

Who came up with the idea of a Voice to Parliament?

The Voice to Parliament was one of the key requests of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The Uluru Statement was agreed in 2017 by over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who were elected by the 1300 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people who participated in the Uluru Dialogues, from communities right across the country. These leaders came together to draft the historic Uluru Statement from the Heart, inviting all Australians to come together to create a better future.

One of the key steps identified was the need for a Voice to Parliament: a body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who would give advice on matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.

Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support the Voice?

Over 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support practical Reconciliation through the Voice.

This is consistent with the outcomes of the Uluru Convention that drafted the historic Uluru Statement from the Heart. It is inviting all Australians to come together and create a better future, and identify that constitutional recognition through a practical and simple Voice is needed.

Voice to Parliament Q&A

All your questions answered



Will it give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people special rights?

No, this is about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our Constitution with a Voice to Parliament, not a voice in Parliament.

When the constitution was drafted it deliberately excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a moment in history that we can recognise their 65 000 years of continuous culture in our 122-year-old constitution.

The Constitutional Expert Group comprising of nine experts advised that recognition through a simple, practical voice will not give

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples special rights. It will operate like other reference groups that Government listens to, which is a normal function of Government. We all know that big businesses and the mining lobby are listened to. Well, this is an opportunity for all Australians to come together and build a stronger, united country by including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples.

What is a referendum and why do we need one?

The constitution is Australia's founding document: it's a pretty big deal. It's like a rule book for Government, not an operating manual. For example, the constitution specifies that the Government can make laws about "Defence" - it doesn't specify whether we have to have an army, a navy or an air force. That's up to the Government.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been asking governments for a long time to be a part of the process that determines policies and outcomes on matters that directly affect them. This time

they are asking the Australian people to give them a Voice through constitutional recognition.

If a majority of Australians in a majority of states vote YES at the referendum, it will enshrine recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the right to provide advice on matters that affect them and their communities.

Parliament will be responsible for setting up the Voice and how representatives are chosen.

If you're an Australian citizen, you get a say. Make sure you're enrolled to vote if you aren't already!

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How will this change the Australian Constitution?

If the referendum is successful, a new section will be added into the Australian Constitution. This new section, is to be called "Chapter IX Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples" and it will make it a constitutional requirement for there to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, which has the power to make representations to the Parliament and Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

It also states that the composition, functions, powers and procedures are an issue for the Parliament to decide.

What will the referendum question be?

When you vote, you will be asked only the following question:

"A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Do you approve this proposed alteration?"

Unlike a regular election where you number boxes, for the referendum you vote by writing either **YES** or no.

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What is the Voice to Parliament?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want simple, practical recognition that means they can have a say on issues and policies that impact their lives: a Voice to Parliament.

A Voice to Parliament will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can advise Government about the specific issues they face and what works best in their communities. It is about making sure policies and laws deliver real results on the ground.

It will take the form of an advisory body made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who will be elected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These representatives will provide advice to the parliament on how new laws would impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

What happens once the constitution has been amended? How does the Voice get established?

Following a successful referendum, the Government will then have the job of drafting the legislation to make the Voice a reality. This will need to be voted through Parliament just like any other bill.

How will the Voice make a real and practical difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Too often in Australian history Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had decisions made for them, and they have been denied the basic right to have a say on issues affecting their communities. This has meant a massive amount of expertise and knowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have has been ignored.

We are still living with this reality today. The 2022 Closing the Gap report shows that efforts to close the lifetime expectancy gap within a generation are not on track. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy is still nearly a decade shorter than the non-Indigenous population.

Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are receiving the support required to be developmentally on track when they commence school than was the case a few years ago.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want simple, practical recognition that means they can provide advice on issues that affect their lives like health, education, and jobs. This reflects a simple reality that all of us know: when we listen to people about decisions that affect them, we get better results.