

Handling objections in the Voice Campaign

This year we have a massive chance to make history by campaigning for Yes in the upcoming referendum for recognition and a Voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

But we know that opponents of this change are hard at work trying to confuse the issue and this can have an effect on the people we need to win over to a Yes vote.

The good news is that research has shown that there are large segments of the population who we can win over! To do so it is vital that we understand what objections are out there, what inspires them, and how to respond in the most effective way possible.

The reasons for objections

There are two major types of objections to the Voice in this campaign: genuine objections, and excuses.

Excuses are made by those who absolutely do not support the Voice and are looking for ways to justify their position. These are hardened NO votes that we can't win. We shouldn't waste our time on the people who have already made up their mind to vote No.

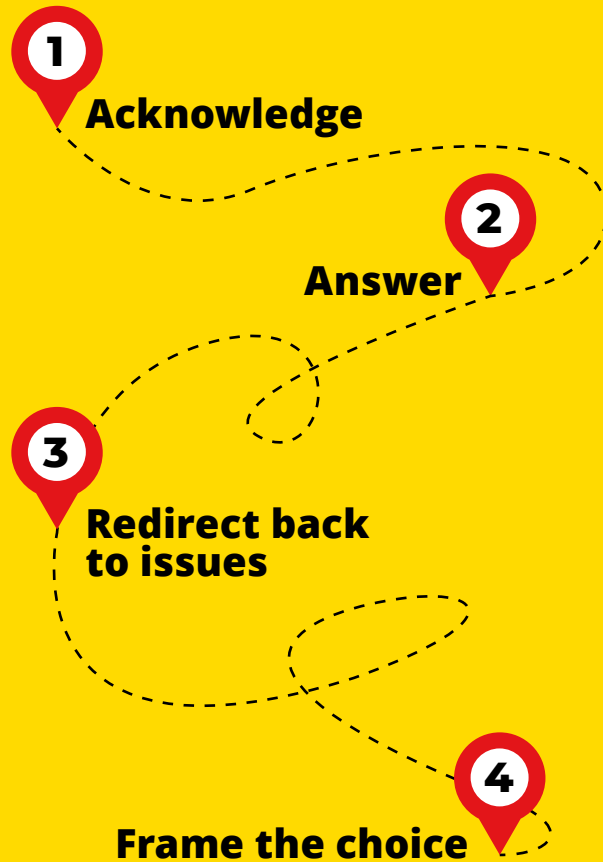
Many people will have genuine objections, and these will be motivated by a range of concerns such as:

- » Fear about change.
- » Misinformation about what the Voice is.
- » No sense of urgency about the need for change.
- » Not clearly understanding the choice around the Voice.
- » Unconscious bias.

These are people we can win over and want to focus our conversations on.

Our **4-STEP** Guide

There are four simple steps to handling objections to remember to win votes to Yes:



1. Acknowledge

This can be tricky, but we want to acknowledge what we have heard the person say and how they feel without agreeing with what they say. The reason we do this is so the person is less defensive around their objection and can see that we have heard what they have said. We actually want them to move past the objection, not back them into a corner and create distance between them and us.

Most objections are based on a feeling rather than knowledge. We want to acknowledge and connect to the feeling while offering a sensible and factual counterpoint.

2. Answer

We want to answer the objection in a clear and concise way. Directly responding to the objection shows that we are taking them seriously.

But we don't want to take too long to respond, as that risks enhancing the distance between us and them. We want to correct misinformation and provide a fact-based answer, but if we get bogged down in technicalities we risk losing them.

Try to keep your answers to 2-3 sentences, or about a minute.

3. Redirect

Get back to the REAL issues at stake here – what the Referendum is really all about.

We all know as unionists that issues are what motivates people to take action. Ask them an open question and give them the space to respond.

4. Frame the choice

Once you have successfully taken the answer back to the issues, it is helpful to end by framing the choice they now have by providing options for their next action.

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>There is no detail, what exactly am I voting for?</i>			
<p>I can hear you would feel more confident in your decision with more information.</p>	<p>The Constitution of Australia is like the basic rules of Government. It's like a rule book, not an operating manual.</p> <p>The Constitution specifies that the Government can make laws about "Defence" - it doesn't specify whether we have to have an army, a navy or an air force - that's up to the Government. This proposal is just the same.</p> <p>This referendum the question will be:</p> <p>A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.</p> <p>Do you approve this proposed alteration?"</p> <p>If a majority of Australians in a majority of states vote yes at the Referendum, it will enshrine recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the right to a voice on issues that impact them in our Constitution.</p> <p>Parliament is responsible for setting up the Voice and how representatives are chosen.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>This is an opportunity for all Australians to come together and contribute to building a stronger, fairer nation.</p> <p>You have a decision to make.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>It will divide the Nation.</i>			
<p>I can see that you want a stronger, fairer Australia.</p>	<p>That is what this referendum is all about.</p> <p>When the constitution was drafted it deliberately excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This could be the moment we recognise 65 000 years of continuous culture in our 122-year-old constitution.</p> <p>This is an opportunity for all Australians to come together and contribute to building a stronger, fairer nation.</p> <p>Experience shows that when grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can give advice to Governments about decisions that affect them, better decisions are made.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked to be recognised in our constitution and to simply be listened to on issues that impact on them.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>
<i>It will be a third chamber with too much power. It will hold up Government, and there will be high court challenges and red tape. There will be no end to the advice they want to give.</i>			
<p>I hear that you want to make sure that Parliament and Government function properly.</p>	<p>This is about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a Voice <i>to</i> Parliament, not a Voice <i>in</i> Parliament.</p> <p>The Voice will be a representative advisory body that gives advice on laws made specifically for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>It will have no power beyond that.</p> <p>This is simply about being heard.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked to be recognised in our constitution and be listened to on issues that impact on them.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>I don't support "special treatment" in the Constitution, based on race.</i>			
<p>You're passionate about fairness and everyone getting a say - regardless of race, (Like you) I'm not a lawyer - but everyone should get a say in our country. We're all capable of contributing.</p>	<p>This is about recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a Voice to Parliament, not a Voice in Parliament.</p> <p>The Constitutional Expert Group comprising of nine experts advised that a recognition through a simple, practical voice will not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples special rights.</p> <p>Government has over 30 reference groups that it listens to. We all know that big businesses and the mining lobby are listened to.</p> <p>Experience shows that when grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are listened to Governments about decisions that affect them, better decisions are made.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz)</p>	<p>Constitutional recognition in the form of a Voice will mean fewer wasted resources, less party politics and real results.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>
<i>The Voice will have no real impact on issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today, The Voice is only advisory, and therefore will have no power.</i>			
<p>I hear you want to see practical solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	<p>There's no denying that if a majority of Australians voted YES it would be a powerful unifying moment in Australian history, and a big step towards reconciliation.</p> <p>Experience shows that when grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can give advice to Governments about decisions that affect them, better decisions are made.</p> <p>Aboriginal health organisations are a great example of the success that occurs when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard. Now these organisations are considered best practice.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are asking for practical recognition to help fix their unique challenges related to jobs, housing, health and literacy.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>The voice will be just a Canberra voice with little involvement from 'real Aboriginal people'</i>			
<p>I hear you don't want more of the same. You want real outcomes.</p>	<p>80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support the Voice, and are inviting you to support it too.</p> <p>Federal government is in Canberra, it is not a Canberra voice, it is a voice to Canberra.</p> <p>If a majority of Australians in a majority of states vote yes at the Referendum, a process will be undertaken to elect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to be part of the advisory group. Representatives from remote communities and capital cities right around the country.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>Constitutional recognition in the form of a Voice will mean fewer wasted resources, less party politics and real results.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>
<i>This is a back door to a land grab; our farms and houses are not safe.</i>			
<p>I can hear you want to ensure there aren't other consequences from this referendum.</p>	<p>The Voice will be a representative advisory body that gives advice on laws made specifically for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>It will have no power beyond that.</p> <p>This is simply about being heard.</p> <p>People didn't lose their homes or land as a result of native title and it won't happen now.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have asked to be recognised in our constitution and be listened to on issues that impact on them.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>There are already Indigenous people in Parliament. Just get elected.</i>			
<p>I can hear that fairness is important to you.</p>	<p>An electorate may choose an Aboriginal MP. Those elected representatives are like any other elected politician. The job of that MP is to represent their electorate, not the voices of all Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities don't have a mechanism to be listened to on issues impacting them.</p> <p>The Voice to Parliament will be an elected group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who represent communities and provide advice to Parliament.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>After more than 65,000 years of continuous culture, it's time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want recognition in a practical form by having a say on issues and policies that impact their lives.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<p><i>Not all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people support a Voice, so why should I? An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person I know and respect doesn't support the Voice, so I'm not sure I should either.</i></p>			
<p>I can see you want to make sure that this is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want.</p>	<p>Doesn't matter where you are from, people are going to have different views. That's what makes our Australian democracy great.</p> <p>What makes this situation so extraordinary is that 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people support the Voice and are inviting you to support it too.</p> <p>It is rare to have something so strongly supported by any group in our community.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>After more than 65,000 years of continuous culture, it's time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want recognition in a practical form by having a say on issues and policies that impact their lives.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>

Acknowledge	Answer	Redirect	Frame the Choice
<i>This isn't union business</i>			
<p>I know you are a proud union member</p>	<p>The Voice to Parliament is an issue that's being raised by workers across the country.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander union members have asked us to back them in on this, and as a proud unionist, when I'm asked to front up, I show up. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander workers are some of our most vulnerable workers.</p> <p>There is nothing more union than providing a voice to people. Giving workers a voice in their workplaces leads to safer and better outcomes for workers.</p> <p>Listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people's voice on issues that impact their lives will lead to better outcomes as well.</p>	<p>Today you've told me (insert their issue/ thoughts) and the impact of this is (xyz).</p>	<p>After more than 65,000 years of continuous culture, it's time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want recognition in a practical form by having a say on issues and policies that impact their lives.</p> <p>Will you vote to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution?</p>



1. Do you believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be recognised in the 122 year old constitution?
2. Do you believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be listened to on issues that affect them and their families?
3. Will you vote Yes?



Top tips

Do	Don't
<p>Use/Say "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people"</p>	<p>Use/Say "Indigenous or First Nations", these terms are not always well understood</p>
<p>Always lead with Recognition, with voice being the practical form of the recognition.</p> <p>i.e. After more than 65,000 years of continuous culture, it's time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised in our 122-year-old Constitution. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want recognition in a practical form by having a say on issues and policies that impact their lives.</p>	<p>Don't let the constitution recognition element be lost. Always lead with it and the fact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were first and were here for a long time and as a country we need to recognise this.</p> <p>The Voice comes next, it is the practical way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want to be recognised. Don't lead with the voice, lead with recognition.</p>
<p>Be willing to explain key elements of the constitution and Referendum.</p>	<p>Don't assume people have a lot of knowledge about referendums, what the constitution is, or that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not currently recognised in the constitution.</p> <p>Many people don't have a strong understanding of how the constitution operates or how it is different from laws and policies of the government. The idea of a voice to parliament is a new concept for a lot of people. Rather than assuming the people you're having a conversation with know how it all works, we must use simple, everyday language.</p>
<p>Be generous and keep your key on the main objective which is to win a "Yes" vote.</p>	<p>Don't tell people they are using the wrong words or accuse them of being racist when they want to support "yes". We know people, and particularly soft or undecided voters are awkward about having these conversations. They often feel like they don't have the language or often use non-ideal language.</p> <p>People are unlikely to change their perspective and get defensive because someone has "corrected" them - regardless of how much they like or respect that person.</p>