

12 December, 2014

**EnergyAustralia Managing Director, Catherine Tanna - Recognise Gala
Fundraising Dinner speech, Carriageworks, Sydney**

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

May I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and to pay my respects to the elders, past and present.

I want you to think about the power of deadlines.

If you're a politician, that may be the next election. For a sports person, it's the next major competition. For a journalist, it's the next day's edition.

And in business, we can't live without them.

A deadline brings focus. It conveys urgency and meaning

It makes the task at hand serious and real and compelling.

And because of that, the task gets done.

We know what our task is and we know why it needs to be done. But we need to make sure the broader community knows why change is needed.

Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is about fairness, respect and doing the right thing.

Through my life, I have seen how recognition and empowerment can shape people, contributing to who we are and what we become.

It's why recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures is such a vital step forward.

It's sometimes said that we are a young country. The fact is we are a country with a past that goes back tens of thousands of years.

Indigenous cultures contribute to a heritage we all need to be proud of. And it's why all Australians should have the chance to change our Constitution.

Yet, in the absence of a referendum deadline, there is a danger of this important campaign and its message drifting.

To move our country forward, we need to look at our past. And we need to do that now.

The tireless work that's been going on to build awareness of why our constitution needs to change is inspiring and it continues. And there are plenty more voices to spread this message even further.

When I look across this room, I see leaders – people who can make a difference, who have the connections and the ability to shape our society and what Australia stands for.

Just looking at our EnergyAustralia tables, I see Richard Lancaster who heads up my parent company CLP based in Hong Kong but began his career in New South Wales in

the public service. And Graham Bradley who is my board chairman, amongst his many important roles across the Australian business community including being a member of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Change.

We lead companies that employ thousands and we can reach large customer groups and I believe we have a responsibility to get involved in this campaign.

At EnergyAustralia, we have more than 2.6 million customers and we will be starting the conversation with our customers about why our constitution needs to change.

For many of you in this room, your contribution and support has been longer and I commend you for that.

So, consider once more the impact of a date when the country will vote on Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Think about the clarity, focus and energy that a deadline would drive.

For the things that matter, there is often no easy or safe time to do them. But there is the right time.

Give us a deadline. We will be ready.