

Referendum Night

We were there from the beginning
of the ABC's referendum coverage, watching
Antony Green, grim-faced on our 65-inch smart TV,
predict early a win for the NO campaign. But even so
I hoped it was a kind of faltering, stuttering no
like the no, no, no of the dim-witted Jim of Dibley,
that was really a yes. But no!

In truth it was a clear and clean kind of no –
as hearty as a lout's whistle, as boisterous as
a big brass band but as brutal and precise as a Pilbara
explosion blasting sacred sites into oblivion. It was
a who-do-you-bloody-well-think-you-are kind of no.
I don't have a voice, so why should you? Your tales
of woe don't wash with me. I'm sick of hearing you
whinge. Just shut up and get on with it.

That was the kind of no it was. A no to possibility.
A no to justice. A denial of the violent human history
of our sunburnt, wide brown land.
Ugly lies had won the day.

Having no words, we switched off the screen,
plunging the room into silent darkness – not yet proud
of being part of the 40% who voted YES.

Roslyn McFarland