

Date: 7th of September 2023

WDV Statement on the Voice to Parliament:

Women with Disabilities Victoria (WDV) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land now known as Australia, and the privilege of all those living in and benefitting from the unceded lands which we share. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history stretches back over 75,000 years and are the oldest surviving civilisation on Earth. We honour their knowledge and care for country and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the lands on which we live and work. The WDV office sits on the (historically contested) land of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. The WDV community acknowledges the unique cultural and spiritual relationship Australia's First Nations people have with the land and waters, and their rich ongoing contribution to society.

Sovereignty was never ceded. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

WDV's vision is: A world where all women are respected and can fully experience life.

We are the peak body for women in Victoria who are living with disability and respect the fluid and diverse gender experiences of our members and community.

As an organisation aiming to mobilise gender-based disability justice, we are committed to understanding how we can best serve and support First Nations women and non-binary people with disability. We acknowledge the work that other organisations have done with these communities.

Our mission is to advance real social and economic inclusion for women with disabilities in Victoria.

We acknowledge that First Nations women with disability face compounding and intersectional discrimination and disadvantage. Disability is more prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (43.9 per cent) compared to 28.6% of non-Indigenous women (Source: [Women's Budget Statement 2023, p. 15](#)). As an organisation aiming to mobilise gender-based disability justice, we are committed to understanding how we can best serve and support First Nations women and non-binary people with disability.

We acknowledge that within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities there are a diversity of views about the Voice to Parliament.

WDV's strong position on this is to listen to voices from *within* these communities.

WDV are part of the broader human rights movement and advocate for people with disabilities to be enabled to fully participate in all areas of life. The right to vote is essential to enabling full citizenship (Source: [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \[ICCPR\], Article 25](#)). Voting processes and information has often been inaccessible for people with disabilities. Here are some resources about:

- Voting accessibility <https://icanvote.org.au/>
- Accessibility of AEC services [Referendum 2023 - Accessibility of AEC services](#)
- Easy read guides which explain referendums, how to vote and enrol to vote https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/easy-read/
- [The official YES/NO Referendum pamphlet](#)
- ['Your Answer Matters'](#) a podcast released by the AEC, described as: *"an unbiased and detailed look at why the referendum is important, how you can make your vote count, and why your answer matters"*

As of 6th September 2023, there is currently no Easy Read/ Easy English version of the official Referendum pamphlet available. [The Australian Electoral Commission \(AEC\) notes:](#)

Your official referendum booklet will be available in accessible formats progressively throughout September on this page
<https://www.aec.gov.au/referendums/learn/your-official-referendum-booklet.html>.

Blind and low vision

Your official referendum booklet is currently being converted into formats accessible to voters who are blind or have low vision, and will available here, once completed. Once these materials are completed, they will also be available to request in hard copy through the AEC Contact Centre on 13 23 26.

Easy Read

Your official guide to the referendum is currently being converted into Easy Read and will be available here, for voters with different reading abilities once completed.

If you would like any further information, there are a variety of ways you can contact the Australian Electoral Commission:
https://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Contact_the_AEC/index.htm

We know we have more work to do.

We are committed to understanding *what tangible action we can take* to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and non-binary people with disability. The meaningful steps that we are taking towards this include developing a formal Reconciliation Action Plan. As a member-based, peak body organisation, we have invited First Nations women to be involved in this project. **These consultations will be paid.** Lived experience is a valuable, necessary, and irreplaceable source of knowledge.