

People don't enjoy thinking about things just because they're important.

The battle waged at our tables



DYLAN CAPORN
American poet Joy Harjo wrote that "the world begins at a kitchen table". "It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women," she wrote in her poem, Perhaps the World Ends Here.

Once the site of all meals and conversation in a home, our kitchen tables have had their roles downgraded. Families flock to the couch and even beds to consume food now. Homework has moved from notepads to iPads, which don't need the wooden stability of a table top. The kitchen table has become a relic, a shelf for dumping and storing general clutter.

But it is at kitchen tables that campaigners for a Voice want to convince Australians to vote Yes. The same kitchen tables which are groaning under the weight of unpaid bills.

Unfortunately, those conversations take time and interest, both of which average West Australians are lacking at the moment. In recent decades, campaigns have needed to shift to reach voters where people are, especially with record high levels of political apathy.

On this challenging question of national identity, the Prime Minister's quest for a Yes may struggle to get past the front door in most homes, let alone to the kitchen table.

The Voice is right for Australia — a signal we as a country are willing to listen, learn and be proud of 60,000 years of culture, history and wisdom.

Harjo closes her poem with the title — "perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table". Yes, campaigners should be working to ensure the Voice does not end there either.

Space to talk needed

Lessons for Voice campaigners from same-sex marriage vote



KATE EMERY
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

At the risk of sounding like an English teacher, compare and contrast the following:
It's OK to say no. "It's OK to vote No."
This isn't the right time. "I think it is time for the Prime Minister to consider whether he just wants to stick to his original timeline . . . or whether he actually, genuinely wants to work with all members across the Parliament."

I'm in favour of this but I'm not in favour of it this way. "Today is not a no from the Liberal Party, it is a day of many yeses. Yes to constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians, yes to local and regional voices, yes to better outcomes for Indigenous Australians, yes to Australians having their say. But it's a no for dividing Australians."

The bold lines are from the same-sex marriage debate, at least as recalled by Tiernan Brady, a man credited with having won marriage equality on two continents.

The quotes come from Liberal politicians campaigning against the Voice.

Are we tired of talking about the Voice yet? We might be.

Federal Member for Perth Patrick Gorman wasn't necessarily wrong when he said the Voice was a bigger deal for WA than GST but people don't enjoy thinking about things just because they're important.

If that was true, nobody would ever ignore a MyGov notification again (I'll get to it when I get to it).

So let's talk about marriage equality instead.

That 2017 vote didn't lead to legalised bestiality, as then Liberal senator Cory Bernardi suggested. Nor was it the Titanic-sinking tip of the iceberg implied by Marriage Alliance, a group since rebranded as Binary Australia to oppose trans rights, just in case anyone thinks the anti-trans lobby are only coming for trans people.

Comparing the same-sex marriage campaign to the Voice is like comparing Barbie and Oppenheimer: both Hollywood movies out next week but with as many differences as similarities. There won't be atomic bombs in Barbie and Oppenheimer will presumably have a dearth of roller-blading Ryan Goslings. More's the pity. Voting for the Voice requires understanding what an Indigenous advisory group to Parliament will look like and how it will work. That's tricky because it's Parliament's job to figure out the "how it will work bit" — if voters want it.

Nobody voting on marriage equality needed to be told how marriage works because

everyone already understood the mechanics involved in legally chaining yourself to another person in the hope you might a) get some lovely gifts and b) stay together long enough for one of you to die.

But there are similarities, which means there are lessons. Mr Brady, who helped mastermind Australia and Ireland's marriage equality campaigns, recalled during a recent Zoom hook-up with Committee for Perth, watching a news report on the Scottish independence referendum and seeing a young woman holding a homemade sign. "It said 'I'm

voting Yes, ask me why," he said. "I remember looking at it — this was two years out from the Irish referendum — and going 'that's space, that's an invitation to talk'."

"If we hadn't created the space for those questions to be answered we knew the people who were nearly over the line would vote No because they couldn't have their questions answered."

If people are going to support the Voice they need to ask questions, not get called racist if they want to know why it isn't just feel-good politics, or why First Nations Aussies aren't already sufficiently represented via Parliament.

In the Irish marriage campaign the first "No" ad didn't mention marriage. "It talked about gendered school uniforms, which of course had nothing to do with the marriage vote at all but it was expanding the topics to try and create more doubt," Mr Brady said.

That might be why some are so keen to blur the lines between the Voice and WA's Aboriginal heritage laws or suggest the Voice will kill Australia Day. The No campaign on the Voice has been borrowing, inadvertently or otherwise, from the marriage equality playbook. Will they be more successful this time? Without getting too hyperbolic, time — and votes — will tell if we're looking at a Barbie scenario (smiles all around, maybe a quick dance number) or an Oppenheimer outcome (boom).



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Danger for Labor in straying from course set by McGowan

One of Mark McGowan's biggest strengths as premier was the unwavering discipline he brought to economic management.

It's an approach that continues to pay dividends for both Labor and the State. The latest is the move by Moody's to restore WA's credit rating to AAA on Tuesday.

As Colin Barnett's legacy has grown since leaving office, so too will the impact of decisions made by McGowan reveal themselves more fully over time. The budgeting and spending restraint enacted by the former premier was a key reason cited by Moody's for the upgrade, restoring AAA status



lost in 2014 at a time when Barnett's government was demonstrating neither.

That allows the State to borrow money at discounted interest rates — about a quarter of a percentage point lower than the Eastern States, according to freshly minted Treasurer Rita Saffioti.

The upshot is that amid gathering clouds over the national economy as a result of rocketing interest rates and slowing consumer spending, WA is well positioned to

weather a financial storm.

The Moody's upgrade — delivered one day after Premier Roger Cook and Saffioti announced free off-peak electricity for struggling WA households — comes at a useful time for the new-look Labor Government as it attempts to shift focus back on to the economy.

Consternation over new Aboriginal heritage laws has threatened to derail the opening stanza of the Cook premiership.

That was not helped by Federal Labor MP Patrick Gorman's declaration on Monday — at a Kings Park Yes campaign event skipped by the Premier — that an Indigenous

Voice to Parliament was "bigger than the GST for WA". SEC Newgate's latest Mood of the Nation report, released the same day, held a sharply contradicting view.

Of 36 priorities tracked by the research, the clear standout was "reducing cost increases for household bills and other essential expenses — rated by 75 per cent of more than 2200 respondents as 'extremely important'."

"Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage and promoting reconciliation" came in 33rd.

Support for the Voice itself had fallen to 43 per cent, down from 59 per cent just over a year ago, with WA and Queensland singled out for the

lowest levels of backing.

About 23 per cent of respondents remained undecided (34 per cent were opposed) meaning the referendum is far from lost, but it is yet another sign that the timing of the national vote in the midst of rapid economic unravelling is working against the Yes campaign.

The signs are clearly being interpreted loud and clear by WA Labor: there is danger in straying too far from the course set by McGowan.

That perhaps explains both why Cook was absent from Monday's Yes event and Saffioti's refusal on Tuesday to back Patrick Gorman's GST comments.