

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VOICE



Key facts & follow-ups to keep a positive conversation going.



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“There isn’t enough detail.”

Yes, there is.

The Voice is the result of years of nationwide input and careful design work by Indigenous people. It comes with a mountain of detail, including a 262-page report. It was delivered in 2021. Senior political figures have had two years to read it.

Read → Australian Government Fact Sheet: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Retrieved from www.voice.gov.au/resources

“This hasn’t been done anywhere else.”

Yes, it has.

Australia is the only first-world nation with a colonial history that doesn’t recognise its First People in its constitution. Around the world, forums similar to the Voice are already set-up such as in Norway (30+ years), New Zealand and Canada (27 years).

Listen → 7am podcast, ‘The Voice: How other countries do it’ (28 Aug 2023)

“The Voice favours one racial group.”

No, it doesn’t.

In 1967, a referendum amended the constitution to give national parliament the power to make special laws about First Nations people. However, this amendment did not empower First Nations people with a say in the making of those laws and policies. The Voice will give them the ability to give advice on these laws.

Read → The Guardian, ‘A majority of First Nations people support the voice. Why don’t non-Indigenous Australians believe this?’, Rebecca Huntly (27 April 2023)

“The Voice is a danger to our democracy.”

No, it’s not.

It’s an advisory body. It will enhance our democracy. Media spreading misinformation and undisclosed political donations are the sorts of things that compromise our system of government and endanger our democracy.

Read → The Guardian, ‘Voice pamphlets: false claims and conspiracy theories distributed across Australia?’, Ariel Bogle and Josh Taylor (22 Sept 2023)

“Indigenous people don’t support it.”

The majority do.

The overwhelming majority do—approximately 80% of First Nations People. With every Federal and State election, there is never voter agreement on issues, so why do we insist that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to be in total agreement?

Read → The Guardian, ‘A majority of First Nations people support the voice. Why don’t non-Indigenous Australians believe this?’, Rebecca Huntly (27 April 2023)

“It’s dangerous to give advice to the Executive government.”

No, it’s not.

Ministers’ diaries are filled every week with representations from individuals, representatives of organisations and lobbyists from the mining sector, the arts, you name it. It’s an accepted practice. A Voice to parliament simply means that Indigenous representatives will be heard by government on a regular basis, ensuring better policy outcomes.

Read → Everything You Need to Know about the Uluru Statement from The Heart (2021) by Megan Davis and George Williams

“It will have too much power.”

No, it won't.

The Voice is a very simple, straightforward, reasonable and practical idea. As an advisory body, it will enable Indigenous communities to bring their experience, wisdom and knowledge before parliament. The design of the Voice will be determined by the national parliament.

Read → Liberal MP Julian Leeser, Federal Member for Berowra, statement in support of the Voice: www.julianleeser.com.au/the-voice/

“It's legally risky.”

No, it's not.

The Voice is an advisory body. Like all advisory bodies that currently exist (such as business groups, the welfare sector and charitable organisations) they don't have any power to block laws or override government decisions. The goal is to represent experience, views and opinions to the government.

Read → Australian Public Law Blog, 'The Voice — A Step Forward for Australian Nationhood', Robert French (20 Feb 2023)

“It divides us.”

No, it doesn't.

The Referendum proposal will further the cause of reconciliation in Australia. We are being called on to recognise, in the Constitution, the First Australians. It is about honouring and celebrating the uniqueness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples as custodians of this land. It is not about some form of racial apartheid.

Read → The Guardian, 'The astonishing lies of the no campaign burn like lurid rockets in our sky. We must not go saying no', Thomas Keneally (22 Sept 2023)

“This will create a costly extra layer of bureaucracy.”

No, it won't.

The most recent Indigenous Expenditure Report, published in 2017, that Indigenous-specific expenditure accounted for 1.1 per cent of total direct expenditure on all Australians. The Productivity Commission has recently affirmed that place-based solutions that overcome past failures of government will be money better spent.

Read → RMIT Fact Lab, 'Tony Abbott is wrong – the NIAA doesn't spend \$30 billion a year on Indigenous programs' (4 Aug 2023)

“It's discriminatory.”

No, it's not.

The Voice ends 200 years of discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It starts to heal the deep wound created by our troubled past. It will slowly but surely erode the prejudice and institutional practices which have demeaned Indigenous Australians.

Read → The Monthly Essay, 'A firelight stick on the hill', Patrick Dodson (July 2023)

“We should do a treaty instead.”

The Voice is a crucial first step.

The Uluru Convention represented an historic coming together and an impressive consultative process. This Convention led to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The order was clearly set out — Voice. Treaty. Truth. This was overwhelmingly endorsed by delegates at the Convention. We should be prepared to respect this historic consensus from First Nations people.

Read → The Uluru Statement From the Heart (2017) www.ulurustatement.org

“Indigenous people are already represented in Parliament.”

This misses the point.

There are currently eleven Indigenous politicians. Like their counterparts from diverse backgrounds, they must represent all of their constituents. They can be voted out at the next poll and replaced by non-Indigenous representatives. The Voice guarantees an ongoing mechanism for Indigenous Australians around the country to be heard — and for government policies and programs to be better conceived and more effective.

Read → The Conversation, 'With 11 Indigenous politicians in parliament, why does Australia need the Voice?', Shireen Morris (14 March 2023)

