

HISTORY IS CALLING

We, the undersigned members of the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences at ACU support unconditionally a ‘yes’ vote in the upcoming referendum on enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution.

We understand that the Voice would be a permanent advisory body, guaranteed to give counsel to parliament on matters that affect First Nations people in Australia. Unlike a succession of previous government-appointed advisory bodies, a [Voice enshrined in the constitution](#) will be more fully representative of First Nations communities and will never be vulnerable to government closure. In this way, we see that a Voice would also give significant, and for the first time secure, recognition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the nation’s foundationally guiding document.

The Australian Constitution is a document that its founders knew would be changed—not by politicians through the parliamentary process, but by the will of the people through referenda. The 2023 Voice referendum is a crucial opportunity for Australians to tell parliamentarians that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should not be forgotten or unheard citizens of Australia.

As scholars of culture and history, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have exercised sovereignty in this country for millennia. This is a sovereignty that has never been ceded. As researchers, too, we have seen that policies for First Nations people are most effective when they are the results of listening to and collaborating with the communities themselves.

We recognise that extended national debate has produced differing views on the Voice, which requires every Australian citizen to be [informed about what it will and won’t do](#). We also recognise that there will still be much work to be done even after a referendum is passed. But we stand with [80-83% of Indigenous people](#) who call for the Voice as the best model available to start to change the inequities identified in the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#). We join with several of our peak professional bodies in supporting the Voice, including the [Australian Historical Association](#), the [Australian Academy of the Humanities](#), and [a host of land-based First Nations bodies and peak-service organisations](#).

We support a ‘yes’ vote to recognise past injustices, to acknowledge our shared history, to end the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from Australia’s constitution, to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about matters affecting their communities, and to commit to continuing to work towards outcomes that make a practical difference with concrete results.

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