



**DEBATE: Should West Papua be independent?  
Melbourne University Debating Society v Monash Association of Debaters**

**SAMPARI FORUM FOR WEST PAPUA  
ACU ART GALLERY, 26 Brunswick St, Fitzroy (Melbourne)**

**Thursday 8 December 2016: 6-8pm**

**TRANSCRIPT: REBEKAH DE KEIJZER. Third speaker, Affirmative team**

Audience, what we think our opposition has failed to understand today is that the world as we know it is changing around us. Treaties can be revoked and rewritten. Incidences of human rights abuses can be recorded and put on social media and circulated throughout the world within seconds. Governments and nations can be built. What doesn't change however is the right that every single individual has to its self-determination and their own governance. And that is the right that we on the affirmative team are so proud to stand behind in this debate today.

What I see this debate come down to is two main things. The first one being the feasibility and the potential success that West Papua would have as an independent nation. And the second is, what is the best pathway for the West Papuan people. Is it independence, or is it any other pathway that we can use as an option.

On the idea of the feasibility of West Papua as an independent nation. We would like to remind our opposition that there is already a West Papuan government. In their struggle for independence they have forged their own government. They have viable structures that can be put in place if the Indonesians withdraw and the West Papuans gained their independence. We think that this is a well functioning acknowledged government that is already an oiled machine and is ready to go.

Secondly, on the idea of how successful this country would be as an independent state, we want to refer to the wealth in natural resources that West Papua does have. We think because of this wealth and because West Papuans would finally be allowed their own sovereignty and be allowed to choose what they want to do with their own resources, they will be able to bring in revenue and build their own infrastructure and forge their own nation and identity, which we think is so important and is at the very heart of this very struggle and debate.

Also in the independence struggle we have seen wonderful things come out of the West Papua people. We see a strong national identity. We see a community that sticks together. We think that all this just evidences the fact that West Papua would be able to function as its own state and would be a very successful one at that. So that's why we'd like to put forward that their own state would be viable and their own state could be economically successful and sustainable on its own without Indonesia's influence.

The second idea that I notice came up a lot in this debate is what is the best approach for the West Papuans, what's going to bring in the best result. We are advocating the approach of independence, and despite what the opposition like to claim, we don't really think there is an alternative approach for the West Papuan people. We think that at the heart of the struggle, and of every single West Papua, they want to have the right to their own self-determination, the right to decide what kind of governance they would like and what kind of rule that would be.

We'd like to refer you to the case of East Timor where we saw a huge public outcry in Australia because of human rights violations that were occurring that led to an Australian-led UN intervention. We think that is a clear example of how it would be feasible for West Papuans to gain their independence, through independent parties recognizing what's going on and pushing for positive change towards self-sovereignty.

On the idea of how Indonesia would react to this. We think that there actually is a lot of support for West Papuans all around the world. We see groups like the International Lawyers for West Papua. We see many people here today who do have this cause in their heart. We think a lot of people sympathize with this cause. And we think that this sympathy will actually lead Indonesia to understand that because we are living in a very globalised world, and the reputation that you have as a nation matters when it comes to global trade. We think this is going to damage Indonesia's reputation, and they are going to have an incentive to want to give them their own governance. Because social media nowadays is having more and more of an impact and we do live in a more globalised world. We think that's why Indonesia, which is already a fractitious country, would be looking towards independence as a viable solution for many of their problems.

The idea of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, which has recognized West Papua, would also be an important driving force for independence, and would propel West Papuans to have their own nation-state and sovereignty. We think this movement will grow through independent observers understanding what's going on, seeing the struggle and the passion that West Papuans have for their own self-determinacy, and we think that is why a peaceful path towards independence has always been possible, and why we are always happy to propose on the affirmative side.

The idea that there is an alternative pathway to independence is not an idea that we support at all. We think that without sovereignty there will always be oppression of human rights, there will always be oppression of culture. West Papuan's resources will always be exploited for another nation's benefit. We think independence is the only way to counteract these harms and move towards a better future. We don't think Joko Widodo's presidency is actually good for West Papuans at all, despite the opposition's claims, and we think the end goal is always independence. This is what the grass-roots is striving for, which the opposition likes to refer to, and this is the goal in the heart of every single West Papuan.

So audience I put forward to you today that the UN and other global powers are no longer able to ignore the oppression of West Papuan people, and that independence is the only answer to

counter these decades of struggle and decades of harm perpetrated against West Papuans. We see that the West Papuan people, who have the most to lose in this conflict, have never given up in their struggle and have always strived for independence. Through their struggle they have formed a strong national identity and strengthened in their resolve as a community. They want full freedom and nothing less. Ladies and gentlemen, in the context of this debate, independence for West Papua is and can be the only answer. Thank you.