



Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission



Australian Government
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

28 February 2023

Referendum on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Dear Secretaries and Agency Heads

Across the Australian Public Service (APS), public servants are providing support to the Government to implement a referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Australian Constitution.

It is timely to remind ourselves, as leaders of the APS, of our obligations to both build continued confidence in the integrity of the APS; and ensure the wellbeing of all of our employees.

The APS is entrusted by the Government and the Australian community to undertake important work and plays an integral role in supporting and delivering Government policy. As public servants, we are all obligated to support the Government of the day, work with impartiality and ensure a safe workplace for all employees.

The upcoming referendum is an opportune time to remind our employees of their ongoing obligations to continue to behave impartially in connection with their employment, and to uphold the good reputation of their agency and the APS at all times.

The Australian Public Service Commission provides guidance to staff, through existing publications such as the [APS Values and Code in Practice Guide](#), and the [Social Media Guide](#) and the Ethics Advisory Service, to assist them in this regard. The Commission will also engage with the Chief Operating Officers Committee to remind them of this guidance.

During this important national conversation, which is already underway, we understand that some of our staff, particularly our First Nations colleagues, may find some of the commentary and public debate distressing. We all have a duty and responsibility to ensure all APS workplaces are psychologically and culturally safe.

Wherever possible, we should encourage staff who are experiencing any negative effects or distress during this time, to engage with employee support mechanisms including Employee Assistance Programs, staff employee networks such as the Indigenous Employee Network, Indigenous Champions and Indigenous Liaison Officers.

The referendum will be a significant event for Australia and its people. In its lead-up, we have confidence you will safeguard employees' well-being and the institutional integrity of the APS.

Peter Woolcott AO
Australian Public Service Commissioner

Professor Glyn Davis AC
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister
and Cabinet