



I Pledge to Champion a Respectful Referendum



Gayaa Dhuwi
(Proud Spirit)
Australia



IAHA Indigenous Allied
Health Australia



Australian Indigenous
Psychologists Association
AIPA



Black Dog
Institute

The upcoming Voice Referendum is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us, as a nation, to discuss how best to recognise and represent First Nations people in our democratic process. It is a conversation that we should not shy away from. But we should be aware of the risks involved in having the debate and be proactive in reducing its potential harms.

Regardless of a 'yes' or 'no' outcome, we need to find a way to move forward together, and protect the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations people, during and after the Referendum. Below are a set of actions, based on research, to approach the conversation with respect, empathy, and to keep the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations peoples, families and communities at the centre of the discussion.

I pledge to:

1. **Listen to First Nations people:** acknowledging there is no one First Nations identity or perspective, and that no one First Nations person can represent all people, I pledge to listen to a diversity of First Nations peoples to better understand First Nations histories, cultures and experiences.
2. **Elevate First Nations voices:** using the principle of 'nothing about us, without us', I pledge to put the voices of First Nations people at the forefront of any campaign activities relating to the Voice Referendum, including in events, panel discussions and media engagements.
3. **Provide a safe space for First Nations advocates:** acknowledging public advocacy is work and comes with associated risks, I pledge to provide safe options for participation, including the option for anonymity in media appearances and a process for support during and after participation.
4. **Build common ground through shared goals** by acknowledging the Human Rights of First Nations Peoples, as specified in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by the Australian Government in 2009. As a starting point to any conversation on the Voice, I pledge to affirm the principles of the Declaration, including the rights to self-determination, equality and connection to land, community and culture. In doing so, the question becomes not 'what' but 'how'.
5. **Set the standard for respectful debate:** I pledge to engage in discussions with respect and patience, being open to different viewpoints and experiences. I will avoid personal attacks, offensive language, inflammatory statements, or dismissive behaviour. I will allow time and space for negotiation, be prepared to compromise and display a willingness to engage in reciprocal dialogue.
6. **Use culturally appropriate language:** I pledge to use inclusive, strength-based and culturally appropriate language when referring to First Nations peoples in my campaigning activities, avoiding stereotypes, generalisations or othering language. The [Australian Government's Style Guide](#) can provide principles to adhere to.
7. **Build trust through action:** I pledge to build authentic relationships with First Nations individuals, families and communities by engaging in dialogue and attending cultural events, not as an 'expert' but as a guest to the community. Beyond conversation, I pledge to actively support initiatives that promote the rights, well-being, and self-determination of First Nations peoples, based on First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

I, pledge to uphold the principles of the Respectful Referendum Guidelines and to be an active champion of these principles within my organisation,

Signature