



**WINNING A
VOICE FOR
FIRST NATIONS
AUSTRALIANS**



Your Union's Commitment

At the founding Convention of United Workers Union 450 Delegates representing 150,000 members came together to build power for working people. Delegates voted that the Union would support the Uluru Statement from the Heart. They directed the Union to campaign in a referendum on a First Nations Voice to Parliament.

Delegates shared their experiences and struggles and dug deep to understand the importance of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community to the past, present and future of our nation. UWU members like you overwhelmingly supported a YES campaign and want our Union to lead conversations in workplaces and across the Nation.

It is going to take all of us to get this done. The work you do with members, your families and communities is the most important part of the campaign. Our Union has a proud history of fighting for what is right and making lives better. This vote is simple. Recognising our First Nations Australians and allowing them to have a voice in decisions made about them. It will mean better decisions are made which will help them achieve the same quality of life we expect. It is Union business and we need to make this right.

2022 Resolution

The United Workers Union applauds the Australian Labor Party's commitment to the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full, which includes a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the constitution. We note and endorse Labor's intention to hold a referendum to support a constitutional Voice in its first term of office.

We commit United Workers Union to be active in building member and public support for a positive YES vote for a constitutional Voice for First Nations peoples. United Workers Union further commits to advance the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, endorsed in May 2017 by empowering First Nations members to lead our path towards reconciliation, justice and equality.

We thank the First Nations Roundtable, and all members, for their continued guidance and advice.

The first part of the Uluru Statement from the Heart is securing a Voice for First Nations people in our constitution, through a referendum.

Closing the Gap

For over 200 years Australian Governments have been making decisions about First Nations people. These decisions have resulted in the outcomes we see today. The statistics show that life for many First Nations Australians is hard, short and poor. It starts that way, and few are given the chance to catch up. Something isn't working and needs to change.

THE UGLY TRUTH



Life expectancy of First Nations Australians is **8 years shorter** than other Australians.



First Nations child mortality (death) rates are **twice** that of other Australians.



Suicide is the leading cause of death for First Nations children aged 5-17.

Suicide rates for First Nations Australians are **twice** that of other Australians and these rates are rising.



Average weekly earnings are **half** that of other Australians.



5% of First Nations children are in out-of-home care and this rate is rising.



First Nations adults make up around **3%** of the population, but constitute **27%** of the national prison population. These rates are rising.



66% of First Nations children are not ready or 'on track' when they begin school and this rate is rising.



One in four First Nations children perform below national minimum standards for reading.



Over 50% of First Nations people reported that they experienced at least one form of major discrimination in 2021.

NIAA Closing the Gap report 2022

AIHW analysis of ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, 2018-19 (ABS 2019b)

AIHW Indigenous Health and Wellbeing 2022

The Uluru Statement refers to this as a national torment. We agree.

The Voice will give First Nations' communities a say about new laws and projects that the Government is undertaking to close the gap.

In the Union we know that nothing about us, without us, is for us. The Voice allows First Nations Communities to have their say.

**To close the gap and do better,
First Nations Australians need a Voice.**

What is the Voice?

When the YES Referendum is successful, a First Nations Voice will be established.

The Voice will be a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (First Nations) from across Australia. Their job will be to help the Government understand how new laws will affect First Nations people.

So, for the first time, instead of our Government telling First Nations people what is best for them, First Nations people will have a chance to explain to the Government what they think is best.

A Voice will mean the Government will have better quality information about First Nations communities and issues, delivered directly by a body of First Nations people.

The Voice will not have the power to make laws or stop the Government doing something. It will be there as an advisory body.

A Referendum will change our Nation's Constitution. It means no Government or Prime Minister can just take it away. This protects our choice for First Nations people to have their Voice.

HOW WE



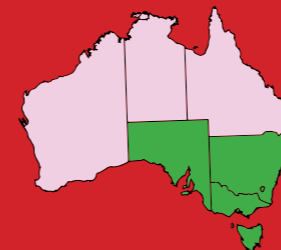
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HOW WE CAN WIN

- ✓ Majority of Australian Voters
- ✓ Majority of voters in at least 4 states

✓ CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION



A referendum - a compulsory national vote that is not an election - is required when there is a proposal to change our Australian constitution.

Only 8 of the 44 referendums we have had as a country have resulted in a Yes vote. Changing the constitution is harder than winning an election. As it should be.

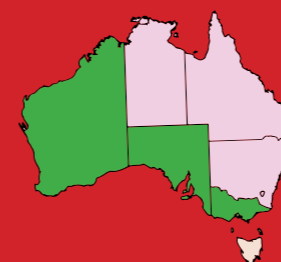
To win a Yes vote on the Voice we need to win a double majority:

- A majority of states vote Yes, and
- An overall national majority of voters need to vote Yes

HOW WE CAN LOSE

- ✓ Majority of Australian Voters
- ✗ Majority of voters in at least 4 states

✗ DON'T CHANGE THE CONSTITUTION



This means 4 of our 7 States need to have a majority Yes vote. Territories do not count in the State majority count, but they do count in the national vote.

To win, we need to campaign wide: our workplaces, our families, our community groups, online and in-person at events.

Our job is to build solidarity with First Nations Peoples. We need to get over 50% of the country to vote Yes. This means we need to be having conversations with people of all types of politics and backgrounds.

Almost 9 million Australians will need to vote Yes to win a Voice. We are going to have to talk to everybody, even people we don't normally talk to about politics.



Yes



Only through a Constitutional Referendum will the Voice have the support and authority it needs to make sure the Government and Parliament will take its advice seriously.





TAKE ACTION!



Next Steps

Taking Action Together

- ✓ **Commit to Vote Yes**
- ✓ **Talk** to your friends, family and workmates – it will take all of us to win
- ✓ **Follow these sources for trusted news** www.Yes23.com.au
www.uwu.org.au/voteforvoice
- ✓ **Sign up** above to receive campaign updates
- ✓ **Sign up your friends, family and workmates** to the campaign as well

Your Feedback Matters

Do you have feedback or questions for the UWU team? Have you seen or heard something that needs to be fact-checked or called out?

Contact us at yes@unitedworkers.org.au or complete the feedback and tip form by scanning the QR code.



Questions & Answers

Why is this important?

Australia's Constitution (our birth certificate) began in 1901. It does not mention Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. This is wrong. First Nations people have lived in Australia for over 65,000 years. Their societies and languages are the oldest surviving cultures on the planet. They should be on our nations birth certificate.

What is a Voice to Parliament?

Constitutional Recognition and a Voice to Parliament would be a small group of First Nations people chosen by their communities. They would provide advice to the Federal Government on new laws and policies that might affect First Nations people. They are an advisory group. They don't sit in Parliament or have the power to make or vote on laws.

Why do we need to change to Constitution?

A Voice should be separate from politics. If the Voice is written into the Constitution then it becomes permanent. Politicians can't ignore our vote and remove it. Governments are also more likely to take its advice seriously if it's in the Constitution. The only way a Government could cancel recognition of First Nations people and dismiss the Voice would be to hold another referendum and ask the people to decide.

Why is this Union business?

Unions always stand up for fairness, justice and making sure no one is left behind. These issues affect many of our First Nations members. They have asked for our help. Our member leadership endorsed this campaign at the 2022 Member Convention.

(Questions & Answers cont'd)

Why is there not much detail on the Voice?

Australians are being asked to vote on the idea of recognising First Nations people and a Voice to Parliament. The detail is like everything else in the Constitution. It will be researched, planned, debated and voted on by experts and Parliaments, which is what we elected them to do.

For example, Australia's Constitution says that Parliament should make laws so that Australia has an army and a navy to defend the country. It doesn't give details of numbers of soldiers or equipment or budgets, it's just a couple of lines saying we should have it.

We are voting on the idea of recognition and a Voice. Parliament will work out the detail, and details will be adjusted over the years as things change.

Will this actually change anything?

Australia has seen over 200 years of laws and policies that have failed to meaningfully close the gap between First Nations Peoples and the rest of Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know and understand the best way to deliver real and practical change in their communities.

Through the Voice, First Nations people will be able to talk to Government about the things that work and don't work on the ground. Government will get better advice, and this will lead to better outcomes.

Is this a bit radical and risky?

Many other countries have established First Nations advisory groups to their national parliaments. Canada, Finland, Sweden, Norway and other countries have had them for many years. Australia is the only major developed country not to recognise its own Indigenous people in its' Constitution. What Australia is proposing in this referendum is a simple, effective and low risk solution that will not change our way of government.

Will the Voice have too much power? Will it be able to interfere with Government?

The voice is simply an advisory group. The Government can choose if it wants to listen to that advice. The Voice will not have the power to stop, change, propose or delay any laws or policies of the Parliament. The Voice will not have a budget to create programs or activities. It is there only to advise the Parliament.

Don't First Nations people already get enough? They get all sorts of special treatment.

If First Nations people were getting more than other Australians, their quality of life and conditions would not be as bad as they are. Look at the *Closing the Gap* statistics in this booklet. Occasionally special measures are made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because their situation is far more urgent. Their health, education, justice and employment outcomes are far below other Australians. For example, First Nations people could access COVID-19 vaccines at an earlier age than other Australians. This was because in general, First Nations health issues are so much worse than other Australians and they were more vulnerable.

Doesn't this divide the nation?

This unites the nation. Many First Nations people feel apart from the rest of Australian society. They don't have the same quality of life and opportunities that most of us do and feel ignored.

A strong YES vote will show that we care about our First Nations people. If we take action to lift the most marginalised people in our country up, it shows who we really are and what we stand for. This will make Australia a kinder, fairer society that values everyone, no matter what they look like, where they live or what language they speak.

I heard many First Nations People don't even agree on the Voice.

Over 80% of First Nations people support Constitutional Recognition and a Voice to Parliament. There are some First Nations people who don't agree, think it doesn't go far enough, or think a Treaty should come first. As with any group of people, there are different views and they should be heard. The media is giving these views plenty of attention.

Most First Nations leaders and the large majority of First Nations people support this referendum and want recognition through a Voice. UWU has been guided by First Nations members and delegates who support us being involved to win a YES Vote, and 450 delegates at the 2022 National Member Convention strongly agreed.

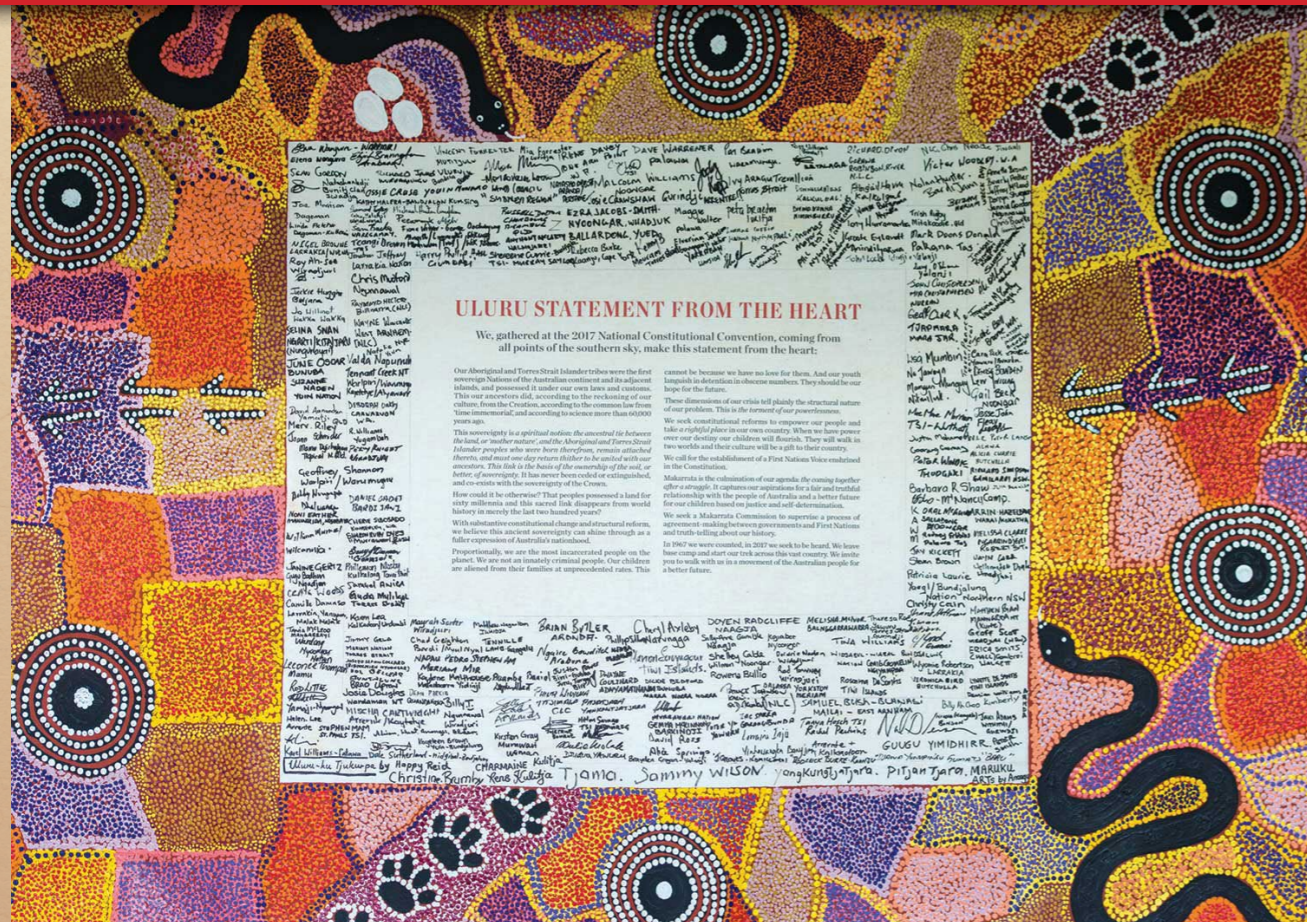
I'm not sure, I don't know enough, maybe we should do this later?

If this referendum fails, it will set reconciliation between First Nations and other Australians back for a generation. The 1999 referendum on Australia becoming a republic failed, and no Government has wanted to try again even though most Australians support it. This is our chance to do something that is right, practical and long overdue. We cannot miss this chance.

It is a simple question, Should we recognise Australia's first peoples, 65,000 years of culture, and should we give them a seat at the table on decisions that affect them? If in your heart you agree with those questions, the answer is simple. YES.

UWU acknowledges that we meet and work on the unceded lands of First Nations peoples. We wish to pay respect to their Elders — past and present — and acknowledge the important role all First Nations peoples continue to play within Australia and in our Union.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart



The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation from First Nations Peoples issued to all Australians on 26 May 2017. It calls for important changes to reshape the relationship between First Nations Peoples and the Australian population.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart asks Australians to walk with First Nations Peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

The Statement calls for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth-telling about our history.

Our Union has committed to walking alongside First Nations Peoples and the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and that starts with winning the constitutional referendum to secure Voice.



Scan here to read the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

The Conversation



It's good to talk about your own reasons for supporting a YES vote.

It's also really important to use these 4 simple reasons that help convince people to vote YES:

Fair

A fair-go for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Practical

A Voice will help *Close the Gap*. It will help improve the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Simple

If Governments get better advice they will make better decisions.

Unifying

This is a chance to bring our nation together.

Remember:

- Speak from your heart. Connect using emotion instead of too much information.
- Use simple language. Avoid using words or ideas that need to be explained.
- Focus on the good things that would come from a YES result.
- You don't have to be the expert. Believe in your own feelings about the vote.
- Be open in the conversation. People might worry they will 'say the wrong thing' or don't know much about the issue. That's ok, make it easy for them to talk to you about it.
- If in doubt, keep it simple.

If we hear 'No'

- We hear and acknowledge the concerns.
- We work to find a shared values point.
- We share our story of why we are voting 'Yes'.
- We talk about Voice as a way to begin making real change.

Conversation Framework

What?

Ask open questions like:

Have you heard much about the Voice to Parliament?
What do you think about it?

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.

How?

Get specific:

What is the main concern that is making you unsure?

Can I share with you what helped me change my mind about that?

Equalise

Acknowledge/empathise with the things you can agree on:

I agree. We do need to be informed before we vote.

Equalise

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".

Equalise

Show understanding:

It's ok to want more information about this before making your mind up.

Elevate

Solution/Conclusion:

I have some information here and I can answer some of your questions.

Elevate

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.

Elevate

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. Voting Yes in the referendum is a step in the right direction toward reconciliation.

Conversation Flow

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.

02 If they strongly support it

Me too! Why do you support it? I personally feel strongly about it because...

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...

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?

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.

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!

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.

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.

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Aboriginal people are not asking to live in a perfect world.

All we are asking for is not to be ignored.

You like a bit of a challenge in life, so being perfect would be boring.

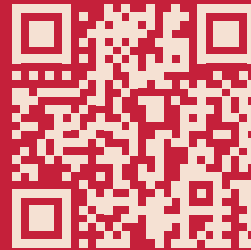
But we can make Australia a better place by learning from our history.

Barunah Alick

*Darnley Islander/Ankamuthi
& UWU Member*



**TAKE
ACTION!**



SCAN HERE



uwu.org.au/voteforvoice

The YES logo & artwork included in this booklet is painted by **Tammy Thomas**.
UWU SA First Nations Roundtable Member.