

Plain Language Fact Sheet The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice

Australians come from many places. They have different backgrounds, beliefs, and speak many languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were the first people to live in Australia. They have lived here for over 65,000 years.

Australia's Constitution is an important paper that describes the rules and laws of Australia. Our Constitution doesn't recognise the rights, history, and relationship First Peoples have with Australia.

This year, we can change the Constitution by voting in a Referendum. This way, Australians will have a chance to:

- recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' rights, history, and relationship with this land
- make sure they can have a say about laws and rules that affect all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

What is the Uluru Statement from the Heart?

The Uluru Statement was made in May 2017 by over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In it, they ask for better future for everyone and for a Voice to Parliament.

What is the Australian and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament?

It is a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to talk to the government about laws and policies that affect their communities. The Voice to Parliament would create a special Advisory Group of First Peoples. This group would be allowed to make suggestions and share their thoughts. The Advisory Group would talk to the government about laws that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Their ideas and voices will be heard.

What is a Referendum?

A Referendum asks a question or questions to people who can vote. If you can vote, you can only answer "Yes" or "No" to the question or questions. This is the only way to change Australia's Constitution.

Who can vote in a Referendum?

To vote, you must be:

- an Australian citizen
- 18 years or older
- registered to vote

If you are registered to vote you must vote in a Referendum.

How do I vote in the Voice Referendum?

You go to a polling place and vote on a ballot paper. A polling place is a place that has been chosen by the government for people to go to vote. The government will also choose a date for people to vote.

When will the Australian and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum be held?

It will be held near the end of 2023. We do not know the exact date yet.

How is the Referendum decided?

The law is changed if more than half of the people who vote agree to change the Constitution. This means more than half of the voters:

- across all of Australia
- in at least four states

must vote “Yes” for the Referendum to pass.

What question will the Voice Referendum ask?

The question will ask:

“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?”

This means “Should we change the Constitution by creating an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament? Yes or No?”

Who created this information sheet?

This fact sheet was made by many organisations working together. These organisations include Life Without Barriers, Reconciliation Australia, SNAICC – National Voice for our children, the Yes Alliance and Polaron Language Services. They joined together to provide easy-to-understand information about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

Where can I get more information?

Here are some websites with more information:

- [Life Without Barriers](#)
- [Polaron Language Service](#)
- [The National Indigenous Australians Agency](#)
- [Reconciliation Australia](#)
- [SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children](#)
- [Yes 23](#)
- [First Peoples Disability Network](#)
- [Have Your Say](#)