Press Release
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Referendum Council an opportunity to drive a clearer process towards constitutional recognition

ANTaR, national advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, today welcomed the announcement of the establishment of a Referendum Council.

The role of the Referendum Council is to advise on progress and next steps towards a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution, including overseeing community consultations on finalising the proposed changes to the Constitution.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said the Council will help provide some much needed structure and clarity to the process towards a referendum, especially with the consultation process on a proposal.

“This is an important step forward and hopefully signals an end to the political drift we’ve seen over the past 12 months on this issue,” he said.

“Establishing the Council was a central recommendation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in the meeting with the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition in July of this year, so it’s welcome that it has now been announced,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that the most important aspect of consultations going forward is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views are driving considerations on the proposal.

“The Indigenous led consultations are crucial, and the National Congress of Australia’s First peoples as the national representative body, should have a key role to play in the process going forward,” he said.

Mr Meehan noted that as a result of the awareness raising campaign community support has been growing on this issue, with the most recent poll showing 79 per cent of the general Australian community and 85 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians would have voted YES if a referendum was held in June of this year when the poll was taken.

“There appears to be broad based support for a referendum, it’s now time to consult on finalising a proposal to take forward, and the Referendum Council provides a mechanism to do this,” he said.

ANTaR is the only incorporated non-Indigenous organisation dedicated solely to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and speaking up for justice, rights and respect for Australia’s First Peoples.