Minister for Statehood, Malarndirri McCarthy today called for the Northern Territory to have appropriate representation on a new expert panel to lead a national discussion on a referendum recognising indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

Ms McCarthy welcomed a national discussion and debate on recognising Indigenous people in the Australian Constitution.

“The Northern Territory Government supports a referendum on Indigenous recognition in the Australian Constitution and I will be pushing for full and proper Territory representation on any expert panel set up to pursue this matter,” said Ms McCarthy.

“We need to build on the 1967 Referendum where 92-percent of Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the Constitution in favour of Indigenous people.

“I also call on the Australian Government to support our push to become the seventh State in the Federation with the same Constitutional equality as every other Australian because as it stands now, Territorians only have half a vote because we are not a State!

“The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous people and yet Territorians will only have half their vote counted in any referendum.

“For any referendum to succeed it is extremely important that every single person of voting age is informed and included in this discussion so they can make an informed decision.

“Constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples has been discussed for a number of decades and Australia is now ready for a mature, intelligent and rational debate on this very important issue.

“Australia is also ready for the Northern Territory to become the seventh State.

“Next year marks the centenary of the Northern Territory when South Australian surrendered administration of the Territory back to the Commonwealth.

“The Territory Government has been consulting all year with Territorians on becoming the seventh State.”