

*Australian voters reject  
referendum to recognize  
Indigenous peoples in  
Constitution*

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Canberra, October 16 (RHC)-- In Australia, voters have rejected an historic referendum that would have recognized Indigenous peoples in the Constitution and established an Indigenous "Voice to Parliament" committee.

In a joint statement, groups representing Australia's Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders called for a "Week of Silence." They wrote, "That people who have only been on this continent for 235 years would refuse to recognize those whose home this land has been for 60,000 and more years, is beyond reason."

Dean Parkin, who led the campaign in support of the referendum, told reporters: "I want to speak very directly to those Australians who voted 'no' with hardness in your hearts. Please understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have never wanted to take anything from you. We have never and will never mean you no harm. All we have wanted was to join with you our Indigenous story, our Indigenous culture, and not to take away or diminish what it is that you have, but to add to it, to strengthen it, to enrich it."

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