity arises.

Ms. Thomas says that MDAS supports the premise of self-determination and as such, the Organisation will not be campaigning for either the 'Yes' or 'No' vote but rather, encouraging its community to exercise their right to have their say through the Referendum process.

"MDAS is not in the position of telling people what they should and shouldn't believe. We accept that the Voice is a complex issue for many people and that an approach that may be satisfactory for some, will not be for others," Ms. Thomas said.

"As an Organisation, we would say that up until now, detail about the Voice has been thin on the ground, which leaves it open to distortion. Going forward, information needs to be fact-checked and shared in plain language across a range of platforms. Not all people are on Facebook or read newspapers and we don't all have an academic understanding of constitutional reform and political representation.

"Our community simply wants to know what the Voice is and how it will positively benefit them. It is our view that this is yet to be clearly articulated.

"It is also a mistake to assume that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders understand and support the need for the Voice. We're not homogeneous, we come with different experiences and values and that leads to a diversity of ideas and levels of understanding. Rather than debating the various merits of the 'yes' and 'no' campaigns, or demonising those with an opposing view, the Government should develop transparent information that speaks directly to the expected outcomes of a Voice to Parliament, in real terms.

"The way I see it, the greatest obstacle to the referendum is confusion."

Ms. Thomas said that self-determination is only truly exercised when it is driven by informed consent.

"We want to see the detail but more than that, we want it provided to our community in a way they can understand."

ENDS