



29 August 2023

AUSTRALIANS WILL ALL BENEFIT FROM THE VOICE

Australia has a choice.

In six weeks, we will vote on whether the government should hear from us – from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – when making decisions about things that affect our communities.

It's pretty simple.

In 1967, Australia voted to change the Constitution so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People were counted as part of the population, and the Commonwealth would be able to make laws in relation to us.

It was like Australia said to us: 'We see you'.

Since then, the Parliament and the government of the day has made many laws and policies that affect our lives. Many have been to our communities' detriment.

The problem is that these laws and policies have been made about us without us.

The experts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – have not been consulted or listened to.

And that has led to a lot of time and money being wasted on ineffective and damaging laws and policies.

The Voice will help the government make better policy decisions.

And we – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples – will be afforded the simple dignity of being included in conversations about matters that affect our lives.

Here on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, we are starting to see how the whole community benefits when Dja Dja Wurrung People are part of the conversation.

After many years of negotiation and hard work, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) are increasingly sitting at the table with decision makers. Through this ongoing and evolving dialogue, great things are happening.

We are healing Country, reinstating cultural practices our People have used for millenia, alongside Western science. We are sharing our language, art and Culture with the whole community through landscaping and the built environment.

These activities are healing for Dja Dja Wurrung People and are beneficial for the whole community. They are only possible because we are in the conversation.

When First Nations voices are listened to, and that knowledge is shared, we all benefit.

Listening to First Nations voices will enrich our society.

Now is the time. This is our moment as a nation to change for the better.

In 1967 the Australian people said, 'We see you'.

In 2023 we're calling on the Australian people to say, 'We hear you'.

Quotes from Rodney Carter:

"Allowing First Nations People to be heard is so important. Our voices have been silenced for so long. Yet we have so much to offer.

"The Voice will make us all better people.

"I think there are a lot of others less fortunate than Dja Dja Wurrung People across Australia. The Voice affords other people an opportunity to be involved. It allows somebody in any context to contribute to the conversation and that's a good thing. We need our People to be part of the conversation.

"We manage our Culture and our Heritage, not just for the benefit of our own mob but for all People that come to our Country.

"If Australia says no to the Voice, that's Australia saying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices don't matter. That would be divisive. That would be extremely insulting. That would be a massive backwards step for Australia.

"I believe we are better than that."

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