

Indigenous constitutional recognition: public awareness has risen, poll shows

Polling commissioned by Recognise shows 63% of Australians know about proposal but support has remained level as political momentum stalls



Indigenous leader Patrick Dodson arrives at a meeting in July to consider the model for a referendum on Indigenous recognition. Photograph: David Moir/AAP

[Lenore Taylor](#) Political editor

Tuesday 10 November 2015 07.46 AEDT Last modified on Tuesday 10 November 2015 08.10 AEDT

New polling shows a sharp increase in public awareness of the arguments for Indigenous recognition in the constitution but no big rise in support for the idea, as the political process to make the change remains stalled.

The polling, commissioned by Recognise from Polity Research, showed awareness of Aboriginal constitutional recognition had climbed from 37% in March to 63%, and from 52% to 73% among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

It also showed that if the referendum had been held at the time of the survey, 79% of the general Australian community and 85% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians would have voted yes, broadly similar to the results in March.

“We believe this rise in support was in part due to the widespread media attention when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives met the then prime minister and opposition leader in Sydney in July,” said joint campaign director of Recognise, Tanya Hosch.

She called on [Malcolm Turnbull](#) and Bill Shorten to reach agreement on a new referendum council to steer a series of indigenous meetings scheduled by the Abbott government to agree on a model for constitutional change to take to a referendum in 2017.

“This surge of awareness and support can’t be taken for granted. The prime minister and the opposition leader must urgently reach agreement on the composition of the referendum council so the next big step towards a model and a referendum can be taken,” Hosch said.

Last week Turnbull and Shorten held a phone hook up with Indigenous leaders to discuss the council and an announcement appeared imminent, but none came.

It is understood the co-chairs of the original expert panel on the issue, the leading lawyer Mark Leibler and the Indigenous leader Patrick Dodson, are among the members, but the full makeup has not been concluded.

The former prime minister Tony Abbott agreed in July to fund a series of conventions to reach agreement on a model, after various Indigenous leaders advanced different ideas. The first meeting was supposed to have happened in September.

Shorten used a visit to Uluru on the 30th anniversary of its handover to traditional owners to say Indigenous recognition could not afford to be “empty poetry” and had lay to rest “the ghosts of the discrimination” haunting the constitution.