

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nation needs more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of parliament

2 March 2016

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, ANTaR, today welcomed this week's announcement of two Aboriginal leaders' intention to run for election to Federal Parliament.

Yesterday, Wiradjuri woman and Deputy NSW Labor Leader Linda Burney announced her intention to run for the Sydney seat of Barton. Today, Yawuru man Professor Pat Dodson was announced as the Opposition Leader's candidate to fill the casual senate vacancy left by the outgoing Labor Senator for WA Joe Bullock.

ANTaR National Director, Andrew Meehan said that it was absolutely fantastic to see that two Aboriginal leaders may soon be adding their voice and experience to our nation's parliament.

"Both Ms Burney and Professor Dodson are extraordinary leaders and would make a huge contribution to decisions made in Canberra," he said.

"Both have been leaders of the reconciliation movement and have fought for First People's rights on a range of critical issues for decades."

Mr Meehan also welcomed the announcement of Nigena Woman Tammy Solonec as Labor candidate for Swan in WA earlier this year.

"Having more Aboriginal people in Federal Parliament means First People's voices are right in the centre of where policy gets debated and developed. More representation is absolutely critical and a great thing for the nation," Mr Meehan said.

He emphasised that Aboriginal representation is not a party political issue but rather something that all parties should be challenging themselves on to ensure greater representation and voice.

The election of Ken Wyatt for the Liberal Party as the first Aboriginal member of the House of Representatives in 2010 was an important breakthrough, as was Nova Peris for Labor as the first Aboriginal woman elected to Federal Parliament.

"For too long parties just don't seem to have thought about the importance of bringing on more Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander candidates, so it's good to see that starting to change, but there's a long way to go," he said.

(ENDS)