

ReconciliationWA

Learn about the Voice to Parliament

In late 2023, Australians will have the opportunity to vote in a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our Constitution.

A Voice to Parliament will give Aboriginal Australians the right to be heard when the Government makes laws and policies designed for their communities. When governments listen to good advice, they make good decisions and all Australians benefit.

The journey to Constitutional Recognition

The Uluru Statement From The Heart follows decades of Aboriginal advocacy towards constitutional recognition and treaty, with Aboriginal people advocating for their rights and wellbeing since the 1800's.

In July of 2015, Indigenous Leaders met with then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Opposition Leader Bill Shorten at Kirribilli House and issued the Kirribilli Statement.

In response, the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader established the Referendum Council. Its purpose was to advise on progress toward a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

The Voice to Parliament

Every community knows what works best for them.

The first reform proposed by the Uluru Statement is the constitutional enshrinement of a Voice to Parliament. The Voice will be a representative advisory body that provides advice on laws made specifically for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It is about making sure policies and laws deliver practical results on the ground and better value for taxpayer investment. It is a common reform adopted around the world to improve democratic participation for Indigenous populations.



Jacqueline McGowan-Jones
Arrente
Warumungu woman

“Aboriginal medical services are one of those things where we've shown what works best for our people on the ground.”

Efforts to 'close the gap' for Aboriginal people have been limited by the lack of listening to Aboriginal people - effectively a Voice to Parliament.

When governments listen to good advice, they make good decisions.

By ensuring policies are guided and informed by Aboriginal peoples themselves, there is greater opportunity for long term, effective change.

The Uluru Statement From The Heart

Between 2016 and 2017, twelve Aboriginal led dialogues engaged approximately 1200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia to explore structural reform and constitutional change. This was the most proportionally significant consultation of First Nations peoples Australia has ever seen. Each regional dialogue included a representative sample of First Nations peoples drawn from local Traditional Owners, Aboriginal community-based organisations and Aboriginal leaders.

The dialogues chose representatives to attend the First Nations Constitutional Convention at Uluru in 2017. By overwhelming consensus, more than 250 delegates adopted the Uluru Statement From the Heart, which includes the call for a Voice to Parliament.



[Read the
Uluru Statement From The Heart.](#)

What will the Voice to Parliament look like?

The government has outlined what it will do following a successful referendum, and how it will go about setting up the Voice. It has worked with the Referendum Working Group to finalise a set of Design Principles that provide the outline of what the voice will look like.

- The Voice will give independent advice to the Parliament and Government.**
- The Voice will be chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people based on the wishes of local communities.**
- The Voice will be representative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, gender balanced and include youth.**
- The Voice will be accountable and transparent.**
- The Voice will be empowering, community-led, inclusive, respectful and culturally informed.**
- The Voice will work alongside existing organisations and traditional structures.**
- The Voice will not have a program delivery function.**
- The Voice will not have a veto power.**



Meaningful symbolism, paired with practical change

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been living on their lands across Australia for more than 65,000 years. This is the oldest continuous culture on earth. Symbolically, the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal peoples would formally unite all Australians with the richness of Aboriginal culture and heritage.

The Voice is a practical way of making sure the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people is more than just symbolism, and it is what First Nation Australians are calling for through the Uluru Statement From the Heart.

A constitutionally enshrined Voice

We, as Australians, get to choose the rules we live by.

The Australian Constitution is the set of rules by which Australia is governed. It is up to the Australian people to decide if the Constitution should change, and the only way to change the Constitution is by holding a referendum.

Since the Constitution was first drafted, we've decided as a nation 8 times to change it for the better.

Giving the Voice longevity to create the sustainable, long-term outcomes we all want.

Historically, Aboriginal advisory bodies have been cut back or shut down by changes in government.

For a Voice to be successful it needs stability to create impact across generations, and for its existence to be safe from abrupt decisions from the government of the day.

Having a constitutionally enshrined Voice not only means it will be protected, but it motivates Parliament to refine the laws which govern it over time to ensure it remains impactful, sustainable and effective.

Voting in a referendum.

Just like a federal election, all Australian citizens aged 18 and over must vote, and you need to be enrolled with the Australian Electoral Commission.

To vote in a referendum, Australians are asked a question and must write their answer. For the referendum to pass, a majority of voters need to vote 'yes' nationally, plus a majority of voters in at least 4 of the 6 states. This is known as a double majority.

Emma Garlett

Nyungar-
Niyiyaparli-Yamatji woman

“It's a chance to allow every Australian to think about what they value, and what they see as important, and whether they see a future that involves Aboriginal people in decision-making in this country.”



Common questions about the Voice

Do Aboriginal people support the Voice?

While there is not one single view among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the majority support the Voice.

The Voice was born from significant First Nation consultations across Australia, and polling confirms overwhelming First Nation support.

How will the Voice be effective?

The Voice's power comes from its capacity to provide well-informed advice through those chosen by the Aboriginal communities they represent, *before* laws and decisions are made. While governments wouldn't have to accept this advice, the decision would be transparent, and governments would be held to greater account if they ignore credible advice without credible reasons.

How is the Voice different to having First Nation politicians in office?

There is no nationally coordinated representative body which provides government with the views and experience of the Aboriginal people who are affected by their decisions. And while there are more Aboriginal people in office than ever, they speak for their constituents and represent the political party under which they are elected.

Is it true First Nations peoples would have a right to veto legislation through a third chamber in Parliament?

No. The Voice will be an advisory body, with no power to veto legislation or govern people.

Why is the Voice a good decision for our economy?

Governments have been inconsistent and have failed to close the gap, despite significant spend, with the absence of a Voice. Aboriginal communities will be able to work closely with governments to better direct funding where it is needed, and have greater impact.

How will the Voice help other calls for self-determination like Treaty & Truth?

Each proposal in the Uluru Statement (Voice, Treaty, and Truth) is as important as the other, and they are currently being advanced by Aboriginal peoples with local, state and federal governments. A Voice will support treaty making across the states and territories, while also achieving positive outcomes in education, health and housing, without waiting what could be decades for a treaty settlement.

Find answers to more questions at: recwa.org.au/voice-to-parliament-faqs

Misinformation in the Voice campaign

If in doubt - find out!

As with any political issue, you may have heard misinformation about the Voice. While some people have been misinformed themselves, it's clear others are intentionally creating confusion and fear to discourage Australians from seeking further information.

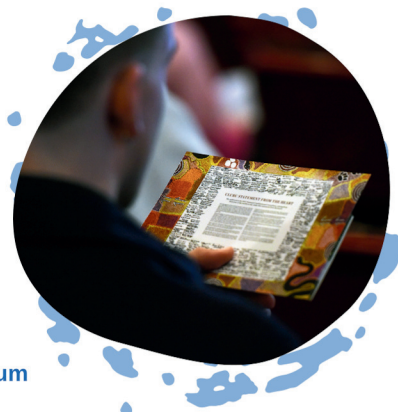
We encourage you to learn about the Voice from a variety of sources, to listen to the views of many Aboriginal people, and to use fact-checking services like RMIT ABC Fact Check, AAP Fact Check, AFP Fact Check, and the AEC Disinformation Register which addresses referendum inaccuracies.

Find out more

A referendum is an important process, and doesn't come around often.

You can learn more about the Voice to Parliament at:

- ulurustatement.org
- voice.gov.au
- recwa.org.au
- reconciliation.org.au
- www.sbs.com.au/voicereferendum



Nolan Hunter
Bardi man

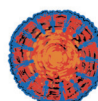
“History played a part in how current day Australia looks in terms of the relationship with its First Nations Indigenous peoples. We can't change history, but we can change the future of this country.”

Taking care of one another

This is a difficult time for many people, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Continue to reach out to friends, family and colleagues who may be feeling burdened during this time.

13YARN (13 92 76) is a confidential yarning and crisis line for Aboriginal people and run by Aboriginal people.

Learn more at 13yarn.org.au.



ReconciliationWA

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