Voice Factsheet

The Uluru Statement from the Heart identifies a First Nations Voice to Parliament as a crucial next step in promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples' right to self-determination.

To effect long lasting and systemic change, there must be consultation, partnership and representation that reflects the diverse 250 plus First Nations cultures and language groups across Australia.

A First Nations Voice guaranteed by the Constitution will offer a permanent platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard by Parliament and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a say in the policy matters that affect their lives.

In order to establish a First Nations Voice in the Constitution this change will have to be passed at a referendum.

The specification that a First Nations Voice be constitutionally protected is an important one. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have extensive experience of fluctuating stability where Indigenous advisory bodies have been created and dissolved due to changes in government and political priorities (for example, the abolition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission). The Uluru Statement calls for a stable platform, guaranteed by the Constitution for First Nations voices to be heard now and into the future.

The way in which this advisory body would function has been misunderstood by previous governments. The Indigenous Voice Co-Design Final Report, released in July 2021, has sought to guide and clarify the bodies function in practise.

The Voice would be a non-legally binding advisory body that represents First Nations opinions at local, regional and national levels, advising on significant matters of importance to the social, spiritual and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Voice, and Local and Regional Voices, will not deliver programs, manage funding, or make parliamentary decisions. The relationship between Parliament and the Voice is a two-way interaction of communication to amplify the voices of First Nations peoples and promote self-determination.

The Voice, if supported by the Australian public in a Referendum, has the potential to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and communities' voices are heard and their guidance and expertise is followed by governments in regards to Indigenous affairs.

A First Nations Voice to Parliament would ensure that Parliament is better and more appropriately informed in its approach to Indigenous affairs policy and law making.