

# Future of Australia Hangs on a Yes or No Vote for a New Voice in Its Parliament

A Reconciliation Awaits Between Australia's Aboriginal Peoples, Torres Strait Islanders and the Descendants of Its European 'Settler-Colonist' Ancestors

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## Australian Voters Continue to be Disturbed by So Much Moral Blindness

*For the past six years, Ron Morgan Research has been investigating consumers' use and views of web browsers and search engines, while asking more than 2,000 Australian's every month questions pertaining to geo-political issues and such things as which brands, products and companies they trust or distrust the most.*

The results have shown that Australians have never been more distrusting of Corporate Australia than they are in 2023. Their research has revealed that, since the onset of COVID, Australians are angry and distrustful of, among many things, companies like PwC, Optus, Telstra, Medibank, Facebook, Meta, Harvey Norman since its 'Job Keeper Scandal', even Qantas has fallen from one of the countries most trusted brands to one of its most distrusted. But especially the monster mining enterprise Rio Tinto since its wilful, malicious destruction, in 2020 in Western Australia, of the Juunkan Gorge's Aboriginal World Heritage site. Yet, in a matter of minutes, this 40,000 year-old precious shelf of seminal Aboriginal rock art, as a gift to all of humanity, was blasted into smithereens, just so Rio Tinto's mining executives could access a mere \$135 million dollars worth of iron ore. Which brings the tensions front and centre to 2023; what with one of Australia's now most contentious referendums ever held between First Nation Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islanders and the descendants of Australia's early settler colonist peoples.

## What the Yes Versus No Voice in Parliament Are Saying

An Australia-wide 'Yes' or 'No' referendum is to be held on the inherent rights of the original Aboriginal people, and Torres Strait Islanders, after over two centuries of being muzzled, to finally have 'A Voice in Parliament'; 'Their Voice in Parliament'.



A map of the Torres Strait Islands. (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

But Yes and No campaigns, drafted by parliamentarians on both sides of this divisive question, have since established blistering yay or nay arguments that since have been published on the Australian Electorate Commission's website. [Australian Electoral Commission \(aec.gov.au\)](http://aec.gov.au)

What follows is this writer's attempt, as one who has been married to an Aussie for nearly five decades, and lived in and passionately loved that dry and brown land, its peoples and ancient, ever-evolving heritage, to try to make some sense out of it all.

Whatever voter pamphlets are yet to be distributed or posted, hopefully, they will shed more light on some of the 'facts' than this writer has so far been able to discern.

Some critics of the referendum process contend that the vote is flawed for two reasons. First of all, apparently, by the fact that the Australian Labor Government, who currently holds power, hasn't yet distributed to the electorate voter a pamphlet that is strictly focused on just the 'Facts' about what the legalization, if codified, will henceforth mean to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, as well as every other non-aboriginal Australian. Secondly, that

the 'Yes' and 'No' positions be published in entirely separate, unedited and unformatted documents, exactly as they have been received. Thirdly, regarding the 'No' Vote on a Voice in Parliament, there must be a clearly stated clarification of claims that have been made about the nation's *National Indigenous Australian's Agency*, as well as a clearer definition of what any future treaty made between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples would mean, and whether or not a constitutional convention will precede any constitutional changes yet to be made.

## Constitutional Recognition Overseas

Other nations, with similar settler-colonial histories, like Canada, New Zealand and the United States, formally recognized their own *First Nations* decades ago.

FACT – In 2017, the then Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, accurately stated, The Australian Constitution is the only constitution of a First World Nation with a colonial history that does not recognize its first peoples.”

The Canadian Constitution was altered to specifically name the “*aboriginal peoples of Canada – the Indian, Inuit and Metis people*”, while affixing their existing treaty rights and guarantees that the rights and freedoms shall not be construed so as to abrogate or deregulate from any aboriginal treaty or other rights or freedoms that pertain to the aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Furthermore, that any changes yet to be made to relevant sections of Canada’s constitution would have to be made in consultation with representatives of those aboriginal peoples.

FACT – Though New Zealand has no single constitution, it is considered to be a *constitutional monarchy* which has “constitutional practices” that recognize its Maori people in the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 between the British and various Maori chiefs.

FACT – In the United States, aboriginal people are referred to in the U.S. Constitution, since 1789, for the purpose of trade and commerce, which legal experts agree is a formal recognition of their rights. Though the U.S. Constitution only mentions ‘*Indian Tribes*’, as it empowers the Federal Government to *regulate commerce with them*, legal experts agree it establishes the importance of its aboriginal peoples and their places which became the USA.

## A Voice in Parliament Is Step One Towards Future Treaty’s and Truth-telling

FACT – Treaties between Settler-Colonial Governments and Aboriginal Peoples already have been successfully negotiated elsewhere. In Canada, for example, the government has signed 26 such treaties since 1975 (and another 70 between 1701 and 1923)

FACT – The ‘No’ Vote pamphlet, as it reads, incorrectly suggests that any treaty between Aboriginal peoples and the Australian Government would be “merely an agreement between one group of Australian citizens and the Government.”

FACT –By the fact that the Australian Government already is a signatory to the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Australian Government already has recognized that “Indigenous Australians are members of their own nation, and the Australian Nation.” This dual recognition is key to any Indigenous-State Treaty that the ‘No’ pamphlet discounts. Consistent with the UN Declaration, a treaty can be made, say, between Australia’s Wurundjeri people and the State of Victoria, with the Wurundjeri

represented by their own governance body.

FACT – The same treaty negotiation process between Australia’s State government with their First Nation peoples could be negotiated throughout the entire nation’s other states.

### National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

FACT- The ‘No’ Vote attempts to discredit the ‘Yes’ Vote by arguing there already exists hundreds of indigenous bodies at all levels of government, such as the NIAA, with its huge 1400 member staff, as an example of just one more bureaucracy and not the answer.

FACT – The NIAA is staffed by public servants with the Departments of the PM and his Cabinet, and not an independent body in the same way that *A Voice To Parliament*’ would be.

FACT – The NIAA is not an entirely indigenous organization, with only 22% of the staff identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.

### Closing the Gap

FACT – The ‘Yes’ Voice in Parliament seeks to argue for the need to severely ‘close the gap’ between Australia’s Aboriginal peoples and the descendants of its Settler-Colonial’ peoples

FACT- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a life expectancy 8 years shorter than non-indigenous Australians; a worse rate of disease, infant mortality, and; a suicide rate twice as high as it is for non-indigenous Australians

FACT- Within the 19 socio-economic targets of Australia’s *National Agreement on Closing The Gap* to measure progress in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders aren’t to be found among the four targets on track to be met by the government.

### 1967 Referendum

FACT – A constitutionally-enshrined ‘Voice to Parliament’ would unite Australians, 90% of whom, in 1967, voted ‘Yes’ to change the constitution so that Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people would be counted in the population in the same way as everyone else.

FACT- The ‘Yes Vote To a Voice in Parliament’ proposes to remove from the Australian Constitution the words that declare Parliament shall have the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with regard to the people of any race, or that prohibits Australia’s Commonwealth government from excluding First Nation Australia from the official population count.

FACT – The ‘No’ Vote for a Voice in Parliament falsely claims that the current referendum has received less scrutiny than previous attempts to change the constitution. Yet the ‘Yes’ Vote for a Voice in Parliament clearly points out that the intense scrutiny that preceded the 2017 First Nations National Convention produced *The Uluru Statement From the Heart*, that called for a constitutionally-enshrined Voice to Parliament.

These are but a few of the facts that should be considered in deciding whether or not a ‘Yes’ or a ‘No’ vote should be considered paramount in this all-important referendum. The future of Australia and a great deal more hangs in the balance. Consider the below sources of what

all is entailed in the vote. Let world opinion weigh into the outcome.

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*Irwin is the author of the book, "The Wild Gentle Ones; A Turtle Island Odyssey" ([www.turtle-island-odyssey.com](http://www.turtle-island-odyssey.com)), a spiritual odyssey among the native peoples of North America that has led to numerous articles pertaining to: Ireland's Fenian Movement; native peoples Dakota Access Pipeline Resistance Movement; AIPAC, Israel & the U.S. Congress anti-BDS Movement; the historic Battle for Palestine & Siege of Gaza, as well as; the many violations constantly being waged by industrial-corporate-military-propaganda interests against the World's Collective Soul. The author and his wife are long-time residents on the North Shore of British Columbia.*

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