

YES FAQs

WHAT IS A REFERENDUM?

A referendum is when voters are asked to write Yes or No in answer to a question. The only way to make changes to Australia's Constitution is via a referendum.

WHO CAN VOTE IN A REFERENDUM?

It's compulsory by law for all eligible Australian citizens aged 18 and older to enrol and vote in referendums.

HOW DO I VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM?

Referendums are like elections. Make sure you are [enrolled to vote](#). On polling day, you can go to a polling place set up at schools and other public buildings around the country and cast your vote on a ballot paper.

HOW IS A REFERENDUM DECIDED?

For a referendum to be successful, it needs a double majority. This means a majority of votes in at least four states as well as a majority across the whole of Australia.

WHAT IS THE 2023 REFERENDUM FOR?

Australians are being asked to vote in a referendum on this question – Should we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution, with a Voice to Parliament?

WHAT IS THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE?

A Voice to Parliament will be a permanent body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to give independent advice to the Australian Parliament on laws and policies that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A constitutionally enshrined Voice will ensure that the expertise and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must always be considered by the Federal Parliament when making decisions about the lives, communities and affairs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

WHERE DOES THE VOICE PROPOSAL COME FROM?

The Voice was proposed in the [Uluru Statement](#) from the Heart. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is the culmination of over a decade of work and extensive First Nations consultation which arrived at a consensus about what constitutional recognition should look like.

Twelve deliberative dialogues were conducted involving a total of 1,200 First Nations people drawn from local traditional owners, First Nations community-based organisations and

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. These regional dialogues then selected their own representatives to attend the First Nations Constitutional Convention at Uluru in 2017, where First Nations forged a historic consensus on what constitution recognition should look like, adopting the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The Statement is an invitation from First Nations people to all Australians. One of its key features is to ask Australians to support meaningful constitutional recognition by providing a First Nations Voice.

WHAT SHAPE WOULD A FIRST NATIONS VOICE TAKE?

The referendum will ask Australians if they agree that First Nations people should have a seat at the table when decisions are being made about their lives.

There are two key steps in this process. First, we vote for a representative body. Then we decide on the model.

Everyone will vote on the principle of whether we should have a representative body. Once agreed, the government has expressed an intention to lead a thorough consultation process with First Nations communities to develop a truly representative body. We must demand this and hold them accountable.

The government has agreed to the First Nations Referendum Working Group's principles, including that representatives will be elected by First Nations people and will be regionally representative, including remote communities.

WILL THE VOICE HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON FIRST NATIONS LIVES?

The Voice to Parliament provides an opportunity to progress the rights of First Nations people in Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long called for self-determination and to be listened to about decisions that impact First Nations communities. Decades of evidence spanning healthcare and health responses, approaches to education, justice reinvestment and the preservation and celebration of culture shows that we can make better laws and policies by listening to what First Nations people have to say about things that impact their lives.

A Voice will mean the Government will have better quality information about First Nations communities and issues, delivered directly from communities themselves. Information from communities will result in better quality laws and policies, better-targeted investment and ultimately better outcomes for First Nations people across many sectors.

DO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE SUPPORT THE VOICE?

Overwhelmingly, yes. Independent research undertaken in 2023 shows that at least 80% of First Nations people support the Voice.

WHY IS THE VOICE NEEDED WHEN THERE ARE ALREADY FIRST NATIONS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT?

First Nations Members of Parliament are elected to represent their electorates, and usually as members of a political party. They do not primarily represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There is currently no nationally coordinated representative body to provide the Government and Parliament with the views and experiences of First Nations communities affected by decisions made on their behalf.

WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION? WHY CAN'T IT BE AN ORDINARY ACT OF PARLIAMENT?

Each of the five previous committees and advisory bodies which have been set up by parliamentary processes for this purpose has been abolished by successive governments cancelling programs, policies and investments with the stroke of a pen. This chopping and changing according to election cycles has contributed to the ongoing disadvantage experienced by many First Nations people.

If the Voice was enshrined in the Constitution, it could not be abolished without significant public scrutiny (in another referendum), giving the government of the day a strong incentive to work with First Nations people and ensure their advice and input is heard.

WILL THE VOICE LEAD TO MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE?

The Voice will create an avenue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice to Parliament about laws and policies, ultimately leading to meaningful structural change. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know and understand the best way to deliver real and practical change in First Nations communities.

The Voice would make a positive difference in addressing real issues in the community, including improving outcomes for education, employment, housing and health. It will hold politicians accountable for how existing funding is allocated and spent – making sure it's actually going to its intended purpose and getting the best outcomes for the very people it's meant to benefit.

WOULD THE VOICE CREATE DIVISION AND DIVIDE PEOPLE ON THE BASIS OF RACE?

The Voice would help create a fairer, more unified Australia, and help address historic and systemic disadvantage faced by First Nations people since colonisation. Laws and policies work best when the people affected by them have a say in how they work.

Writing Yes won't change everything but it's a step in the right direction to win the bigger changes we've been calling for.

If the overwhelming majority of people write Yes, then we can create a wave of transformative policy changes - like treaties, land rights and equity - because of the momentum and the political mandate of voting together.