

# Divisive race politics must end: Marcia Langton

[SARAH ISON](#) 10:33PM December 5, 2022



[Northern Territory Senator Jacinta Price. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Martin Ollman](#)

One of the architects of the Indigenous voice to parliament, Marcia Langton, has accused the Nationals of injecting “misinformation and vitriol” into the debate over the voice and taken a swipe at Country Liberal Party senator Jacinta Price for not being representative of the Celtic Warlpiri people.

The University of Melbourne professor said it would be “terribly unfortunate” if the issue sank into a “nasty, eugenicist, 19th-century style of debate” and said the notion of “race” didn’t exist at all.

“I have to say as a member of the faculty of medicine at the University of Melbourne (race) does not exist, we are one species; there are no races,” she told the ABC.

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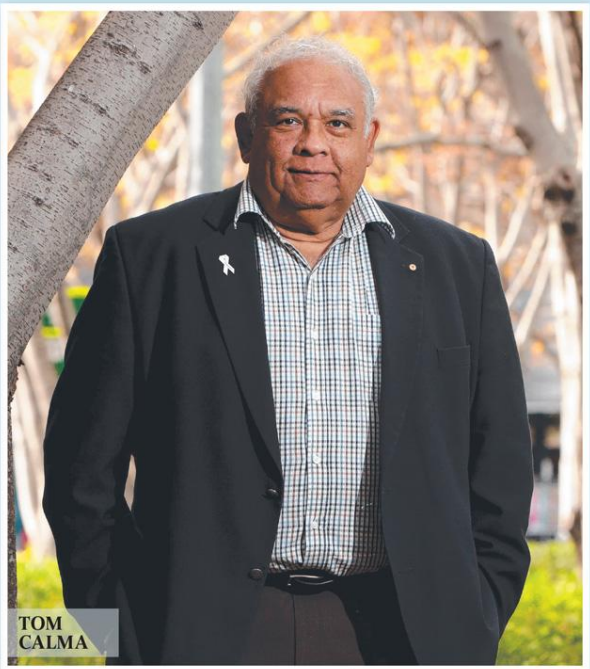
Professor Langton said she had “mixed feelings” about whether the Nationals’ opposition to the voice, which they revealed publicly last week, would significantly damage the campaign to change the Constitution.

“It’s unfortunate the Nationals have injected misinformation and vitriol into the debate so early on,” she said. “We’ve been through this many times over – these kinds of campaigns.”

Professor Langton compared the Nationals’ position on the voice to the “Adam Goodes saga”, which ended in the AFL eventually apologising to the former Swans star for failing to adequately call out the racism he faced. She said she was “terribly disappointed” Senator Price, a Celtic Warlpiri woman, had kicked off this next “nasty” debate.

“The Warlpiri people that I’ve spoken to – many of the leaders – believe that the voice is a very necessary part of the Australian political system, and they would welcome it very much because they want their people to be represented,” Professor Langton said.

“You’d think that with all the terrible things that have happened in the Warlpiri world (such as) the coronial inquiry of the death of ... Kumanjayi Walker ... we have to take these matters seriously. This is too important to play nasty electoral politics about.”



**COMPOSITION**

- There would be local and regional voices across Australia. Each region would decide how best to draw its voice members (ie election, nomination/expressions of interest/selection, drawing on structures based in traditional law and custom, or a combination) and how many voice members there would be.

- The local and regional voices would provide advice on systemic national issues to a national voice and communicate with state/territory representative bodies (where they exist) and state and territory governments.
- National voice members would be drawn from the local and regional voices within each state and territory.

- The national voice would have 24 members, five from remote communities.
- There would be two members from each state and territory, as well as the Torres Strait Islands. There would also be a third member for remote representation for NSW, NT, Queensland, WA and SA and one member for mainland Torres Strait Islander people.

- Gender balance would be structurally guaranteed.
- There would an option for two additional members jointly appointed by the national voice and the government.



**ITS FUNCTION**

- The national voice would be able to table formal advice in parliament.
- A parliamentary committee would consider tabled advice and engagement with the national voice, and enable parliamentarians to hear directly from the national voice.

Professor Langton said the “divisive politics” about race needed to end.

“It would be terribly unfortunate for all Australians if the debate sinks into a nasty, eugenicist, 19th century style of debate about the superior race versus the inferior race, and I have to say I’m terribly disappointed ... a Celtic Warlpiri person – has kicked this off,” Professor Langton said

Senator Price accused Professor Langton of “pitting Aboriginal people against Aboriginal people”.

“If she understood cultural protocol she would know she hasn’t the authority to speak on behalf of Warlpiri,” the CLP senator said. “I certainly don’t follow up with Yiman or Bidjara descendants in an attempt to speak on behalf of them.

“Ms Langton is the only person making links to eugenics which demonstrates her line of thinking, certainly not mine.

“It’s a desperate and cheap attempt at drawing links to Nazis.

“It will be interesting seeing the variety of ways Ms Langton and (Indigenous leader Noel) Pearson will utilise their vast knowledge of the English language to smear ‘No’ campaign supporters as racist in the lead-up to the referendum.”

Mr Pearson has strongly criticised Senator Price for being caught in a “tragic redneck celebrity vortex” and compared her to One Nation senator Pauline Hanson.



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