

Mundine pitch to ALP's rank and file

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If Warren Mundine is elected president of the ALP he will be the first indigenous Australian to head a national party.

Up against party luminaries such as Barry Jones and Susan Ryan, Mr Mundine is making a pitch to the "forgotten people" of the ALP - its members.

"How many times have you been to a branch meeting, moved an important motion and never heard back from an MP or minister? When was the last time you felt you were actually listened to by the party leadership?" he asks in his candidate's statement.

The party's presidency is the only position elected by rank-and-file members. Voting will close at the end of this month and will be declared on November 14. Eleven candidates have nominated, six of them politicians or former politicians.

The uncle of the champion boxer, Anthony "The Man" Mundine, Mr Mundine describes his side of the family as "the non-fighting side".

One of 11 children and the father of seven, Mr Mundine came from a working-class background. His father, Rory, was paid only a third of what non-Aboriginal workers received.

Rory Mundine joined the Australian Workers Union and it made sure he was paid at the same rate as everyone else. It convinced him of the value of the labour movement and the ALP - views he passed on to his son.

Three years after winning wage parity with whites, his father realised his dream of owning his own house - a small three-bedroom place in Sydney's western suburbs. But with so many children, Warren was forced to share a bed with his two brothers. At age 13 he contracted hepatitis and his mother decided to give him his own bed. "It wasn't a great way to get what I wanted," he joked.

He is adamant that indigenous Australians must be encouraged within the Labor Party.

Now Deputy Mayor of the NSW town of Dubbo, Mr Mundine pledged to unite the party, to fight to keep its relationship with the trade union movement strong, to recruit new members, to fight branch stacking and to ensure Labor advocates humanitarian policies.