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## Shorten vows to be "forward leaning" on Indigenous recognition

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ABC Radio –AM  
28 May 2016

ELIZABETH JACKSON: Indigenous affairs will briefly take centre stage during the election campaign today, when the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and the Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, come together for reconciliation events in Melbourne this afternoon.

Last night, in a speech to open Reconciliation Week, Mr Shorten promised that, if he wins the election, he'll do more to advance Indigenous recognition in the constitution.

Our political reporter, Tom Iggulden, has more now from Canberra.

TOM IGGULDEN: Reconciliation Week's celebrated each year, on the anniversary of the 1967 referendum which gave the Commonwealth power to make laws for Indigenous people and to have them counted in the census.

This year's celebrations opened with an event in Melbourne last night, featuring Indigenous choirs and a performance by singer-songwriter Archie Roach:

ARCHIE ROACH (sings): No, it's not too late for peace and love / And as the old one up above...

TOM IGGULDEN: There was strong representation at the event from all sides of politics.

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge spoke for the Government.

ALAN TUDGE: After 25 years, we have come to the realisation that there is no practical reconciliation-versus-symbolic reconciliation: that you actually need both streams to occur. And I think all of us have now agreed that that is exactly on the path that we are on.

TOM IGGULDEN: Labor was represented by its leader, Bill Shorten.

BILL SHORTEN: This ancient continent is, was and always will be Aboriginal land.

(Audience applauds)

TOM IGGULDEN: Several senior Labor politicians were also there, including its Indigenous representatives.

BILL SHORTEN: And I'm also pleased to be here with my colleagues, Shane Newman and Warren Snowdon and Nova Peris; and Labor's newest - yeah, she deserves a round of applause.

(Audience applauds)

**TOM IGGULDEN:** Senator Peris unexpectedly quit federal politics during the week, breaking into tears during a news conference to explain her decision.

The ALP's expected to announce a replacement for her as soon as this weekend.

Saturday AM's heard suggestions one of her staffers, Ursula Raymond, is the front-runner.

Former ABC newsreader and Northern Territory Labor Minister Malarndirri McCarthy has is nominated and is being backed by the party's left.

But in his speech last night, Mr Shorten was concentrating on the bigger picture when it comes to Indigenous politics.

**BILL SHORTEN:** Without a future framework agreed with Aboriginal people, all the arguments from 1788 will continue to plague us in one form or another.

**TOM IGGULDEN:** He said he'd been encouraged by his visits to remote Aboriginal communities in the top end during the last couple of days.

**BILL SHORTEN:** But I'm also here in the middle of an election campaign, because I just want to tell the truth. I want to admit that we have not yet shifted the systemic problems of division and distrust.

**TOM IGGULDEN:** And he promised to revive stalled efforts to recognise Indigenous people in the constitution.

**BILL SHORTEN:** I promise that a future Labor government will advance recognition in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A Labor government, if elected, will be forward-leaning, conscious that changing our constitution is about agreeing on a head of power for the Parliament to use to make laws.

**ELIZABETH JACKSON:** Tom Iggulden with that report.