SYMBOLIC OR PRACTICAL?
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists have said that constitutional recognition can have a positive practical effect on the well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, the symbolic power of constitutional recognition is also important. Think about the jersey of your favourite footy team, the baggy green cap, Anzac Day, your wedding ring. All of these things are symbols, but they hold great meaning for us. They anchor us to our sense of place in the world.

CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION AND CLOSE THE GAP
Constitutional recognition and Close the Gap are linked because we won’t be able to close the gaps in education and health unless we also close the gaps in respect and understanding.

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“Recognition of the First Peoples in the Constitution of a country starts to send a message that you are valued, you are important, that we want to respect you, and we want to deal with the things that have caused us division and discord in the past.”

Yawuru man Prof. Patrick Dodson
ANTaR Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group Member

“Constitutional recognition of the First Australians would be good not only for our own heads and hearts, but also for the nation’s soul.”

Yankunytjatjara woman Dr Lowitja O’Donoghue

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO DONATE: WWW.ANTAR.ORG.AU
CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION – SPREAD THE WORD

Popular ownership is essential to referendum success. All of us can play a part in achieving this by spreading the word to our families, friends and colleagues. Use the points in this card to talk about constitutional recognition with people you know and help build the grassroots movement for change.

RECOGNITION IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO

Our Constitution was written more than a century ago and it reflects the values and beliefs of the time it was drafted - when it was widely thought that Aboriginal people were dying out. As a result the first chapter of our national story is missing from our national document.

Some sections reflect views on race that have no place in the Constitution of a modern, reconciled nation. Section 25, for example, talks about the states having powers to ban people from voting based on their race. Section 51(xxvi) allows laws to be enacted to the detriment of Aboriginal people.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

We need to fix the historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from Australia’s Constitution and remove discrimination from it. However, it’s important to ensure that the Government can still make laws (like Native Title) with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We have to have laws that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people just as we do for many groups in society - women, the elderly, the disabled, veterans, people living in remote areas - but these laws should be based on need and the national interest, not race.

Need because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain Australia’s most disadvantaged citizens. The national interest because their cultures and languages are unique to this country to be celebrated as part of our common heritage.

DIDN'T THE 1967 REFERENDUM SORT ALL THIS OUT?

In the 1967 referendum, more than 90 percent of Australians voted Yes to remove discriminatory references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But we didn’t finish the job. The Constitution still does not recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this land. And it still has sections that discriminate - like Section 25, which says the States can ban people from voting based on their race.

WOULD CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION NEGATE SOVEREIGNTY OR A TREATY?

No. Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, sovereignty (the power of a people to rule their own affairs) and a treaty are separate issues. Legal experts say recognition in the Constitution would in no way negate a later discussion by Australians on whether our country should have a treaty or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have sovereignty. Regardless of your views on treaty or sovereignty, these are separate issues from that of constitutional recognition.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WWW.ANTAR.ORG.AU/CONSTITUTIONAL_RECOGNITION OR WWW.RECOGNISE.ORG.AU