

Referendum Working Group

Enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution

Meeting 1, Thursday 29 September 2022

Terms of Reference

Context

1. The Government has committed to conducting a referendum within this term of Parliament on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.
2. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice was a key aspiration outlined in the Statement from the Heart along with a Makarrata process, of truth-telling and treaty
3. There has been significant work undertaken through several consultative processes including the recommendations of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians (2012), the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2015), Referendum Council and Uluru Statement from the Heart (2017), the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (2018) and the Indigenous Voice Co-design Process (2019-2021).
4. The Government considers it essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard in the process leading up to the referendum.

Scope and Purpose

5. The Referendum Working Group will provide advice to Government on successfully implementing a referendum within this term of Parliament on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution. Matters to be considered include:
 - a. the timing to conduct a successful referendum;
 - b. the proposed constitutional amendment and question required for a successful referendum; and
 - c. the information on the Voice necessary for a successful referendum.
6. Experts (both government and non-government) may be co-opted from time to time to provide information for the group to consider in its deliberations.
7. The work of the Referendum Working Group will inform the deliberations of a separate Referendum Engagement Group.

Membership

8. The Minister for Indigenous Australians will invite individuals to participate in this group. In determining the composition of the group the Minister has consulted broadly.
9. Factors considered in determining the composition of this group included a range of issues to ensure diversity and inclusivity across: gender, age, urban and remote, community organisations, individuals and traditional owners and elders.
10. Members of the Referendum Working Group will also be part of the Referendum Engagement Group.

Meetings and Working Methods

11. This group will be co-chaired by the Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians and Senator Patrick Dodson, Special Envoy for Reconciliation and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
12. Members will be supported with travel and other arrangements (including sitting fees) for attendance at meetings.
13. Members of the Referendum Working Group should conduct public engagement mindful of their responsibilities to this group and the shared objectives of a successful referendum.
14. Members should retain the confidentiality of meetings, subject to Chatham House rules.
15. The Members of the Referendum Working Group may choose to issue a communique following a meeting.