

## THE VOICE REFERENDUM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Read our media release about the Voice Referendum [here](#).

Read our position statement about the Voice Referendum [here](#).

### **Does COTA Australia have a position on The Voice Referendum?**

Yes. COTA Australia supports the Australian Constitution being amended to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to add the principle of a Voice in the Constitution.

### **Is COTA Australia telling me how I should vote at the upcoming Referendum on a Voice to Parliament?**

No. COTA Australia respects the right of all Australians, especially older Australians, to vote in accordance with their own views on the Referendum.

COTA Australia will seek to inform our supporters about why more than 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are asking all Australians to vote Yes. COTA Australia will do this by promoting information sources in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and other groups.

This is the same approach COTA takes regarding Federal Elections, Federal Budget submissions, and key government inquiries. For example, we deliver an Election Platform calling on all political parties to make commitments in the interests of older Australians and then issue a scorecard on how the various parties line up on those matters. We advise our members about these issues, but we do not advise members or constituents which party older voters should support.

Regardless of your views, COTA Australia encourages you to inform yourself about the reasons the Voice has been proposed and discuss the issue with family, friends and in the wider community, and then vote in the Referendum on Saturday 14 October.

### **Why did COTA take this position on the Voice?**

COTA Australia holds the values of caring about people, equality, and fairness. We are committed to human rights, social inclusion and listening to the lived experience voices of people affected by Government decisions.

COTA Australia has been an active and vocal supporter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access culturally safe and appropriate aged care and health services.

COTA values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of a diverse older population and as members, volunteers and staff in our organisation.

The Voice will ensure the Parliament and governments of the day hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a way that has eluded successive governments. The quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people can and should be better.

### **How does COTA Australia determine its policy positions?**

COTA Australia bases its policy positions on inputs from members, older Australians in member organisations and among the general public, and other stakeholders, using various methods including local COTA Policy Councils feeding into our National Policy Council, surveys, focus groups, direct contacts, workshops and more.

Because COTA Australia represents a very diverse population group, not all older Australians agree with all policy positions COTA Australia takes. We balance the views of our broad constituency with our stated mission and values as an organisation, and take account of relevant member, academic and social research, to find the best stance we can in the interests of older Australians.

COTA Australia acknowledges that we have members who are opposed to the Voice Referendum and members who support it. We also recognise that surveys show that older Australians are divided on the issue. After careful consideration, respecting all views, COTA Australia believes it is right to support the Voice.

### **Where can I find out more about why to vote YES at the Referendum on the Voice?**

A good place to start is by reading the Uluru Statement from the Heart that first proposed the Voice in 2017. It is available at <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>

The Australian Human Rights Commission has published a Voice Referendum Resource Kit, to encourage the Australian public to consider the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum through a human rights lens. It is available at: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/voice-referendum-understanding>

The official YES Campaign publishes information about why to vote Yes at the Referendum on its website here: [https://www.yes23.com.au/vote\\_yes](https://www.yes23.com.au/vote_yes)

The Australian Electoral Commission has published the official referendum booklet outlining the official Yes and No case, along with the official guide on how to vote at the referendum here: <https://www.aec.gov.au/referendums/learn/your-official-referendum-booklet.html>

The Yes23 Campaign states that this referendum is about straightforward ideas and practical solutions:

- **Recognising** and respecting 65,000 years of Indigenous culture for the first time in Australia's 122-year-old constitution.
- **Listening** to advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about matters that affect their lives, so governments make better decisions.
- **Protecting** the Voice from politics and bureaucrats by putting it in the constitution, giving it the security it needs to provide meaningful and honest advice.
- **Over 80%** of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community support this proposal. It has been designed and agreed on by Indigenous leaders over many decades.

### **I read something on the internet, and I am not sure if it is accurate: Where can I go to find out?**

As we all know, not everything we read on the internet is necessarily accurate.

The below are two reputable services which attempt to determine the accuracy of claims you may have heard about.

RMIT ABC Fact Check determines the accuracy of claims by politicians, public figures, advocacy groups and institutions engaged in the public debate. It is available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/factcheck>

RMIT FactLab works in partnership with Meta to fact check social media content on Facebook and Instagram. Its articles are available at: <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/media-and-communication/industry/factlab/debunking-misinformation>

It's important that people have access to reliable and accurate information so that you can make an informed decision when it comes time to vote.

### **I can't get to a polling booth on Referendum Day, what can I do?**

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) says there will be:

- thousands of polling places open from 8am to 6pm on Saturday 14 October 2023,
- hundreds of early voting centres available in the two week early voting period
- mobile voting for people in residential care facilities and remote areas of Australia
- telephone voting for people who are blind or have low vision, and

- in-person voting centres overseas.

However if you can't get to any of these options, you can apply for a postal vote between 6pm on Monday 11 September and 6pm on Wednesday 11 October.

More information about ways to vote is available at:

[https://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/ways\\_to\\_vote/](https://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/ways_to_vote/)

### **I live in a nursing home: How will I vote at the Referendum?**

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has developed specific information about voting at the Referendum for people living in residential aged care. You can read this information here:

[https://www.aec.gov.au/About\\_AEC/residential-care.htm](https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/residential-care.htm)

### **How do I find out more about the Referendum?**

The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has extensive, easy to understand information on its website at: <https://www.aec.gov.au/referendums/>

If you do not have access to the internet you can ring the AEC on 13 23 26 seven days a week, 8am to 8pm local time, or if calling from overseas call +61 6160 2600 (international call charges apply).