



Australian Community Futures Planning

Questions about *Australia Together*

How is the Indigenous Voice consistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?

What's in this fact sheet?

Contents

What is the Vision for *Australia Together*?..... 2

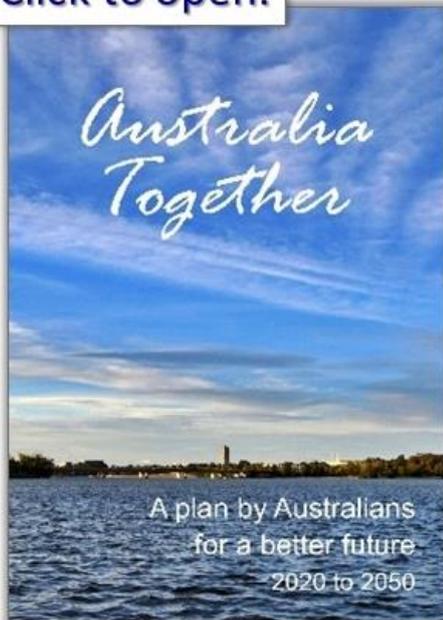
How is the Indigenous Voice consistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?..... 3

 Table 1 – Does the Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for *Australia Together*?..... 4

How is the rejection of the Indigenous Voice inconsistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?..... 6

 Table 2 – Does rejection of an Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for *Australia Together*?..... 6

Click to open.



Click to enlarge.



What is the Vision for *Australia Together*?

The Vision for *Australia Together* sets out the aspirations of Australians for the future of their nation. It is a draft vision that has been assembled by ACFP by scanning the views of Australians on the best future they can imagine as those views have been expressed in various surveys and research programs over the last two decades.

The draft Vision has been assembled to enable ACFP to run trials of a process for development of Australia's first National Community Futures Plan – we've call that plan [Australia Together](#). The planning process on trial is called [National Integrated Planning & Reporting](#). It is an inclusive planning process enabling any and all Australians to become involved in planning a better future for their country and presenting that plan to those they elect as a statement of their preferred destination as a nation and their preferred paths toward it.

In effect, the draft Vision for *Australia Together* and the National Integrated Planning & Reporting process devised by ACFP comprise an experimental program in which we are all able to ask a question that is fundamental to our quality of life and even to our survival. That question is:

If the draft Vision for *Australia Together* is what Australians want for their future, what is the safest way to get there?

ACFP's role in this process is to provide Australians with the tools they need to answer that question in an organised and efficient way. We are helping them design a plan to make the best future they can imagine in the 2020s into a reality by 2050 or sooner. One of the key tools we offer for that purpose is the [Australia Together National Wellbeing Index](#). This is a database of the factual information that we all need to be able to develop strategies which will make the Vision a reality without resulting in exclusion of diverse Australians or an increase in inequality.

The [draft Vision for Australia Together](#) is revised from time to time as information comes to light about changes in or development of the preferences of Australians for their future or for safe paths towards these preferences. The Vision is comprised of:

- a high level one-page Vision statement containing 17 statements about the aspirations that Australians have expressed for the quality of life they wish to be able to lead by 2050; and
- 57 Direction statements of the preferred and safe routes toward that Vision.

An important feature of this planning system is its efficiency. It is structured to help everyday Australians efficiently select strategies which fit with the Vision. Anyone wishing to suggest a strategy can simply ask themselves if that strategy would drive us towards the destination described in the Vision or away from it, and they can ask whether it would drive us there via safe routes. They can also ask themselves if the strategy would marginalise some groups in society or exclude them. Strategies that exclude any particular group are inconsistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*.

In the case of the strategy of an Indigenous Voice, Australians can ask whether it will drive them towards the Vision or away from it. The following analysis strongly suggests that the Vision for *Australia Together* would be substantially disabled if it excluded an Indigenous Voice.

Conclusion: The Indigenous Voice drives Australia straight towards the Vision, not away from it, and it does so without excluding the aspirations of non-Indigenous Australians.

The efficient structure of *Australia Together*

ACFP has developed a structure for *Australia Together* so that it will function as an efficient way of selecting the best combination of Targets and Strategies to make the *Vision for Australia Together* a reality.

We call this system a signpost system.

In *Australia Together* the Directions of travel in accordance with these signposts are **socially inclusive, equitable and intelligent, environmentally sustainable, economically fair and resilient, and democratically open and ethical.**

The structure of *Australia Together* makes it easy to use this signpost system to integrate Targets and Strategies with the preferred *Directions* of Australia. It provides an automatic safe selection system for policies.

57 Directions in the Vision for *Australia Together* function as sign posts of the safe routes to the future

16 directions for our society



19 directions for our environment

9 directions for our economy

13 directions for governance

How is the Indigenous Voice consistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?

The analysis below shows that there isn't a single element of the Vision for *Australia Together* that wouldn't be enhanced by establishment of an Indigenous Voice. Broader Australia would also be much better off, with enhanced capacity for peace (both at home and in the wider world), climate change mitigation and adaptation, cultural harmony and genuine fairness in their democracy. **An Indigenous Voice would unambiguously propel Australia towards the Vision for *Australia Together*, not away from it.**

By contrast, a rejection of an Indigenous Voice would do great harm to all Australians. Chief among those negative impacts would be:

- a widening of inequality in Australia and the consequent cost of the health impacts of that;
- a progressive weakening of social cohesion and the security that comes from all groups living harmoniously together;
- a loss of the respect of international communities and the attendant economic costs of that;
- a subscription to cruelty instead of compassion and injustice instead of fairness.

Legend – How to read the following Tables.

| | |
|--|---|
| | The green arrows in Table 1 indicate that an Indigenous Voice would lead Australia towards making the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i> a reality, not away from it. In Table 1 no negative impacts have been identified. This is because ACFP has concluded that arguments put forward against the Indigenous Voice in the referendum held in October 2023 are either bogus or actually amount to a preference by No Case campaigners to move away from the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i> , as can be seen in Table 2 . |
| | Red or split arrows in Table 2 indicate that rejection of an Indigenous Voice on the grounds suggested by the No Case would result in movement away from the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i> rather than towards it, or no movement either way. |

Table 1 – Does the Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for *Australia Together*?

The analysis in Table 1 shows that the Indigenous Voice would unambiguously propel Australia towards the Vision for *Australia Together*, not away from it.

| Table 1 | |
|--|---|
| <i>The Draft Vision for Australia Together. By 2050 ...</i> | <i>Does the Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision?</i> |
| We are safe | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Indigenous Voice is essential to the safety of First Nations people. The Voice would be a significant step towards self-determination. Without that they would be unable in their diverse communities to describe what safety is for them. Until they can describe that, they will continue to suffer the social disadvantage and distinctly poor health outcomes they have experienced since colonisation. • An Indigenous Voice therefore drives us towards safety. • Lack of an Indigenous Voices drives us away from safety for Indigenous people and does nothing to improve safety for non-Indigenous people. |
| We are reconciled with and celebrate our First Nations peoples and their cultures | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Indigenous Voice can help Australians establish the terms on which First Nations peoples might be reconciled fairly and justly with non-Indigenous people and with the Australian State (the Crown). • Lack of an Indigenous Voice will slow the process of reconciliation, possibly to a halt. • An Indigenous Voice drives us toward the vision for a reconciled Australia. • Exclusion of the Indigenous Voice drives Australia away from that element of the Vision. |
| Everyone is welcome to participate positively in community life | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Indigenous Voice establishes that Australia is an inclusive society where First Nations people are welcome to participate positively. • Refusal of an Indigenous Voice amounts to rejection of the participation of First Nations as equal with all other Australians in community life. |
| We are inspired and able to renew our physical and spiritual wellbeing | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Indigenous Voice would enable First Nations people to inspire others with their culture and heritage. It would also be essential to their spiritual wellbeing and their physical and mental health. • The lack of an Indigenous Voice would ensure continued poor health outcomes for Indigenous. |
| We act together as a compassionate society | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of an Indigenous Voice and of the Uluru Statement from the Heart would be a defining act of a compassionate and unified Australia. • Rejection of the Indigenous Voice indicates a lack of compassion in Australian society at large. |
| Equality is valued as enriching human community, cultural harmony and social progress | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of an Indigenous Voice and of the Uluru Statement from the Heart is necessary to demonstrate a commitment to the equality of all Australians, to social cohesion and fairness. |

| <i>Table 1</i> | |
|--|--|
| <i>The Draft Vision for Australia Together. By 2050 ...</i> | <i>Does the Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision?</i> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejection of the Indigenous Voice equates to a rejection of the need for equality and social harmony. |
| Diversity is positively appreciated as a basis for a successful society | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Indigenous Voice implies appreciation of diversity as something necessary to Australia's success. Rejection of the Voice would imply a rejection of diversity and a swing to monoculture in society. It would amount to a rejection of multiculturalism and reversion to policies of assimilation. This is by no means an objective of the broader Australian community, half of which were either born overseas or have a parent born overseas. It implies diversity is going away and that we can succeed without it. There is no evidence for that. |
| Everyone can realise their full potential in life, as individuals, members of a family and citizens through unlimited opportunities in education and employment of choice | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The statistics show clearly that Indigenous Australians often do not realise their full potential, especially insofar as they have less access to education. An Indigenous Voice is necessary to increase their potential for a fulfilled life. |
| Vital services are fully accessible | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of an Indigenous Voice has resulted in poor service design for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and a lack of accessibility particularly for those in remote areas. |
| Scarce resources are conserved and fairly shared | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice is essential to conservation and resource management. The lack of an Indigenous Voice means that conservation and land management policies have been poorly framed by governments and have excluded the experience of successful conservation and land management by Indigenous Australians for millennia. The lack of an Indigenous Voice will also add to the potential for Aboriginal lands to be contaminated by chemical, mining and military wastes. |
| National wealth is fairly shared | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice is essential to policy development for fair sharing of national wealth, including sharing of returns from use of Aboriginal lands by miners and pastoralists. The lack of an Indigenous Voice will ensure that inequality grows between First Nations people and other Australians. |
| Our economy is sustainable and supports rewarding opportunities and continuous improvements in living standards for everyone | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice is key to lifting the living standards of Indigenous Australians and "closing the gap". Lack of an Indigenous Voice will widen the gap. |
| As a nation we have the courage to take a leading place in achieving the environmental aims of a global society | <p style="text-align: center;">➔</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the extraordinary and special knowledge among First Nations communities of Australia's natural environment, an Indigenous Voice would add significantly to Australia's ability to assure other countries that we value global environmental aims, especially for preventing climate change and stopping species extinction. |
| Stewardship of ecology is affirmed as fundamental to planetary and human survival | |

| <i>The Draft Vision for Australia Together. By 2050 ...</i> | | <i>Table 1</i> | <i>Does the Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision?</i> |
|--|---|-----------------------|---|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we discount the value of that Voice, we will damage both our own environmental aims and those of the world. |
| Strong democracy is assured by a well informed and engaged community | → | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice is essential to a well-informed community. Without an Indigenous Voice, there will be less chance of the truth-telling necessary for good decision making in democracy. |
| We are confident our leaders will reflect thoughtfully on our views and best interests when making decisions for our future | → | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice must be present. Otherwise we cannot be confident that leaders can reflect on the views of all Australians when making decisions for our future. |
| We take pride in Australia as a responsible international citizen, active in building a safer, more peaceful and united world | → | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Indigenous Voice is likely to be the most efficient vehicle by which non-Indigenous Australians and First Nations people may make a lasting peace and achieve unity with a coexistence of sovereignties. |

How is the rejection of the Indigenous Voice inconsistent with the Vision for *Australia Together*?

Table 2 – Does rejection of an Indigenous Voice propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for *Australia Together*?

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the Indigenous Voice would unambiguously propel Australia away from the Vision for *Australia Together*, or leave progress toward the Vision stagnant. The No Case is wholly at odds with the Vision for *Australia Together*. It seeks to defeat it. This amounts to a rejection of the rights of Australians to the inclusive and safe future described in the Vision.

| <i>Table 2</i> | | <i>Indigenous Voice referendum 2023 – The No Case</i> |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Arguments against Enshrining the Indigenous Voice in the Constitution</i> | | <i>Source SBS News¹</i> |
| <i>Arguments by the No Case</i> | <i>Does rejection of the Indigenous Voice – as preferred by the No Case – propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for Australia Together?</i> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's symbolic, and fixing systemic issues facing Indigenous communities would require a body with actual power. | ← | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The No Case proposed no alternative to the Voice. In the absence of a proposal for a body that would have “actual power”, combined with the refusal to allow for a Voice, the No case can only take Australia away from the Vision. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More bureaucracy will not help Indigenous Australians in disadvantaged | ← / → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The No Case did not explain why an increased level of “bureaucracy” would fail to close the gap or how a decreased level would close it. In the absence of |

¹ SBS News: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/yes-or-no-here-are-the-main-arguments-for-and-against-the-voice/2h82rx9ti>

Table 2
Indigenous Voice referendum 2023 – The No Case
Arguments against Enshrining the Indigenous Voice in the Constitution
Source SBS News¹

| Arguments by the No Case | Does rejection of the Indigenous Voice – as preferred by the No Case – propel Australia towards or away from the Vision for Australia Together? | |
|---|--|--|
| communities to close the gap and achieve reconciliation. | | statements about what is meant by “bureaucracy” and how different levels of it would affect the capacity to close the gap, the No case left Australians with no viable alternative to consider. We can only conclude that if the No Case meant to support the same or a lower level of bureaucracy, they did not demonstrate that this would close the gap. This therefore amounts to a proposal that will do nothing either way to propel Australia towards any elements of the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i> that help close the gap. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governments can ignore its advice if they don't like what it tells them. |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Again, this argument has no impact either way on closing the gap. It offers nothing that propels Australia towards the Vision. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No issue is beyond its scope. |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This assertion was unverifiable. Until parliament might have framed the Act to establish the Voice, there was no way to tell what the impact would be either way on Australia’s capacity to realise the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i>. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Voice adds race to the constitution, and enshrining a body for only one group means permanently dividing Australians. |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The claim that “the Voice adds race to the Constitution” was entirely incorrect. Race is already in the Constitution in sections 25 and 51(xxvi), both of which divide Australia along the lines of race. ▪ A refusal to offer a Voice in their own governance to the group that has suffered the most since colonisation would not have adversely impacted non-Indigenes, since no laws changed for them. ▪ The refusal to offer a Voice to the most disadvantaged group – based on their race – can only increase the division between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and therefore has taken Australia further away from the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i>. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Australians are being asked to sign a blank cheque, given key details about how the Voice would operate will be decided after the referendum. |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This too was incorrect. There is no part of the Constitution which covers what funding, if any, may be devoted to the activities made lawful by the parliament. ▪ Only the parliament has that right, not the people. ▪ An implication that the people of Australia should be able to override the budgeting decisions of the parliament is misleading. This part of the No Case has no bearing on the capacity of the nation to make the Vision a reality – because it changes nothing about the way funds are allocated and who has the power to make decisions on that. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Because the Voice will be designed by parliament, |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is correct. However, rejection of the Voice makes it even easier for future parliaments or governments to sideline it. The rejection itself |

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|---|--|---|
| future governments could change or sideline it. | | sidelines it from the very beginning. This undoubtedly moves the nation away from the Vision – and sooner rather than later. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be a first step to more radical changes like financial reparations for colonisation and dispossession. | ← | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Again, the referendum question enabled nothing by way of changes in legislation along these lines. Parliaments have the right to make laws on these issues now, without the need for a referendum. However, rejection of the Voice does diminish the chances that Indigenous people will have a say if or when laws are being made on compensation or reparations. It diminishes the possibility for fairer sharing of national wealth. This would be a definite move away from several aspects of the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i>. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be costly and bureaucratic - an additional fiscal burden on top of existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies. | ← | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No proof was offered for this. Nor did the No case attempt to deal with the possibility that an Indigenous Voice may well save money. Rejection of an Indigenous Voice removes the possibility that spending programs may be designed that are the most likely to lead to better outcomes for any funds invested. Rejection therefore makes it less likely that we will move towards the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i>. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indigenous people already have a voice via an unprecedented level of Indigenous representation in parliament. | ← / → | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the extent that this suggests that representation of Indigenous people in parliament is or will be sufficient to help them use parliamentary process to overcome the disadvantage arising from their minority status, it is entirely false and misleading. The participation of a minority in the parliamentary process offers Indigenous Australians nothing if the Constitution itself, under which the parliament operates, is designed to exclude them. This argument by the No Case has no utility one way or the other to propel Australia towards the Vision. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truth and Treaty should come before the Voice. | ← | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejection of the Voice will slow down the process for truth and treaty, so that moves Australia away from the Vision for <i>Australia Together</i> rather than towards it. Putting truth and treaty before a Voice also weakens the capacity for First Nations peoples to democratically organise their participation in treaty processes. For evidence that this is so, see The People’s Constitution: the path to empowerment of Australians in a 21st century democracy by Bronwyn Kelly. |

Further questions may be forwarded to ACFP at info@austcfp.com.au
Become involved in building a plan for a better Australia at the ACFP: www.austcfp.com.au