

FACT SHEET

The Voice to Parliament



The Voice – What are we talking about?

The Voice will be an independent advisory body made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. How these representatives are chosen will be decided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Voice will make representations to the Australian Parliament and Executive Government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Voice is one of three things asked for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. These were;

- The Voice
- Treaty
- Truth Telling

Why Is the Government Trying to Change the Constitution?

For more than 50 000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have lived on the lands of Australia and practiced our cultures and languages.

After colonisation, a number of British colonies were established, who had their own parliaments. In the late 1800s, a series of meetings took place, called conventions, which proposed uniting the parliaments as a federation. It was at these meetings that the Australian Constitution was drafted.

The Australian Constitution established the Commonwealth Parliament and its powers amongst other things. It can only be changed through a referendum if the majority of voters in the majority of States and Territories want the change (known as a 'double majority').

Changing the document will mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will have a platform to advise the Parliament and the Executive Government. By putting the Voice in the Constitution, future Australian governments and parliaments cannot change it, without a further referendum.

Who Will Represent the Voice?

Members of the Voice will be selected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, not appointed by the Government.

Members of the Voice will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and will be chosen from each of the states, territories and the Torres Strait Islands. This will include choosing people from remote locations.

The Voice will have balanced gender representation and will include youth representation.

Members will serve on the Voice for a fixed period of time, to make sure there are regular opportunities for communities to decide if they are happy with the people representing them. Members of the Voice will be expected to connect with – and reflect the wishes of – their communities.

So, What Does the Vote Achieve?

The referendum will be a vote that decides whether the Voice exists, not what it will look like. That process will begin after the vote if it is successful.

For example – It is like we are voting on the construction of a bridge. We are deciding whether we need a bridge, and then afterwards, the government goes through processes to determine how many lanes there will be, what it is made of and what it looks like.

After the referendum, there will be a process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, the Parliament, and the broader public to decide on the design of the Voice.

[The Voice Design Principles - Uluru Statement from the Heart](#)

The Voice Timeline

30 MARCH

Bill Introduced to Parliament

Referendum bill with proposed change to the constitution introduced to parliament.

After proposing the change, the matter is referred to a committee for examination – sitting on the committee are members who are Labor, Liberal, Independents and the Greens. It is the committee's job to accept and read submissions from organisations across the country and to participate in five hearings. Hearings held in Canberra, Orange, Cairns, and Perth.

APRIL - MAY

6-week Review Process

The Committee has six weeks to review submissions, attend hearings and pull all the information together to write a report that they present to Parliament.

15 MAY

Report Due to Parliament

Once the report has been submitted, there will be an opportunity for other parties to 'respond' with a second report.

JUNE

Debating of the Bill in Parliament

The Parliament will have had time to review the original report, and any responding reports, before voting about a referendum. For the Bill to pass, both houses of Parliament need to be in favour and vote it in.

Once the Bill is passed, the government must hold the referendum between 2-6 months after it is agreed to.

This means that it would need to go through parliament by the sitting fortnight at the end of July for an October referendum.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER

Referendum to be Held

There is no set date for the vote to be held, if the Bill passes, but it would occur later in the year. In order to vote, people need to be enrolled before and cannot enroll on the day. Voting in a referendum is compulsory for all registered voters, just like Federal, State and local elections.

After the voting is closed for the day, the results will be clear and announced sooner than a typical election.

The Voice Referendum 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 of this proposed alteration?

If a majority of Australians vote in favour of the Voice, the Constitution would be amended as follows:

- There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice;
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, including its composition, functions powers and procedures.

More information

For more information about the Voice, including NSWALC's principles in relation to the Voice, please visit [our website](https://www.alc.org.au).