



**A guide to
talking about
the Voice to
Parliament**

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We're now closer than we ever have been to securing constitutional recognition for Indigenous Australians through a Voice to Parliament.

To achieve a resounding Yes vote in the referendum, we are going to have to talk to people about why this change to our constitution is simple, fair and practical.

The people you know – whether friends or family, people at work, your church, your local sporting club – will be far more influenced by a conversation with you about this than anything they see or hear from a third party.

This is why, all around the country, Voice supporters are sparking thousands of conversations.

Some people you speak to will already be on board. Others won't have thought about it much yet or won't be sure where they stand.

Our research shows that a majority of Australians support constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament. It's something that more than 80% of Indigenous Australians also get behind!

But lots of people who generally support constitutional recognition may feel awkward in knowing how best to discuss it with their friends and still have questions of their own.

By listening, welcoming discussion, sharing our experiences, and approaching this as a conversation rather than a debate, we have a much better chance of bringing as many Australians as possible along with us.

The more people know about the concept of a Voice, the history of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and what Indigenous people are asking for and support it, the more likely they are to also support it.

These kinds of conversations can sometimes be confronting, but they can also be surprising, respectful and affirming.

Creating an open space for people to reflect, ask questions and air their concerns will mean that we're making this journey positive and unifying, which is exactly what constitutional recognition and the Voice will be.



In 2023, Australians will be asked if there should be constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked for this recognition to be in the form of a Voice to Parliament.

A referendum is needed to change Australia's Constitution.

The proposed addition to the Constitution:

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia:

1. There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.
2. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to Parliament and the Executive Government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
3. The Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to the composition, functions, powers and procedures of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The proposed referendum question:

Do you support an alteration to the Constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice?

To approve this change, Australian voters write the answer 'Yes' to the question when voting in the referendum.

Key messages



Context (how we got here)

Clarity (on the question)

Confidence (in the Australian people)

- We are having this referendum because it's time to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution.
- First Nations people have asked for that recognition to be through something very practical and simple: a Voice to Parliament, which means having a say in matters that affect their/our lives and communities.
- Advice, experience and wisdom from people in community leads to better policy outcomes. The people on the ground know their issues best - having a Voice will deliver practical change.
- Australians will be very clear they are voting to insert a simple change into the Constitution. Voters won't be asked to decide on a model or details.
- Parliament will finalise the details of the Voice after the referendum and that is exactly how it should happen.

We are confident the Australian people will understand what is being asked of them – and that they will vote Yes.

Setting the scene

- We are having this conversation because after 65,000 years of continuous culture, it's time Australia's first people are recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. A Voice to Parliament is what Indigenous people want as a form of recognition.
- It's about making sure the real experts in communities – grassroots Indigenous people – can give advice to Parliament and government about the issues that affect their families and communities.
- The referendum will ask a very simple question: Should we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution with a Voice?
- A simple question with a simple answer. Yes.

About the referendum



The call to action

Things have changed a lot in the past few decades when it comes to acknowledging and valuing First Nations wisdom.

Vote/Write YES to be part of this historic moment.

Vote/Write YES to forge a new way forward together.



Conversation framework

We cannot assume people have a lot of knowledge about referendums, what the constitution is, or what the Voice is.

Many people don't have a strong understanding of how the constitution operates or is different from laws and policies of the government. The idea of a voice to parliament is a new concept for a lot of people. Rather than assuming the people you're having a conversation with know how it all works, we have to use simple, everyday language.

Most of the conversations we have day-to-day are not the most effective for persuading someone to reconsider their position.

People are unlikely to change their perspective just because someone has "corrected" them - regardless of how much they like or respect that person. It's important to be as open and understanding as possible in your approach, even if you are very passionate about this issue.

The framework on the next page outlines an approach to open, persuasive conversation that deals with "objections" effectively.

It helps – especially if you know the person well – to take a moment before the conversation to remind yourself of your intention, so that you don't slip into more typical conversational patterns.



The Conversation

While it's important to use your personal story to connect reasons you're supportive to your conversation partner's values, it's just as important to ensure that you're touching on the themes that we know are the most powerful in terms of generating support.

Indigenous constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament is:

Fair

A fair-go for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Practical

Will help close the gap /
Will help improve the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Simple

Something Australians intuitively understand

Unifying

An opportunity to bring our nation together

Remember:

- Speak from the heart: emotional connection over intellectual debate
- Use simple language and avoid jargon
- Focus on strengths and avoid deficit language e.g. things can be better vs addressing disadvantage
- Belief in your own support is more important than knowing every single detail
- Be open and welcoming of discussion and make it easy to engage: many people are awkward
- discussing Indigenous issues and are worried about 'saying the wrong thing' even though they may be supportive.
- If in doubt, keep it simple

Conversation framework

	Explore	Equalise	Elevate
What	Ask open questions like: Have you heard much about the Voice to Parliament? What do you think about it?	Acknowledge / empathise with the things you can agree on: I agree. We do need to be informed before we vote.	Solution/Conclusion: I have some information here and I can answer some of your questions.
Why	Explore the other person's thoughts, without offering your own. Like: That's interesting. Where did you hear that? How did you feel when you heard that? Their answers will help you understand where they are at, so listen carefully.	Nobody likes being told they're wrong. Especially after they've just laid out the basis for their opinion. This is a way to demonstrate to someone that you agree with something they've said, but then show them that you connect a different conclusion (based on your values and experiences!) to that same piece of "evidence"	When we get this step right, we should feel an alignment of values happen. The aim here is to take what you've heard, and "equalised" and connect those things with your reasons to vote yes. We're redirecting the positivity we've built in the conversation towards our conclusion, messages and values.
How	Get specific: What is the main concern that is making you unsure? Can I share some information with you that helped me to addresses that concern myself?	Show understanding: It's ok to want more information about this before making your mind up.	Show the way forward: We are being asked to answer a simple question, with a simple answer. With a resounding Yes vote we will have the momentum for big reforms including real change when it comes to healthcare, employment, justice and housing. All Australians benefit when we recognise and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge, cultures and stories. Voting Yes in the referendum is a step in the right direction toward reconciliation.

Conversation flow

Flow	Question	Rationale
01 Introduce the issue ▼	What do you think about an Indigenous Voice to Parliament? Note: They may not have heard about the Voice. If so, try asking if they’ve heard there will be a referendum this year, and if not, maybe ask if you can tell them about something you’re passionate about.	Start with an open question, you are never going to find out what someone thinks unless you let them tell you first! And remember, this may be the first time they have really thought about this issue, so give them the time and space to work this through for themselves before you start digging deeper into the discussion.
02 If they strongly support it ▼	Me too! Why do you support it? I personally feel strongly about it because...	This gives them a chance to really think about why this issue is important to them – which means they are more likely to be clear about why they support this in the future. It’s also a good opportunity for you to really explore your own reasons. It might also open the door for you to ask them to speak to their networks about it, or get more involved in the campaign!
03 If they sound like they are not sure about it ▼	It sounds like you are not 100% on this, but you see some good reasons to support an Indigenous Voice. What part of you is leaning towards supporting the Voice? For me, it means that...	There are people who support the idea of constitutional recognition but nonetheless are not quite sure about how they’d vote in the referendum. That might be because they’re not sure how a Voice would make a practical difference, or because they have heard some misinformation. Some people may need a chance to talk through their questions to take those last steps to supporting an Indigenous Voice.

Conversation flow

Flow	Question	Rationale
04 If it sounds like they have quite a few reasons against supporting an Indigenous Voice ▼	It sounds like this might be a difficult question for you. Do you want to talk to me more about that? What makes it difficult?	If this is difficult for the person, they might need time to talk through their questions. If they’re not wrestling with it as a question then they have probably made up their minds. Try not to take this personally. It can be hard when people you know don’t see things in the same way or share your values. But all it means is that for now they are someone who cannot take that next step with you on this issue.
05 Don’t forget to say thanks	Thanks for talking to me about this today and I’m here if you want to talk about it some more.	If they’re not 100% sure now or need more time to think, let them know the door is open for future conversations. If this was a positive conversation still be sure to thank them and be clear that you would be happy to talk about this again - they may have questions further down the line, or need help having their own conversations!

Handling concerns

Concern	Rationale
This will not make a practical difference in the lives of First Nations people.	The issues that a Voice body will advise on are issues like education, health, employment and land management. In the past, First Nations people haven't had opportunities to have input into policies. Policies where politicians have made decisions on behalf of First Nations people have failed. Our children and grandchildren will have better services and opportunities if they get a seat at the table when policies are being developed.
I want to vote yes, but I'm just not sure I can because no one can explain to me how this will work	The first step in the process is to get support from the Australian public to recognise First Nations knowledge in the constitution. The second step will involve a detailed consultation process to determine how the Voice to Parliament will work. It doesn't make any sense to do that detailed consultation until we have the support of the Australian people to change the constitution.
I care more about securing real commitments on issues like raising the age or deaths in custody. Doesn't this referendum debate take the focus off immediate actions for justice?	First Nations people have been calling for meaningful change for many years. This referendum is a step in the right direction. It's understandable that many First Nations people also want to see strong action and policy reform. This is a stepping stone on the path to justice. After the vote, it will be up to our communities across the country to shape what the Voice to Parliament looks like. There will be a long consultation process to make sure the model effectively shapes government policy and secures better outcomes for all of us.

Handling concerns

Concern	Rationale
If First Nations people don't agree that a Voice is necessary, how can I be expected to decide?	It's understandable that there are a range of diverse views in First Nations communities. Over many decades, Aboriginal communities and experts have come up with many solutions to improve the lives of Aboriginal people. A Voice to Parliament will mean the government is more likely to act on these solutions.
What are the tangible outcomes if I vote yes? How will this Voice improve lives?	Right now First Nations communities need better access to housing, services and healthcare. The status quo isn't working and we need a Voice to make things better.
Won't this give Indigenous Australians special powers/rights that others don't have?	For too long, First Nations people have been ignored when policies have been made that affect their/our lives. Far too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience lower quality of life outcomes that non-Indigenous Australians. Despite good intentions, governments, and parliaments by themselves cannot provide lasting solutions. A Voice to Parliament would simply ensure that Indigenous people affected by decisions made about them are able to advise politicians about what really works in their communities.

Handling concerns

Concern	Rationale
Isn't this only symbolic? / I don't think it will help.	There's no denying that if a majority of Australians voted YES it would be a powerful unifying moment in Australian history, and a big forwards step towards reconciliation. A constitutionally enshrined Voice will be above the usual partisan politics – representatives will be solely focused on the issues and will be directly accountable to Indigenous people on the ground. Having constitutional recognition enshrined in the constitution through a Voice to parliament is not the only thing that needs to be done, but it's an important practical step towards getting things right in the future.
Will this have veto power and control our elected government? / be a major change to the way government works/ be a third chamber?	The Voice will be a representative advisory body that gives advice on laws made specifically for and about Indigenous Australians. It will have no power beyond that. This is simply about being heard.
Won't this divide us by race?	When the constitution was drafted it specifically excluded Indigenous Australians. While this exclusion was removed at the 1967 referendum, the constitution still treats Indigenous people differently through the 'races power'. The races power gives the Parliament power to make laws specifically about any group on the basis of race. The races power has only been used to make laws about Indigenous people. It is fair and reasonable that Indigenous people have a say over those laws. This doesn't add anything except the right to be heard.
Aren't there a record number of indigenous people in parliament already? Do we need this?	It is fantastic that Indigenous people are directly elected to the parliament. However, they are elected to represent all their constituents, not just the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their electorate. The Voice is designed to allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have their say when the parliament makes laws about them, while still respecting the authority of the parliament.

Handling concerns

Concern	Rationale
How could one voice speak for indigenous Australia?	The voice will be a democratic, representative body. It will listen to all Indigenous communities and provide advice to Parliament.
This debate is harmful and divisive, why don't we just start doing practical things?	Constitutional recognition through a Voice will give Indigenous people a say over the laws and policies that directly affect them. It will represent the views of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities It is about making sure policies and laws deliver practical results on the ground and better value for taxpayer investment. A better approach is a practical thing.
How much will this referendum cost?	Changing the constitution is a significant process. The federal budget allocated \$75 million toward the referendum. The cost of failed policies also adds up very quickly. This is an investment in our future.
Isn't this a Labor Party policy? I'm a Liberal/ National voter. Why should I vote for it?	When we vote in the referendum by writing yes, we will create the political will for better partnerships with First Nations communities. Constitutional recognition guarantees First Nations perspectives will be considered regardless of which party holds government.

Talking points

Constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament	The constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been supported by prime ministers of all persuasions since John Howard in 2007. Recognition is a simple statement of fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were the first people here and form the oldest continuing culture on earth. A Voice to Parliament is a practical way to achieve this recognition in the Australian Constitution.
We can all agree the current situation is not good enough	Far too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience lower quality of life outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians. Despite good intentions, governments, and parliaments by themselves cannot provide lasting solutions. A Voice to Parliament would ensure that Indigenous people affected by decisions made about them are directly advising politicians about what really works in their communities. It is about making sure policies and laws deliver practical results on the ground and better value for taxpayer investment.
There is goodwill in the Australian community	Many Australians know that far too many Indigenous people in our nation aren't getting a fair-go with respect to the quality of life that we expect for all Australians. Australians want to be part of a nation that is genuinely inclusive and see a successful referendum as a way giving real recognition while also making a practical change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Multiple surveys over time show twice as many voters say they will vote yes compared to those who say they will vote no.
A Voice to Parliament is a simple idea	Australians will know what they are voting on by the time the referendum is held. A Voice is a representative body made up of Indigenous Australians and will advise the parliament on laws and policies that directly affect Indigenous people. It will be independent from the parliament and won't have the power to block or veto decisions made by parliament or government.

More information



How did it go?

Talk through how your conversation went with another supporter who might not have started having conversations themselves yet – they might be able to offer some useful suggestions for next time or you might inspire them to get out and talk to people as well!

Keep supporting the campaign

Make sure you're signed up as a volunteer so we can keep you up to date and support your activism.

yes23.com.au



Campaign Contacts

Contact Yes campaign Communications Director Leanne Shingles for information and advice on campaign communication and media processes and protocols

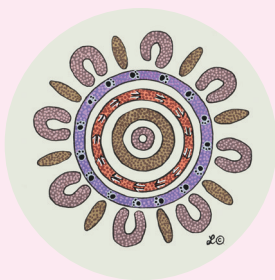
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Contact Yes campaign National Organising Lead Emily Holm for information and advice on campaign organising and actions

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**From the Heart and the Yes campaign acknowledge
Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and
recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and
communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders both past and present.**



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