

## Communiqué

### **Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

The Panel charged with advising the Commonwealth Government on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples could be recognised in the Constitution, convened for the eighth time on 7 and 8 December to finalise its report to the Government.

Under its terms of reference the Panel is required to recommend the form of constitutional change that is likely to attract the support of the Australian people.

In discussion with the Panel at its final meeting in Melbourne, the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Jenny Macklin emphasised the importance of the Panel's task, not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but for all Australians.

In order to do justice to the volume of submissions received and the views gathered in public consultations, the Panel has sought and been granted an extension of time to submit its report.

The report will now be submitted before the end of January next year ensuring the Panel provides the best possible advice to Government.

Since its appointment in December 2010, Panel members have reached out to as many Australians as possible – in person, online, through the media and through representative bodies – to talk about the importance of constitutional recognition.

Over 200 public consultations and other meetings were held in 84 communities in metropolitan, regional and remote communities and more than 3,500 submissions were received.

Members of the Panel are very aware of the great responsibility they have to clearly convey to the Government and the Australian people, the ideas, views and hopes entrusted to them through these public consultations, other meetings and submissions.

To achieve this, a comprehensive, independent analysis of the submissions and consultations has been undertaken to measure the level of support for various options, themes and issues.

The Panel has also sought advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, constitutional law experts and commissioned Newspoll to undertake national polling and focus groups to test public opinion.

The national survey found there was majority support for constitutional recognition in all states and territories. There was also majority support for the removal of sections of the Constitution that permit discrimination on the basis of race.

Similarly, high levels of support for constitutional recognition have been identified in the submissions received by the Panel.

Panel members have been heartened by the positive response to constitutional recognition from the Australian people and look forward to presenting their report to the Government.