



THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Supporter Kit

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HISTORY IS CALLING

In 2023 all Australians will have a once in a generation chance to come together with First Nations Peoples to deliver a brighter future for our nation.

Voting yes in the referendum means accepting the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, recognising First Nations as the original inhabitants of this country and giving us a say in the policies and laws that affect us.

There is no doubt enshrining a First Nations Voice in the Constitution will improve outcomes for First Nations Peoples around Australia where successive governments have failed. We know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have the solutions to improve their own lives and the Voice will ensure those solutions are not just heard, but have the greatest chance to be implemented.

We are excited to walk alongside you to deliver this important change for our country. By sharing your support and encouraging others to join us, we can keep up the momentum for a successful yes vote.

Thank you for your commitment.

Pat Anderson AO & Professor Megan Davis
Co-Chairs, Uluru Dialogue



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FIRST NATIONS VOICE

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A Voice, enshrined in the Constitution, will permanently protect First Nations' advice in our democratic structure and provide First Nations Peoples with a strong institutional foundation to influence decision making.

Having a First Nations Voice means the Australian Parliament will be **compelled to listen to First Nations Peoples** whenever it is exercising its power to make laws and policies that affect them.

Embedding the Voice in the Constitution means this power cannot be removed or diminished by future governments. It **provides certainty, durability and stability** so that First Nations Communities can plan and build for the long term.

Securing a First Nations Voice, protected by the Constitution, is critical. It is **the act which will unlock the full potential of the reforms that follow.** It will deliver a permanent, institutional power to First Nations Peoples and will ensure they take part in the development of all the laws and policies that affect them, including the development of processes for agreement-making and truth-telling.

BACKGROUND TO THE VOICE

Despite ongoing calls by Aboriginal People since the early days of colonisation for a respectful and equal relationship, successive governments have ignored calls for constitutional recognition of First Nations Peoples.

To address this, and ensure First Nations Peoples informed any proposed constitutional change, **the most significant consultations of First Nations Peoples across Australia were conducted, known as the Regional Dialogues.**

First Nations Regional Dialogues

The Regional Dialogues, held across 2016 and 2017, were a series of in-depth, multi-day, grassroots meetings with First Nations Communities across the country, supported by the constitutional lawyers of the UNSW Indigenous Law Centre. They involved a dialogue based on civics education, legal education and constitutional options. They invited the sharing of stories and views of First Nations Peoples and served as a forum for the resolution of tensions, agreements and disagreements between the many voices invested in the idea of constitutional recognition.



BACKGROUND TO THE VOICE



*Christine Brumby, Charmaine
Kulitja, Rene Kulitja and
Kunmanara Happy Reid.
Photographer: Clive Scollay*

Uluru Statement from the Heart

The dialogues led to the National Constitutional Convention at Uluru, a meeting of leaders and representatives of the Communities that took part in the Regional Dialogues. It was there, over the course of four days, that each Regional Dialogue read out its record of meeting. The common consensus for constitutional recognition was a protected First Nations Voice in the Constitution.

Following the consensus in the Constitution form of recognition, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was written and issued to the Australian people, calling for a First Nations Voice and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to oversee agreement-making and truth-telling.

Many years and many lives had led to this moment: a powerful consensus built on the strength, conviction and heart of all those involved.

REFERENDUM 2023

An alteration to the Australian Constitution can only be achieved through a referendum.

All Australians of voting age will have the opportunity to vote at the ballot box in support of enshrining a First Nations Voice into the Australian Constitution.

A successful referendum requires what is known as a “double majority”. This means a majority of all Australians, plus a majority of the six states, must vote yes. The populations of the territories are included in the national count of Australians, but not in the count of the states, as they are not one of the six original states.

We now know that we will be going to a referendum in 2023.

The date of the referendum is decided by the Federal Government. To make this happen, the Government will introduce a bill that will allow the referendum if it passes both houses of Parliament or is passed by the lower house twice.

The date will then be set, the question on the ballot paper finalised, and an education program will commence to make sure Australians are fully informed at the ballot box.

TAKE ACTION — WALK WITH US

Above all else, the Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation for all Australians to walk with First Nations to achieve real change. Here's what you can do now.

1. FOLLOW & SHARE

Help us raise the profile of the Voice referendum and the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#), and like, subscribe and share so our posts are seen by more people. Leave us a comment and tag a friend to help spread the word.

2. STAY IN TOUCH

[Sign up to our newsletter](#) so we can keep you posted on news and updates – and encourage all your friends to do the same.

3. BUY A T-SHIRT

[Buy a t-shirt](#) and help give the Uluru Statement from the Heart a presence in cafes, supermarkets and workplaces across the country. Buy one for a friend, too!

4. MAKE A DONATION

If you can, [donate to our national education campaign](#) so that Australians everywhere will understand the Voice and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the need for all Australians to Vote Yes! at the coming referendum.

5. START A YARN

Have conversations with your friends, work colleagues and families and help them understand where the Voice has come from and why it will help change our nation for the better. Our FAQs can help you answer any questions that might come up.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a First Nations Voice?

The First Nations Voice is the first proposal contained within the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It is a constitutionally protected body of First Nations Peoples which will advise the Federal Parliament and the executive government, able to influence laws and policies at the point they originate.

How will a First Nations Voice help Communities?

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 Peoples across many sectors.

What is the Uluru Statement from the Heart and how is it linked to the Voice?

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is the culmination of 13 Regional Dialogues with First Nations Peoples which arrived at a consensus about what constitutional recognition should look like.

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

What shape would a First Nations Voice take?

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

The exact shape will be determined by the Parliament following a successful referendum. This allows for the shape to be changed by Parliaments over time according to the conditions of the day.

Put simply, the Constitution is for the principles, the concept. The Parliament is for the shape, the bricks and mortar.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When would a referendum be held?

The Albanese Government has committed to a referendum in the second half of 2023.

How will it happen?

The Government will introduce a bill in Parliament to allow a referendum. If the bill passes both houses of Parliament, a date will then be set, the question on the ballot paper finalised, and an education program will commence to make sure Australians are fully informed. All Australians over 18 will vote.

Why do we need to change the Constitution? Why can't it be an ordinary act of Parliament?

Since 1967 federal governments have required a mechanism like a Voice to support its work in the Indigenous policy space. The Government needs to know who to talk to on issues that affect First Nations Peoples.

Each of the five previous mechanisms which have been set up by parliamentary processes for this purpose have been abolished by successive governments cancelling programs, policies and investment 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 Peoples.

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

Do First Nations Peoples support this Voice?

Yes. Independent research undertaken in January 2023 shows 80% of First Nations Peoples support the Voice.

Why is the sequence Voice, then Treaty and Truth?

We're starting with the 'big law' – the Constitution is the highest law in the land. This is the best way for us to ensure tangible outcomes to improve the lives of First Nations Peoples.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do other countries have mechanisms like the proposed Voice?

Similar mechanisms are common in liberal democracies as they are a way to ensure Indigenous Peoples, who often make up only a small percentage of the population, are able to actively participate in decision making regarding the policies and laws that affect them.

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 – this is the fundamental basis of our representative democracy. They speak for their constituents and represent the political party under which they are elected.

Those who participated in the Regional Dialogues do not want to join political parties, they do not want to be politicians. They devote their lives to improving outcomes in their Communities and they just want a say in matters that impact them.

What did the Uluru Statement say about sovereignty?

The Uluru Statement says that First Nations' sovereignty was never ceded and coexists with the Crown's sovereignty today, that sovereignty comes from a different source to the sovereignty claimed by the Crown, from the ancestral tie between the land and its people.

The Uluru Statement calls for this ancient sovereignty to be recognised through structural reform including constitutional change. Enshrining a First Nations Voice is recognition of First Nations' sovereignty and First Nations' rights based on their unique political and cultural existence.

Simply, sovereignty is not undermined nor diminished by the Voice.



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