

# Strong support for Indigenous treaty and constitutional referendum, poll says



- [Fergus Hunter](#)

Support for a treaty between Indigenous people and the government is high and rivals that of the majority backing constitutional recognition, a new poll has found.

The concept of a formal treaty or treaties has long been popular with many Indigenous advocates and has recently achieved broader traction, with the [Victorian government in historic talks](#), [prominent voices calling for the option to be considered alongside recognition](#) and [Opposition Leader Bill Shorten expressing openness](#).

According to the new survey from JWS Research, 59 per cent of voters support a treaty, including 28 per cent who strongly feel that way. This compares to very low opposition – 16 per cent – and a large undecided cohort of 25 per cent.

In May, Mr Shorten said he wanted a conversation about a "post-constitutional recognition settlement with Indigenous people" and agreed that this could include a treaty.



*Opposition Leader Bill Shorten and Labor senator Pat Dodson. Photo: Alex Ellinghausen*

[Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull slapped down the idea](#), saying his counterpart showed a lack of "discipline" and endangered momentum leading into a referendum.

The research says there is majority backing across demographics regardless of gender, age, state and political leaning, although there is higher support among left-leaning voters than conservatives.

The JWS results also show support for an amendment to the constitution to recognise Aboriginal people is one point higher at 60 per cent. This includes a majority across all states and territories, necessary to it passing.

Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion reiterated his support this week for a vote to be held in May next year, the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum that successfully determined that Aboriginal people would be counted in the census.

Recognise campaign director Tanya Hosch and Labor senator and "Father of Reconciliation" Pat Dodson have said that treaty and recognition are compatible and should both be considered. The Greens also support the dual proposals.

The chairman of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council, Warren Mundine, and National Congress of Australia's First Peoples co-chair Geoff Scott also back a legally binding treaty.

The Victorian government recently took the first steps toward establishing formal legal agreements with Indigenous communities in that state, with some predicting results within two years.

Treaties have been adopted between first nations people and governments in New Zealand and Canada.