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COMMENT – BILL HOFFMAN

Applause for PM over indigenous push

THE Prime Minister should be applauded for his Australia Day support of constitutional recognition of this country's first peoples.

Mr Abbott has promised to deliver draft wording of the proposed changes by September, but has not set a date for a referendum, saying: "If it is to be the great unifying moment that it should be, it is important to do it right … We want it to happen as quickly as possible, but a rushed job might be a botched job."

It is now essential for all sides of politics at a national and state level to back the proposal and take the argument for constitutional recognition into the community.

Australia is home to the oldest continuing cultures in the world despite the brutal impacts of white settlement and the continued marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples.

> **The Fraser Coast's federal and state politicians have a responsibility ...**

They remain unmentioned in a Constitution whose sections 25 and 51 (xxvi) retain the power to ban races and enact discriminatory laws.

An expert panel set up in 2011 considered 3500 submissions and addressed 300 public meetings before making recommendations that set the path all Australians are now on.

On Australia Day Mr Abbott said that recognition would complete the Constitution rather than change it. The Fraser Coast's federal and state politicians have a responsibility to carry the case for recognition to their communities.