

## Federal government hasn't 'got the guts' for truth-telling about Australia's history, Dodson claims

By Peter de Kruijff  
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West Australian Labor Senator and Yawuru man Patrick Dodson says the federal government has not "got the guts" to face the reality of Australia's settlement narrative after a motion to establish a parliamentary inquiry into the Makarrata aspects of the Uluru Statement from the Heart was voted down.

Mr Dodson tried on Tuesday to set up a joint parliamentary committee that would examine treaty making and truth-telling aspects of the statement only for it to fail in a tied vote when One Nation sided with the Coalition in opposition to the motion.



*Labor Senator Patrick Dodson.*

The inquiry would have looked at the progress of treaties and truth-telling at a state level as well as the legal issues related to similar processes at a national level.

Liberal Senator Jonathon Duniam told parliament the Morrison government supported local truth-telling.

“The matters referred to are matters best dealt with by the state and territory governments and therefore we don’t support the establishment of a select committee,” he said.

Mr Dodson said the stance was a cop-out, a sham and a lie.

“They ought to owe up to that and let the Australian people know they haven’t got the guts to really face the truth of our how our settlement narrative really should be told,” he said.

“The committee being proposed would begin the long journey to collect data and identify issues and challenges that may arise at the national level with truth-telling and agreement-making – issues and challenges that presently we all speculate and even hold fears about.

“It would review what has been happening internationally and identify what legal issues and challenges there may be at a national level if we go down the Makarrata pathway.”

Makaratta is a Yolungu word – describing the process of peacemaking – that was used in the Uluru Statement from the Heart which broadly called for the voice of First Nations people to be enshrined in the Australian constitution.

The attempt at establishing an inquiry came out of a frustration in the speed of the current government process for exploring how a First Nations voices could be heard in Parliament and through the constitution.

Mr Dodson said the notion of moving too fast on the issue was an excuse and laziness.

“It’s a lack of dedication to actually responding to what First Nations peoples and many other Australians are saying to us as leaders in this Parliament,” he said.

“It’s a bit ludicrous to say it’s too fast; it’s four years since the Uluru Statement from the Heart, it’s nearly 30 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

“If the states can do this – and Victoria is a good example where they’ve got a treaty commission going and they’ve just established a truth and reconciliation commission with powers of a royal commission ... [then] the federal government can do that.”