

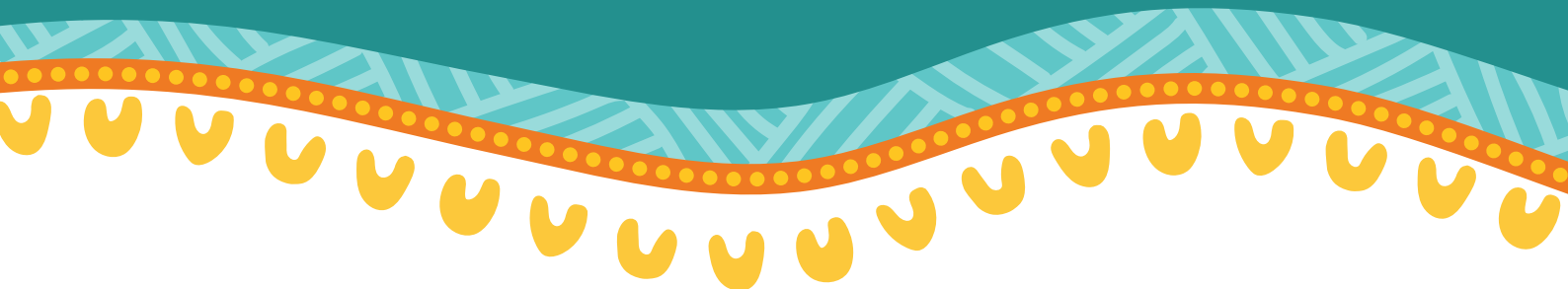
THE VOICE TO PARLIAMENT



New South Wales
Aboriginal Land Council

REFERENDUM

FAQs



Why do we need a Voice?

When we listen to people and include people in decisions about the issues that affect them, we get better results.

A Voice will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities a say in decisions that affect their lives. For example, when Parliament or the Government want to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in areas like health and education, they'd ask the Voice to provide advice come up with the best solutions that will actually work and make a real, practical difference.

The Australian Parliament and Government can choose to listen to that advice, or not - and ultimately make the final decision.

How will it work?

The Voice will be a committee made up of everyday Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the country, with a diverse range of backgrounds, ages, and ideas. It is proposed that members would be chosen from each of the states, territories and the Torres Strait Islands. The Voice will have balanced gender representation at the national level.

Will the Voice have a positive impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives and will it lead to meaningful change?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know and understand the best way to deliver real and practical change in their communities. The Voice will provide an avenue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice to the Federal Parliament about laws and policies.

A Voice will mean the Australian Government will have better information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and issues, delivered directly from communities themselves. Information from communities will result in better laws and policies, better targeted investment, and ultimately better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across many sectors.

Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support the Voice?

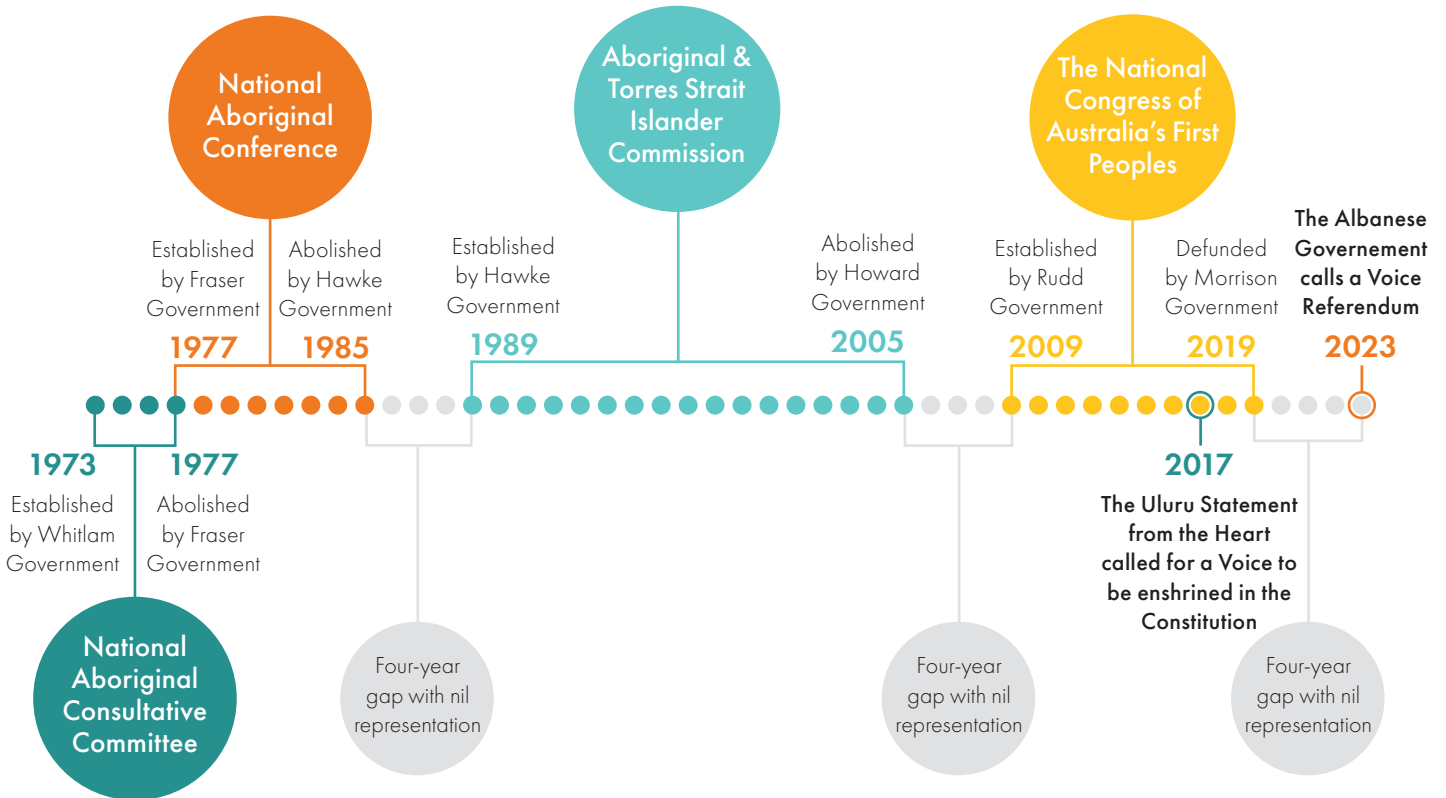
Overwhelmingly, yes. Independent research undertaken in 2023 shows that at least 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support the Voice.



Why does the Voice need to be enshrined in the Constitution?

The Australian Government has historically legislated representative committees but something legislated can be changed by the Australian Parliament.

With each successive change of government, existing bodies have been abolished or had funding cut, as shown in the timeline below.



In 2017 the Uluru Statement from the Heart called for a Voice to be enshrined in the Constitution.

The core function of the Voice is proposed to be included in the Constitution, alongside a power enabling the Australian Parliament to determine the composition, powers and procedures in legislation. A Voice that is not Constitutionally enshrined runs the risk of being ignored or abolished by parliament.

The Constitution is changed through a referendum.



What about Sovereignty and Treaty?

A treaty is a binding negotiated agreement between two or more parties that outlines terms of engagement and the obligations of all sides.

A Voice to Parliament will be a permanent body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to give independent advice to the Australian Parliament and the Executive Government on laws and policies that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A Voice does not replace Treaties or Treaty processes from progressing.

The Voice to Parliament being enshrined in the Constitution does not and could not cede Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's sovereignty.

How will the Voice impact my rights as a non-Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?

Simply, the Voice will not have any impact on your rights – the proposal to create an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to parliament simply strengthens the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be heard and consulted. Their views are not binding on governments, and it does not create a third arm of Government. The Voice simply provides advice in much the same way as many other non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations such as the Business Council of Australia.

By having a advisory body, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be able to heard and provide advice and consult on policies and laws that directly impact their own communities.

Does the Voice give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rights that others don't have?

Having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to parliament does not elevate the views or rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people above anyone else. It simply supports the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a level of representation that other Australians take for granted. It will strengthen Australian democracy and government accountability.



When will the referendum be held?

The referendum will be held on **Saturday 14 October**, with early voting available in NSW from Tuesday 3 October. Postal voting begins Monday September 25 and closes Wednesday 11 October at 6pm.

Voting is compulsory.

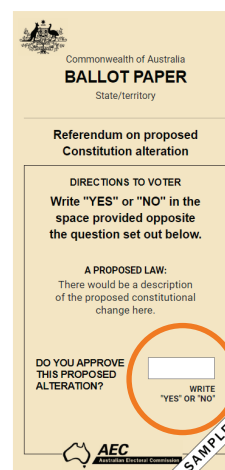
How do I vote?

When voting, the formal instructions are to clearly write Yes or No in the box.

People should write the word 'yes' or 'no' in English, in full.

The Electoral Commission is asking people not to mark a cross or tick on ballot papers, as these markings can be misinterpreted.

A clear 'y' or 'n' can indicate the voter's intent – however if the handwriting is unclear, it could risk an informal vote.



What if I need assistance?

Assistance is provided if the polling official in charge of the polling place is satisfied that you are unable to vote without help. The potential for this to be the case is different for a referendum as opposed to an election given the requirement to write an answer to a question on a ballot paper as opposed to using numbers.

The following electors may seek help:

- The elderly
- People with a disability (including visual impairment)
- Non-literate people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Polling staff are trained on how to assist you. You can nominate any person to assist. If you do not nominate someone, then the polling official in charge will help. If assistance is being provided by a person nominated by you, you and the nominated assistant enter an unoccupied polling booth. The assistant helps to complete, fold, and deposit the ballot paper in the ballot box.

