

About the survey

The member survey was designed and managed by AIATSIS with input from Congress staff and was open to members from 20 May 2011 till 17 June 2011. As well as the online version, hard copies of the survey were sent to those members where no email address was available.

630 members responded to at least some of the Survey's 19 questions. This is a response rate of around 30% which is reasonable for this type of survey.

These results along with the results of policy workshop discussions among delegates at the first National Congress meeting have been presented to the Congress Board of Directors which is incorporating them into their policy directions.

Specific Findings

Respondent information

90% of respondents identified as Aboriginal
4% as Torres Strait Islander, and
6% as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

New South Wales accounted for the largest proportion of respondents, followed by Queensland, South Australia and other States/Territories:

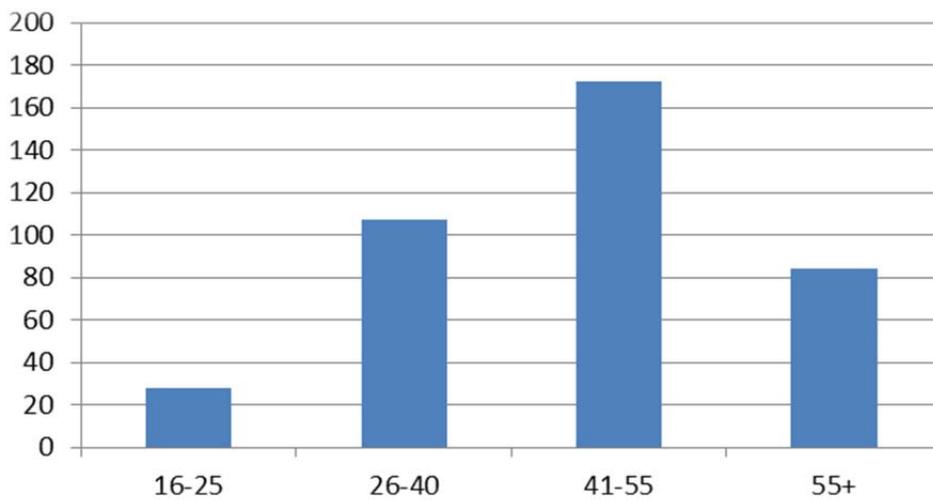
Table 1: Distribution of respondents by State/Territory

| State/Territory | State/Territory percentage of respondents |
|------------------------------------|---|
| New South Wales (NSW) | 38% |
| Queensland | 15% |
| South Australia | 14% |
| Australian Capital Territory (ACT) | 8% |
| Victoria | 9% |
| Western Australia | 7% |
| Northern Territory | 6% |
| Tasmania | 3% |

Around 55% of respondents were female, 45% male

The age of respondents varied from 18 to 73. The median age was 46. The age distribution is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age

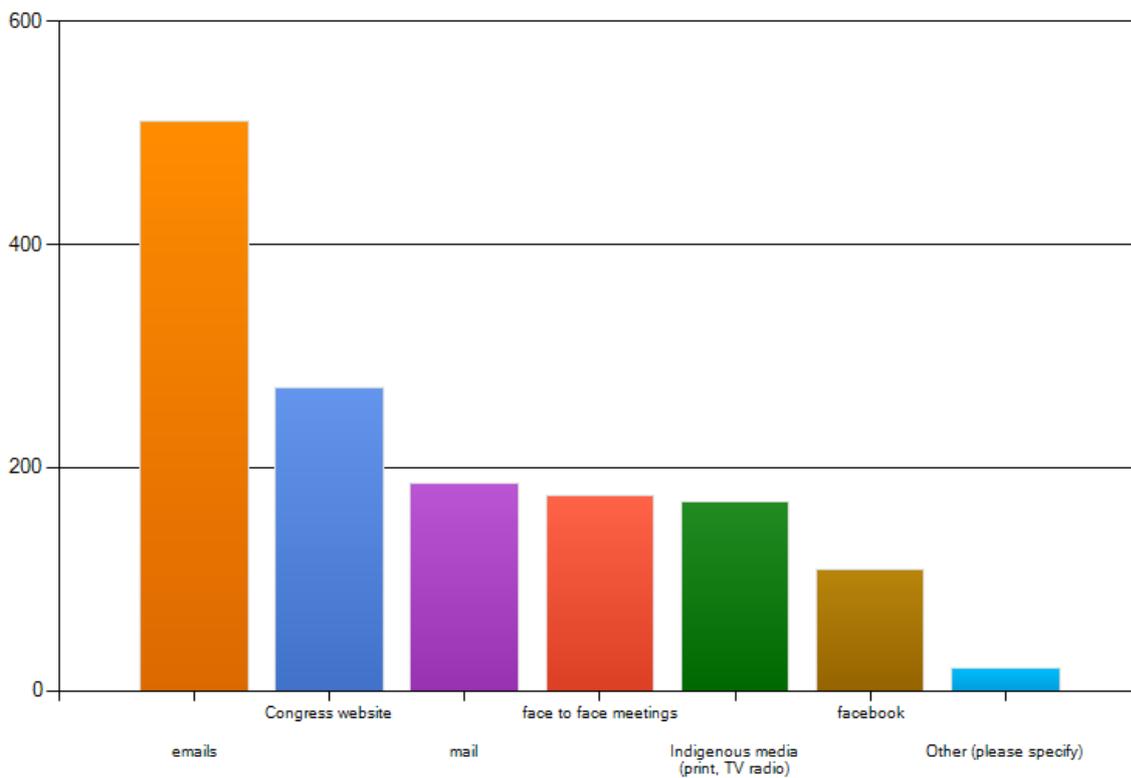


Findings on communication with Congress

The survey asked a number of questions relating to the way members wished to communicate with the Congress. The first was on how members wished to receive information. As shown below, the most popular channel was email, followed by website and then mail, meetings and Indigenous media.

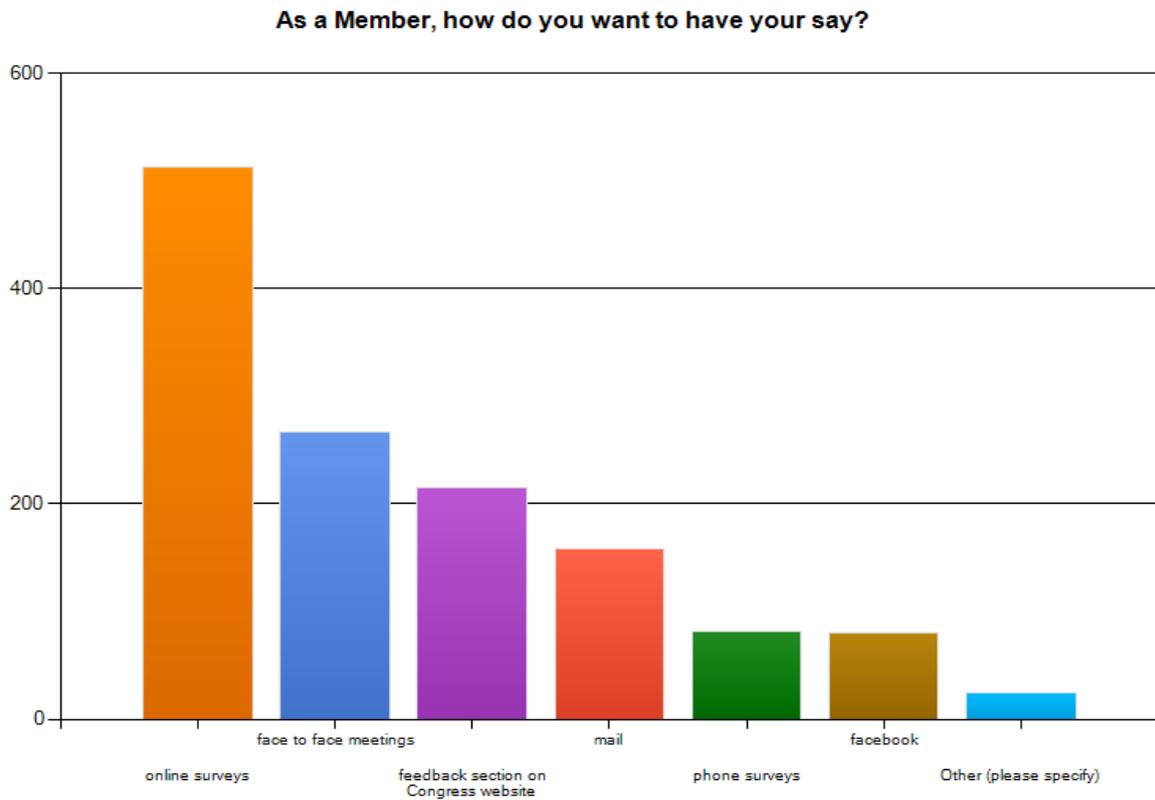
Figure 2: How members would like to receive information

As a Member, how would you like to receive information from Congress? (you may tick more than one).



In regard to how members wished to have their say, there was strong support for online surveys. Other popular methods were meetings, a feedback section on the website and mail.

Figure 3: How members wish to have their say



Findings on policy priorities

Members were asked to prioritise which policy areas the Congress should focus on. Members had a list of 54 areas and issues to choose from.

The top 10 policy areas and issues were:

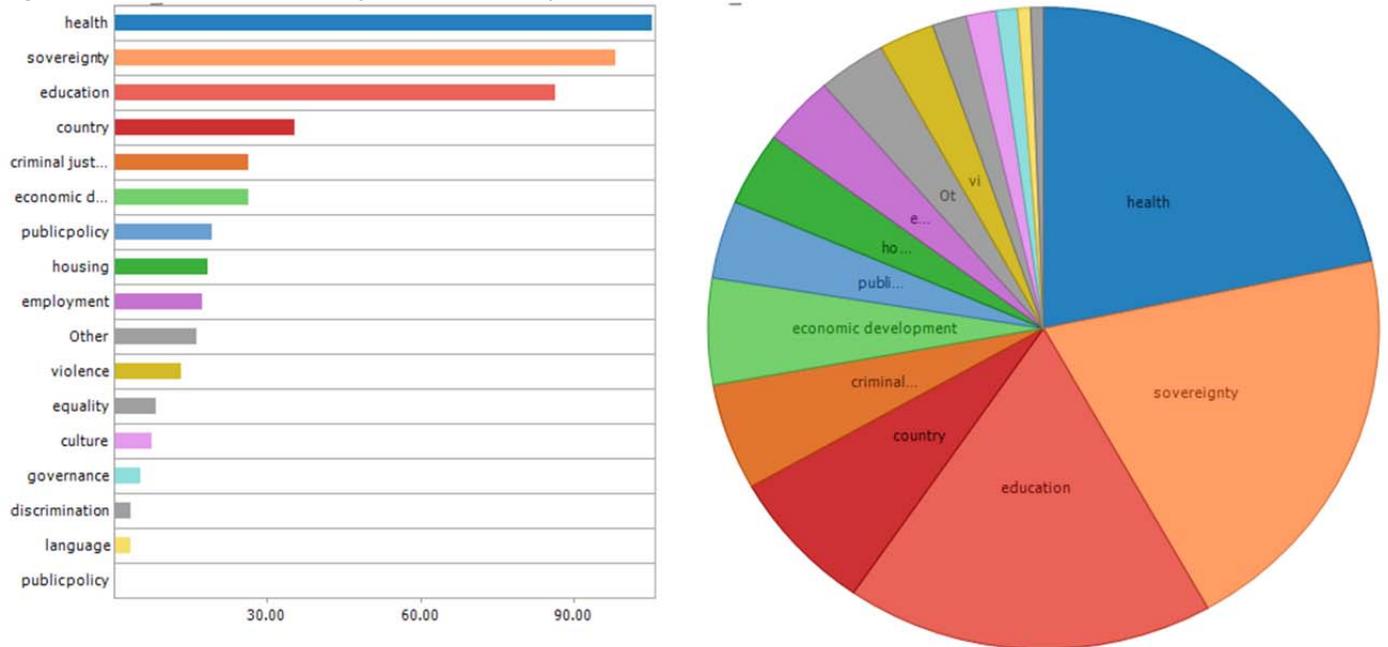
Table 2: Top 10 policy issues from the survey

| Issue | Number of 1st Priorities |
|---|--------------------------|
| sovereignty – constitutional recognition | 55 |
| health – mental health and emotional wellbeing | 42 |
| sovereignty – treaties and agreements | 37 |
| education – early childhood | 31 |
| education – school and transitions (to work or higher ed) | 31 |
| health – access to health care | 21 |
| health – general | 20 |
| country - land rights, native title and land access | 17 |
| health – chronic disease | 16 |
| Other | 16 |

However, some areas (such as health) had a larger number of issues members could choose. As a result, when the individual areas/issues are combined into just areas (e.g. combining all the health issues into one single area), it is possible to see the broad priorities of members that is shown below in Figure 4

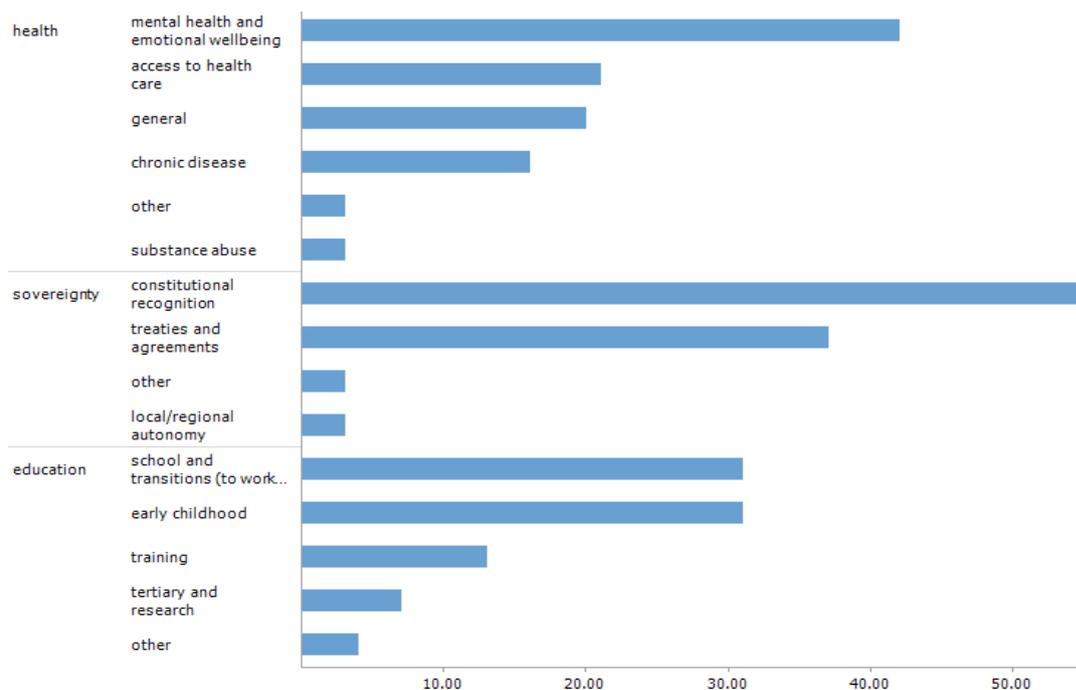
The first three areas of health, education and sovereignty accounted for over half of all '1st priorities'. It should be noted that a number of respondents (143) skipped this question and the graphs below are based on the 487 who did respond.

Figure 4: Member allocation of 1st Priorities by Area



Priorities within the top three Priority Areas are below in Figure 5.

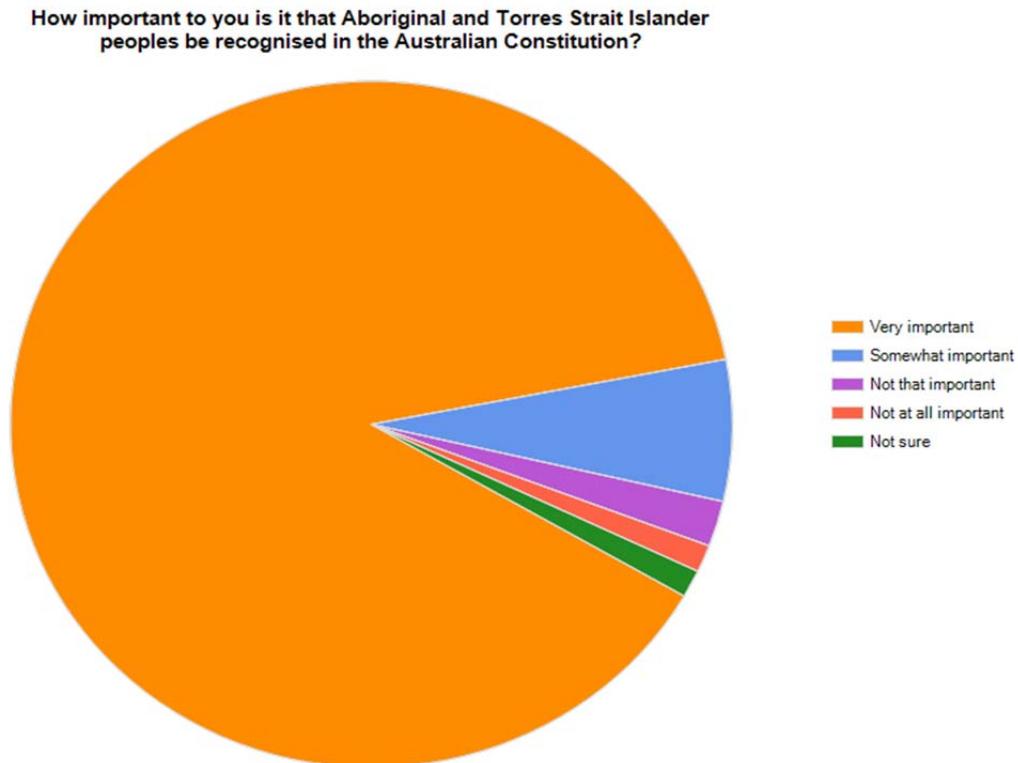
Figure 5: Further policy prioritisation



Findings on Constitutional Recognition

The survey asked a number of questions about recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian Constitution.

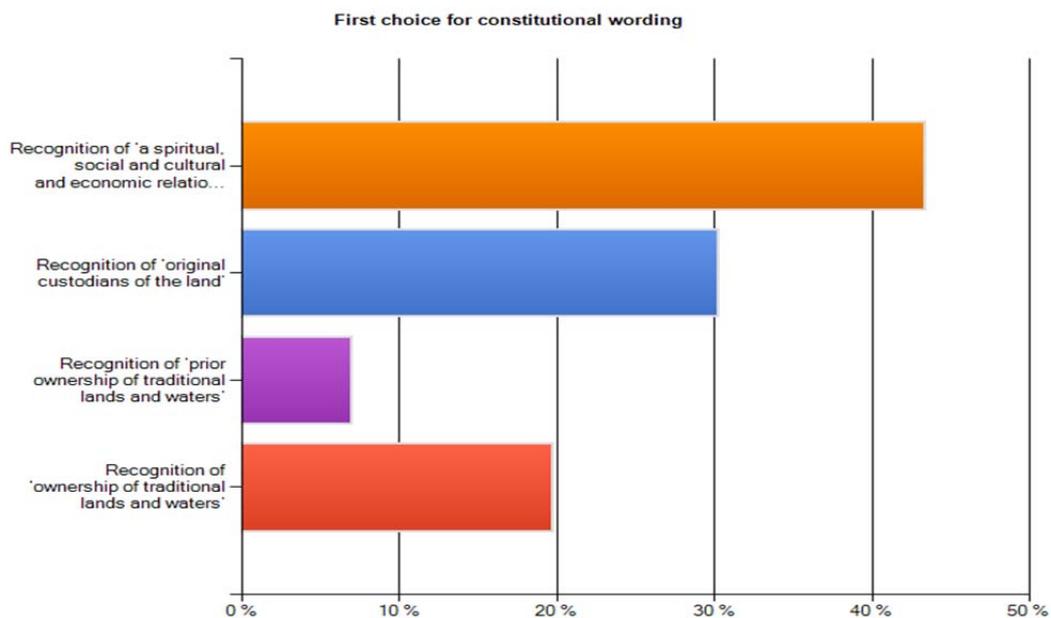
Figure 6: Recognition in the Constitution



Of the 466 people who answered this question, these results indicated that it is very important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be recognised in the Constitution (88.6%). This broadly correlates with the surveys completed by Delegates and indicate that the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution is very important to members and Delegates of the National Congress.

The next question suggested some phrases that might be used to recognise the special relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with their traditional lands and waters.

Figure 7: Constitutional Wording

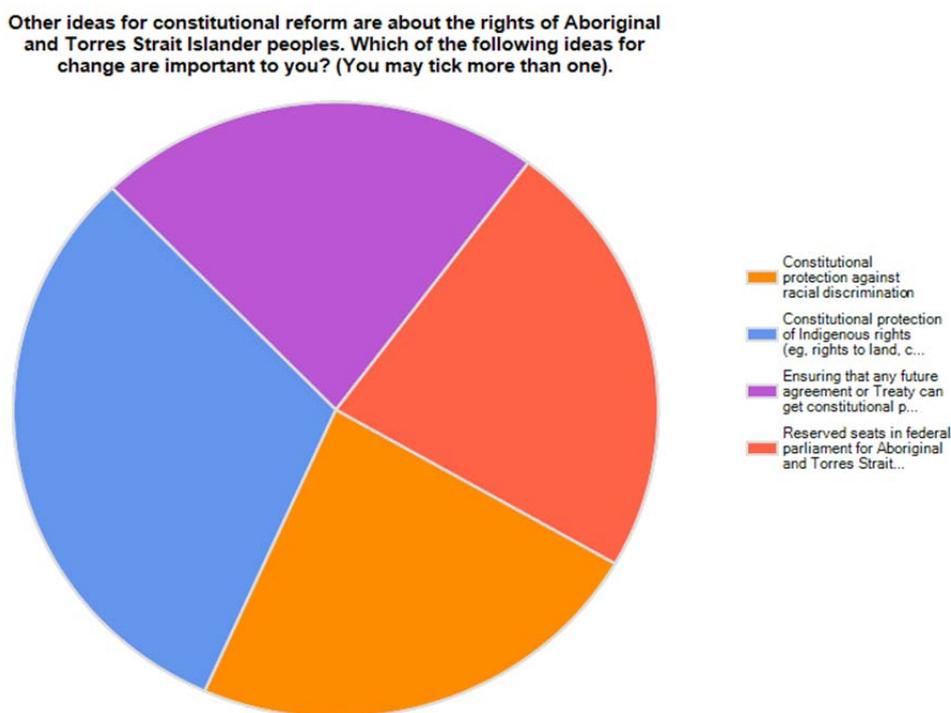


Of the 448 respondents who answered this question, recognition of ‘a spiritual, social, cultural and economic relationship with traditional lands and waters’ was the most popular first choice with 194 total selections and 43.3% of members indicating that it was their first choice.

Recognition of ‘original custodians of the land’ received the second highest vote, with 30.1% of members selecting it as their first choice.

The members surveyed selected recognition of ‘prior ownership’ as least likely to be their first choice, with only 6.9% stating that it was their first choice. These results are similar to the results gained from the delegate surveys. The survey also suggested further ideas for constitutional reform regarding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (Note: Respondents were permitted to select more than one idea.)

Figure 8: Other ideas for constitutional reform



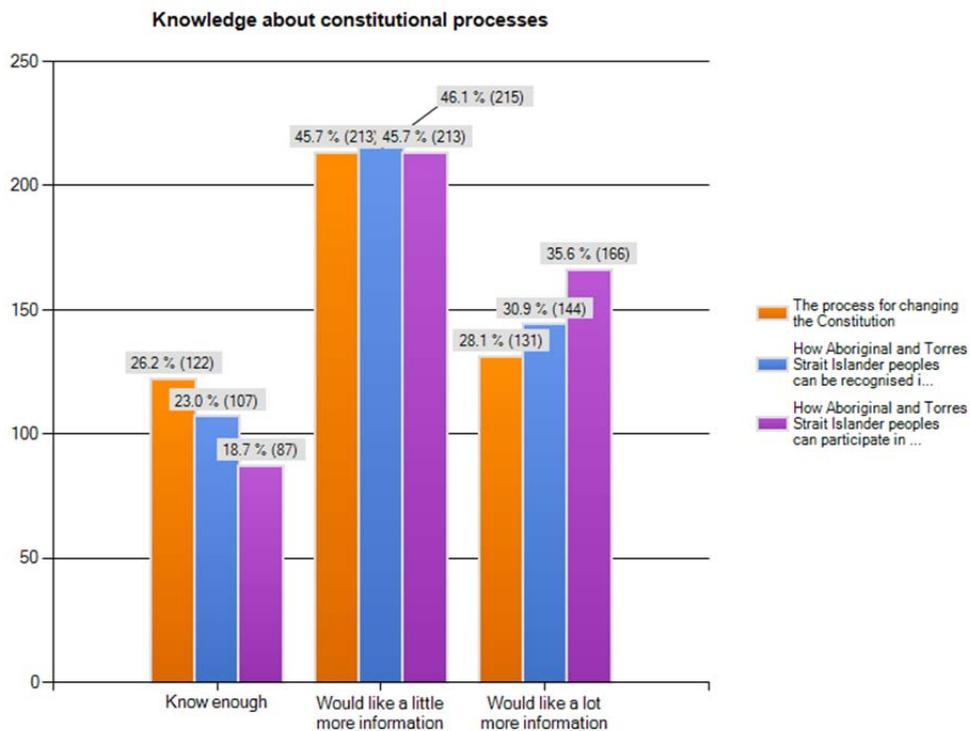
488 people answered this question and 77.9% of them said that constitutional protection of Indigenous rights was important to them.

Constitutional protection against racial discrimination was the next most frequently selected with 58.4% members choosing this option as important to them.

57.9% of members surveyed stated that reserved seats in federal parliament were important to them. Constitutional protection of any future agreement or treaty received the lowest support; however the majority of members still indicated that it was important to them (56.0%).

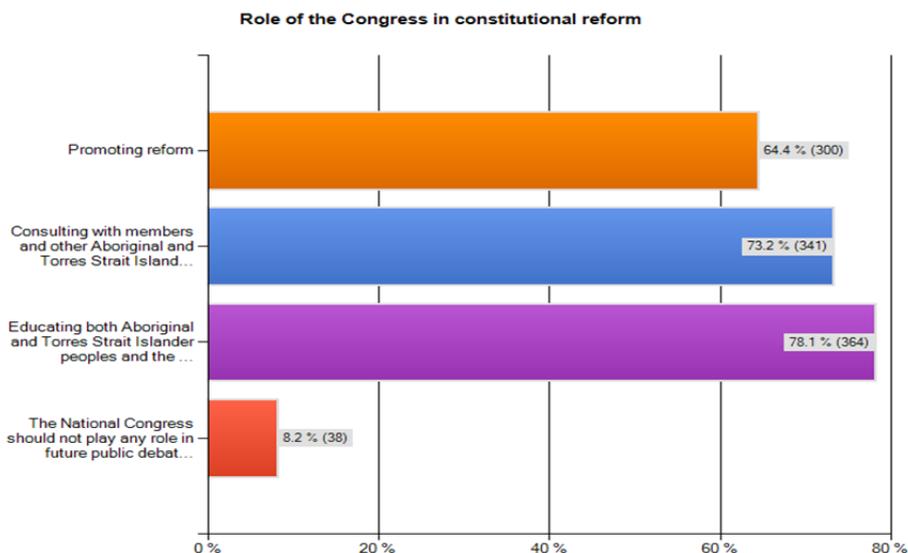
When asked if they felt they knew enough about constitutional processes, or if they would like to have more information about them, most members said they would like to know at least a little more information about the process for changing the constitution, how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be recognised in the constitution and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can participate in the debate about constitutional change.

Figure 9: Knowledge about Constitutional change



The survey also asked what role the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples should have in future public debate about constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? (Note: Respondents were permitted to select more than one of the four options)

Figure 9: Congress’s role in constitutional reform



Only a small minority of the 466 who answered this question said that the National Congress should not play any role in future public debate (8.2%). A high percentage of members selected educating both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the general public (78.1%).

A high percentage of members thought the National Congress should also consult with members and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as promote reform. This data is similar to the results received in the delegate survey.

[ENDS]