

**Report on our ‘Listening Post’
on the referendum at the
Tuggeranong Southfest
November 2022**



Active Democracy Bean

*What did we do–
What did we learn–
What do we recommend–*

**“Democracy is not a spectator
sport”**

Background

On the 11th and 18th November two members of [Active Democracy Bean \(ADB\)](#) held a 'Listening Post' on the upcoming referendum at the Tuggeranong Southfest. Southfest is a 16-day community festival to unite the Tuggeranong community through showcasing what Tuggeranong has to offer through markets, dance, art, music and more. It is run by Tuggeranong Community Council.

ADB is an action group of The [Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy \(CAPaD\)](#), which aims to increase community engagement in democratic processes in the Federal electorate of Bean. We implemented one of our objectives at Southfest, which is to conduct community education projects that provide safe spaces for discussion of topics that enhance democratic processes. We are focussing on the referendum for 2022-23.

What did we do?

The 'Listening Post' consisted of a large corflute of the Voice to Parliament, a display of the educational material from the website [fromtheheart](#), and a board with either 'Active Democracy Bean Listening Post' or 'Come and have a yarn with us.'



We approached people passing by our stall or started a conversation with those who seemed interested in our display.

Our questions were:

- Do you know about the upcoming referendum?
- What do you know about it?
- What are your thoughts and feelings on the Voice to Parliament?
- Do you have any questions or would like more information on it?

We had conversations with forty-eight people over 5 hours, one 2.5-hour session at the 'Battle of the bands' (twenty-five people, more than half were young people of voting age); the other 2.5-hour session at the 'Rock and Roll' event (twenty-three people, no youth). Another session was cancelled due to windy weather.

What did we learn?

Overall, 41% of people knew about the referendum. However, there was a marked difference between the two groups. At the Rock and Roll, 78% knew about the referendum whereas at the Battle of the Bands, only 8% did. Combining both groups, once they were informed about what the

referendum entailed, 95% were positive about including a first nations voice to parliament enshrined in the constitution.

When we questioned why they felt that First Nations People should be recognised in the constitution, their responses were uniformly:

- It's the right thing to do
- They have been here for so long
- Something needs to change

Those that were not supportive gave the following reasons for their views:

- Aboriginal people already have too much
- Why don't we get a special mention in the constitution

What do we recommend?

Our small intervention at a community event in Tuggeranong gives an insight into the community understanding of and support for a referendum.

- 1) The communities understanding that a referendum is occurring next year, and what it is about, may be highly segmented according to demographic and other factors. Any education campaign should target diverse groups in the community.
- 2) Whilst some know that a referendum is occurring, many do not. The time for the provision of education and information is now, prior to any polarisation that may occur as the time for the referendum draws closer.
- 3) There is a strong belief in the fairness of the referendum and this should be built upon in subsequent educational campaigns.
- 4) We were supported by David Smith's office for photocopying and the loan of a corflute stand. We are not associated with any political party and welcome support by others in a similar way. All support will be publicly acknowledged.

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