

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
LAID ON THE TABLE**

13 Nov 2025

South Australian First Nations Voice 2025 Annual Report

FIRST NATIONS VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

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Reporting Period:

28 November 2024 – 13 November 2025

Date of Report Submission:

13 November 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

The First Nations Voice to Parliament acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters across South Australia and pays deep respect to Elders past and present. We recognise the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country, culture, and community, and affirm our commitment to walking together in partnership towards a future grounded in truth, justice, and self-determination.

Message from State Voice Presiding Members

Over the past year, the South Australian First Nations Voice to Parliament (**SA Voice**) has continued to grow in strength, purpose, and reach. This reporting period has been one of significant progress, learning, and collaboration as we have deepened our engagement with First Nations communities across the six (6) Local Voice Regions and strengthened our relationships with the South Australian Parliament and Government, and key partners and advocates for First Nations priorities.

Through regular meetings, community engagements, and input into policies and laws that impact First Nations peoples, the SA Voice has worked to ensure that First Nations perspectives are not only heard but actively shape decision-making.

Our focus has been on establishing strong foundations, building governance structures, refining communication pathways, and embedding processes that ensure accountability and transparency. These efforts have positioned the SA Voice to represent our communities with integrity and impact in the years ahead. A Strategic Plan has been developed to ensure the SA Voice maintains its momentum. It will be released soon.

The *First Nations Voice Act 2023 (the Act)* sets out clear objectives; to strengthen self-determination, enhance representation, and create meaningful opportunities for First Nations people to influence policies and decisions that affect their lives. This year, we have made measurable progress towards these goals. The establishment of the Local Voices and the coordination between their bodies and the State Voice have ensured that grassroots community priorities inform state-level advocacy.

We have provided formal advice to government on key matters such as housing, education, health, justice, cultural heritage, and youth, demonstrating how the Act's intent is being realised in practice.

We also undertook steps to increase accessibility and awareness of the SA Voice's role within communities, ensuring that our people understand how to connect, contribute, and hold us to account. We launched an official Facebook page through which we communicate our activities. The page has attracted more than 20,000 views since its launch in July 2025 and will continue to grow as a key tool to report back on our work.

While there is more work to be done, and the road is long, the foundations of a truly representative and effective SA Voice model are now firmly in place.

Our progress has been made possible through strong partnerships. We acknowledge the support of the South Australian Parliament and Government, regional and remote communities, Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (**ACCOS**), key advocates and organisations for First Nations priorities, and the many community members who have provided invaluable guidance and feedback. Collaboration with these partners has allowed us to align efforts and amplify impact across a range of policy areas.

We also recognise the challenges that have emerged, from resource constraints to the complexities of establishing a new representative structure. Navigating these challenges has required patience, adaptability, and unity of purpose.

Among our key achievements this year are the establishment of consistent engagement mechanisms between State and Local Voices, the delivery of our first formal and detailed advice to Cabinet on what matters to our people, and the development of a clear forward agenda grounded in community priorities. These milestones mark important steps towards the long-term vision of the Act and SA Voice model, a future where First Nations voices are integral to the governance of our State.

However, health inequities continue to shorten First Nations lives by a decade or more. Aboriginal women remain the fastest-growing prison population in South Australia, and youth suicide remains unacceptably high in some regions. These realities remind us that the Voice's work is not symbolic. It is about closing the gap between policy and lived experience. It is about holding both government, Community and the Voice accountable for achieving better outcomes with integrity, transparency, and hope.

The independence of the Voice remains central to its credibility. Operating separately from government ensures that advice is genuine, based on community needs, and free from political influence. Yet, independence also brings responsibility to demonstrate accountability, deliver impact, and balance ambition with practicality.

True partnership requires time and trust. The progress achieved so far proves that such partnership works. From commitments to housing design and bail accommodation, from Engagement Hearings to Cabinet Meetings, these are not symbolic exercises, they represent structural shifts. The Voice has moved from being consulted after decisions are made, to being involved from the outset.

While challenges persist in local capacity, the Voice continues to demonstrate what is possible when First Nations communities and government work together with respect, integrity, and shared purpose.

The progress achieved in 2025 is tangible evidence that genuine partnership delivers change that endures. We look forward to building on this and last year's successes and continuing the journey towards a more inclusive and self-determined future for all First Nations people in South Australia.



Ms Danni Smith
Joint Presiding Member
State Voice



Mr Leeroy Bilney
Joint Presiding Member
State Voice

13 November 2025

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1. Preliminary

This report is presented to the joint sitting of Parliament to meet the statutory reporting requirements under section 38 (1) (b) of the *First Nations Voice Act 2023*.

This report outlines key activities, recommendations made to government, community engagements, and reflections on progress towards greater representation and equity for First Nations people.

The report also serves as a record of achievements, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening the SA Voice's role in shaping policies and decisions that impact First Nations people in South Australia.

Background

The SA Voice is established and operates under the Act as an advisory body to the South Australian Parliament and Government and as a representative body for First Nations people of South Australia.

The SA Voice is independent of the direction or control by the Crown or any Minister or officer of the Crown and is not an agency or instrumentality of the Crown (and is not, to avoid doubt, a public sector agency under the *Public Sector Act 2009*).

The Act outlines the SA Voice's mandate to provide advice to SA Parliament, Government and other organisations on matters of significance to First Nations communities, ensuring that the voices of First Nations people are heard and embedded in decision-making processes and practices on laws and policies that impact them.

The SA Voice achieves this goal through its six (6) Local First Nations Voices (**Local Voices**) that represent First Nations communities across defined geographic areas. Local Voices have direct engagement with community members on regional priorities and concerns. The Local Voice regions are:

- Region 1: Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central)
- Region 2: Far North
- Region 3: Flinders and Upper North
- Region 4: Murraylands, Riverland and South East
- Region 5: West and West Coast
- Region 6: York and Mid North

Members of Local Voices are responsible for gathering the views of the communities in their regions and presenting them to the State First Nations Voice (**State Voice**). The State Voice is comprised of the Presiding Members of each region and is responsible for providing advice to the South Australian Parliament, Government and other organisations on matters of significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A visual representation of the SA Voice model is shown below:



The Act sets out the governance, membership, and accountability requirements of the SA Voice, providing the statutory foundation for its establishment and functions. Through these provisions, the Act embeds a mechanism for ongoing and structured dialogue between First Nations people and the South Australian Government.

The establishment of the SA Voice advances key government policy directions and pledges to work in partnership with First Nations peoples in policy design and delivery. The Voice provides the institutional mechanism to support reconciliation and truth-telling, address the impacts of colonisation, progress the implementation of South Australia's plan for Closing the Gap, and deliver culturally safe, community led and locally responsive services. Importantly, the Voice embeds Aboriginal representation into the heart of government processes and strengthens accountability for progress against shared goals.

2. Local Voices

The Local Voices comprise representatives elected by First Nations communities across the designated Local Voice regions of South Australia. Members bring local knowledge, cultural authority, and leadership to ensure regional priorities are reflected in State Voice deliberations.

In accordance with the requirements of the Act, each Local Voice is required to meet at least four (4) times per calendar year. During 2025, meetings were held in community settings and online to maximise accessibility and participation.

In addition to their meetings, Local Voices undertook extensive consultation with First Nations communities through engagement sessions centred around the three (3) Focus Area of the SA Voice in 2025. These sessions provided opportunities for community members to raise regional priorities with their Local Voice representatives and offer solutions to identified issues.

From early in the year, it was clear that the matters important to First Nations people in South Australia were common across the six (6) Local Voice regions. Recurring themes identified from talking with community through regional engagements included the need for:

- Improved housing access, new construction, housing maintenance and associated infrastructure, especially in regional and remote communities
- Health services that provide a holistic and culturally safe approach to rehabilitation, mental health, and disability supports available in our communities
- Supporting local economic development and employment pathways to promote community development and equitable access to culturally appropriate services
- Preservation of language, culture, and Country
- Strengthened partnerships with government agencies to ensure consistent follow-up and feedback to communities
- Addressing inequalities in the justice system for youth and adults and ongoing concern about the rising number and overrepresentation of First Nations people in the justice system.

By engaging directly with their communities, Local Voices were able to provide advice to the State Voice on matters including housing, justice, economic development, education, health, land and water management, and cultural heritage protection. These inputs formed the foundation for the State Voice's formal advice to government and Parliament across the year.

Region 1 - Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central)

The Central region selected the name Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi, which means 'Voices Speaking Together' in Kaurna. In 2025, the region strengthened its advocacy for community healing, health, housing, and justice reform.

Community engagements at Mawson Lakes and Smithfield Plains highlighted critical issues including inequities in aged care, lack of supports for disability and chronic health management, the need for greater education support, and the need for culturally sensitive health and mental health services. Members consistently heard community calls for focus on housing construction, design and maintenance and the development of Aboriginal housing and health workforces. These insights informed the State Voice's focus areas and how it engaged with the government about them.

During 2025, Region 1 Members contributed to major policy discussions, including a submission on the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1998*, about which they met with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Members also initiated visits to the Adelaide Women's Prison and Yatala Labour Prison. This provided insights that directly informed the 25 July 2025 State Voice Engagement Hearing with government relating to Justice and Policing.

Members from the region also participated in several government workshops, including about the Department for Correctional Services' (DCS) Aboriginal Elders and Respected Leaders Visiting Program (AERLVP), and Attorney-General's Department's (AGD) Serious Repeat Young Offenders Roundtable.

Public visibility of the SA Voice increased through supporting the Electoral Commission SA's (ECSA) supplementary election information sessions, community stalls and school collaborations. Members were also active participants in national events such as NAIDOC and World Suicide Prevention Day.

Region 1 covers the following local council areas:

Adelaide Hills Council	City of Onkaparinga
Campbell City Council	City of Playford
City of Adelaide	City of Port Adelaide Enfield
City of Burnside	City of Prospect
City of Charles Sturt	City of Salisbury
City of Holdfast Bay	City of Tea Tree Gully
City of Marion	City of Unley
City of Mitcham	City of West Torrens
City of Norwood, Payneham and St Peters	Mount Barker District Council
	Town of Walkerville

Membership during 2025

Ms Susan Dixon (Presiding Member)
Mr Douglas Clinch (Presiding Member)
Ms Jennifer Caruso (appointed 12 December 2024)
Ms Rosalind Coleman
Ms April Lawrie
Mr Robert Leidig
Mr Anthony Minniecon
Ms Deb Moyle
Mr Major 'Moogy' Sumner
Ms Marnie O'Meara (elected 24 March 2025)
Mr Scott Wilson

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1:	3 March 2025, Living Kaurna Centre at Warriparinga Wetlands, Bedford Park
Meeting 2:	19 June 2025, Watershed Function Centre at Greenfields Wetlands, Mawson Lakes
Meeting 3:	26 September 2025, John McVeity Centre, Smithfield Plains
Meeting 4:	3 December 2025, Neporendi Aboriginal Community Centre, Christie Downs*

Community engagements in 2025

Mawson Lakes:	19 June 2025, Watershed Function Centre at Greenfields Wetlands
Adelaide:	11 July 2025, NAIDOC March and stall at Family Festival, Tarntanyangga
Adelaide prisons:	24 July 2025, visited First Nations residents in Adelaide Women's Prison and Yatala Labour Prison; toured facilities
Smithfield Plains:	26 September 2025, John McVeity Centre
Christie Downs:	3 December 2025, Neporendi Aboriginal Community Centre*

* Scheduled dates

Region 2 – Far North

The Far North region continued to ensure Anangu voices are heard across both metropolitan and remote communities.

Community engagements in Coober Pedy and across the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, in Pukatja, Umuwa, Amata, Fregon, and Mimili, brought forward priorities around health, housing and education. Members spoke with communities about housing design, locations and access in both towns and homelands, and the need for basic community infrastructure and local employment.

Members listened to solutions put forward by their communities, including transparency in service provision, better community education, development of a healing centre on the APY Lands and local recruiting to fill community-facing roles.

Members also held a community engagement in Port Adelaide for Anangu living off-country. This engagement emphasised the impact of limited homeland services that drives Anangu to cities, the consequent strain on urban housing, and demand for cultural safety, health, wellbeing and return to country services.

Presiding Member Ms Melissa Thompson also participated in workshops with the Department for Human Services (DHS) in relation to Anangu living in Edwards Park. Members advocated for the development of alternative accommodation options for First Nations people who are required to travel to Adelaide to access services.

Far North members met on the Lands with representatives of Kulintja Kutju, an organisation working across the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Lands that empowers Anangu leaders to have a proper say about government funding, services, and programs.

During the Cabinet visit to the APY Lands in October, representatives of the Far North Voice were able to meet with the Premier and Deputy Premier in Umuwa. The meeting provided members an opportunity to talk about the priorities of their region and elevate the voices of their people.

Region 2 covers the following local council areas:

District Council of Coober Pedy

Municipal Council of Roxby Downs

APY Lands

Membership during 2025

Ms Melissa Thompson (Presiding Member)

Mr Mark Campbell (Presiding Member)

Ms Dawn Brown (resigned 26 May 2025)

Mr Christopher Dodd

Miss Dharma Ducasse-Singer

Mr Donald Fraser

Mr Johnathon Lyons

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 2 April 2025, Mercure Alice Springs, Alice Springs NT

Meeting 2: 5 June 2025, TAFE SA, Coober Pedy SA

Meeting 3: 27 August 2025, online

Meeting 4: 27 November 2025, Indulkana SA*

Community engagements in 2025

Coober Pedy: 5 June 2025, TAFE SA Coober Pedy and Umoona Tjutagku Health Service

Umoona: 6 June 2025, Umoona Aged Care

Port Adelaide: 25 June 2025, Tauondi College #

Pukatja (APY Lands): 9 September 2025, Pukatja Community Platform

Umuwa (APY Lands): 9 September 2025, TAFE SA Umuwa

Amata (APY Lands): 10 September 2025, TAFE SA Amata

Fregon (APY Lands): 11 September 2025, outside Fregon Store

Mimili (APY Lands): 11 September 2025, PY Ku Office

Indulkana (APY Lands): 27 November 2025 *

Umoona: 28 November 2025 *

Community engagement for Anangu living in Adelaide

* Scheduled dates

Region 3 – Flinders and Upper North

Flinders and Upper North members focused on strengthening public communication and amplifying community voices during 2025. Meetings in Port Augusta, Leigh Creek, and online helped refine the region's messaging and advocacy strategy.

Community engagements in Copley, Nepabunna, and Hawker revealed priorities around the need for greater community infrastructure, access to housing, and the protection of sacred sites in the Flinders region.

Members heard from communities about their environmental health concerns relating to the environmental impacts of local industry which, due to the absence of local health services and treatments for chronic conditions in community following clinic closures, is forcing many to relocate to bigger cities, or travel great distances to receive care.

Members communicated back to government the community call for power security and water infrastructure upgrades, with some remote communities losing access to power, food and water when infrastructure fails during environmental events. They also advocated for roadworks to reduce environmental dust, alleviate flood risks and improve access for emergency services throughout the Flinders.

During the year, members heard concerns in relation to the outcomes of a SA Police (SAPOL) review into an incident of alleged excessive force against a First Nations community member within their region, a matter of deep concern that was raised up to the State Voice. The matter was addressed in meetings between the State Voice and government, and informed recommendations made to the Premier about police culture.

The region has advocated for a Healing Centre in Port Augusta and deeper collaboration with SAPOL to improve community relations, while contributing to national conversations, presenting at public forums, and working to ensure that information flows efficiently between communities and the State Voice.

Region 3 covers the following local council areas:

Port Augusta City Council
Flinders Ranges Council
City of Whyalla

District Council of Orroroo and
Carrieton (a portion).

It also includes:

Leigh Creek
Wilpena

Arkaroola

Membership during 2025

Ms Candace Champion (Presiding Member)

Mr Robert Singleton (Presiding Member)

Ms Kerri Coulthard

Mr Ralph Coulthard

Mr Charles Jackson

Ms Lavene Ngatokorua

Mr Tjiangu “TJ” Thomas

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 19 March 2025, Central Oval Community Sporting Hub, Port Augusta SA

Meeting 2: 28 May 2025, Leigh Creek Outback Resort, Leigh Creek SA

Meeting 3: 29 September 2025, online

Meeting 4: 21 November 2025, Port Augusta SA *

Community engagements in 2025

Copley: 27 May 2025, Copley Bush Bakery and Quandong Cafe

Nepabunna: 28 May 2025, Nipapanha Community Aboriginal Corporation

Hawker: 29 May 2025, Hawker Community Sports Centre

Port Augusta: 21 November 2025 *

* Scheduled dates

Region 4 – Murraylands, Riverland and South East

The Murraylands, Riverland and South East region made significant strides in community connection and advocacy. Early in the year, members supported the Electoral Commission's supplementary election information sessions. They also continued to build relationships with local service providers, embedding community perspectives in future planning.

Community engagement in Victor Harbor brought forward strong community voices on cost-of-living pressures, housing insecurity, and access to services, as well as important discussions about the emergence of the algal bloom in the region. Members connected session attendees with current information about government services to support access to housing and individual education outcomes for school students.

Justice and Policing issues were a common theme across the region. Members undertook multiple visits to meet with First Nations residents of the Mount Gambier prison to hear firsthand about their experiences with the criminal justice system. They also met with local police officers at the SAPOL Mount Gambier station to share community views and encourage greater connection with First Nations people. The meeting was held as a yarning circle in the rarely-used SAPOL community yarning space – a way to encourage others to feel welcome in the space.

Feedback from community engagements informed a recommendation made by the State Voice to the Premier and SAPOL regarding police culture. To support its implementation, Presiding Member Danni Smith convened a meeting between SA Police Commissioner Grant Stevens, Assistant Commissioner Ian Parrott and members of the Mount Gambier community to explore strategies to strengthen engagement and education initiatives for First Nations people with lived experience of the justice system.

Region 4 covers the following local council areas:

Kangaroo Island Council	Berri Barmera Council
District Council of Yankalilla	Southern Mallee District Council
City of Victor Harbor	Tatiara District Council
Alexandrina Council	Kingston District Council
Rural City of Murray Bridge	Naracoorte Lucindale Council
Coorong District Council	District Council of Robe
Mid Murray Council	Wattle Range Council
District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Grant
District Council of Loxton Waikerie	City of Mount Gambier
Renmark Paringa Council	

Membership during 2025

Ms Danielle Smith (Presiding Member)
Mr Robin Wright (Presiding Member)
Mrs Eunice Aston
Mr Daniel Mitchell-Matthews (elected 24 March 2025)
Ms Sheryl Giles
Mr Timothy Hartman
Ms Lisa Rigney

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 18 March 2025, online
Meeting 2: 7 May 2025, online
Meeting 3: 30 July 2025, Hotel Victor, Victor Harbor SA
Meeting 4: 23 October 2025, Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre, Mount Gambier SA
Meeting 5: 10 December 2025, Waikerie SA*

Community engagements in 2025

Mount Gambier Prison: 23 April 2025, visited First Nations residents in Mount Gambier Prison
Victor Harbor: 30 July 2025, Hotel Victor
Mount Gambier Prison: 23 October 2025, visited First Nations residents in Mount Gambier Prison and toured facilities
Mount Gambier: 23 October 2025, Wulanda Recreation and Convention Centre
SAPOL Mount Gambier: 24 October 2025, visited the community yarning space at the South Australia Police Station and held yarning circle with local officers

* Scheduled dates

Region 5 – West and West Coast

In 2025 the West and West Coast region deepened relationships with ACCOs, local councils, and community groups to build trust and understanding across the region. Members' commitment to hearing the voices of the people was evident through their presence at community events and leadership in local collaborations.

Community engagement in Port Lincoln highlighted key issues and intersections between health and wellbeing, housing and justice. Members spoke with communities about the lack of access to local health and wellbeing services, particularly in relation to mental health, drugs and alcohol, and listened to proposed solutions for coordinating services to better meet community needs, including for those who are incarcerated.

Community engagements in Yalata and Ceduna focused on health service needs, education opportunities and encouraging families to pursue education, employment, aged care and homelands services, including health and legal services. Concerns about community safety, health and wellbeing focused on the need for culturally safe policing and reporting processes, along with the compounding effects of unpaid fines that greatly impact remote communities with low capacity to pay for them.

Members of the West and West Coast region advocated for reforms to address unpaid fines and improved access to regional youth justice services. The region also advanced plans for a local media strategy to enhance communication and awareness of the Voice.

Region 5 covers the following local council areas:

District Council of Tumby Bay

District Council of Ceduna

District Council of Streaky Bay

Wudinna District Council

District Council of Kimba

District Council of Franklin Harbour

District Council of Cleve

District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula

City of Port Lincoln

District Council of Elliston

Maralinga Tjarutja

Membership during 2025

Ms Lorraine Haseldine (Presiding Member)

Mr Leeroy Bilney (Presiding Member)

Ms Cecelia Cox

Mr Duane Edwards

Mr Barry Johncock

Ms Rebecca Miller

Mx Keenan Smith

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 5 March 2025, online

Meeting 2: 2 May 2025, Mallee Park Football Club, Port Lincoln SA

Meeting 3: 21 July 2025, online

Meeting 4: 12 December 2025, Ceduna SA*

Community engagements in 2025

Port Lincoln: 2 May 2025, Mallee Park Football Club

Yalata: 2 June 2025, outside Yalata Admin Office

Ceduna: 2 June 2025, Ceduna Foreshore Hotel

Ceduna: 12 December 2025 *

* Scheduled dates

Region 6 – Yorke and Mid North

During 2025, the Yorke and Mid North region focused on challenges identified in their community particularly accessing education, health services, and renewed infrastructure.

Community engagement in Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula highlighted concerns about limited access to transport and local health services in the region. A lack of new housing and the need for improved maintenance of existing housing was identified as a priority for the community.

Through community engagements, members also raised the need for greater investment in community infrastructure, and the need for community training to unlock economic and employment opportunities for First Nations people across the Yorke and Mid North region.

The challenges with housing maintenance and employment were raised to the State Voice, which presented them to government as an opportunity to involve the community-controlled sector in maintenance work. This formed part of a series of recommendations the State Voice made to the Premier.

Members listened to community calls for the expansion of the local school campus, currently only catering for students in Reception to Grade 2. Through the advocacy of Voice and community members, the Point Pearce school will now be reinstated as an independent primary school for Reception to Year 6, representing a major success for the people of Point Pearce.

During the year, members also met with service providers, councils, and community organisations to strengthen regional partnerships and identify opportunities for economic development. Planning for future engagements across this large geographic area remains at the heart of regional priorities.

Region 6 covers the following local council areas:

Yorke Peninsula Council

Copper Coast Council

Barunga West Council

Port Pirie Regional Council

Wakefield Regional Council

Adelaide Plains Council

Town of Gawler

Light Regional Council

The Barossa Council

Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council

Regional Council of Goyder

District Council of Peterborough

District Council of Mount Remarkable

Northern Areas Council

District Council of Orroroo Carrieton (a portion).

Membership during 2025

Ms Kaylene O'Loughlin (Presiding Member)

Mr Quentin Agius (Presiding Member, from 1 July 2025)

Ms Joy Makepeace

Mr Douglas Milera

Mr Edward Newchurch

Ms Denise Wanganeen

Mr Raymond Wanganeen (Presiding Member, until 23 June 2025)

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 4 April 2025, online

Meeting 2: 1 July 2025, Point Pearce Aboriginal Community Hall,
Point Pearce SA

Meeting 3: 30 September 2025, online

Meeting 4: 20 November 2025, Port Pirie SA*

Community engagements in 2025

Point Pearce: 1 July 2025, Point Pearce Aboriginal Community Hall

Port Pirie: 20 November 2025 *

* Scheduled dates

Local Voice Elections

Supplementary elections

During 2025 there were supplementary elections for vacancies in Region 1: Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central) and Region 4: Murraylands, Riverland and South East.

The elections were conducted by ECSA, with members from both regions providing support by attending community sessions held in Adelaide, Christies Beach, Enfield, Elizabeth, Berri, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier.

Ms Marnie O'Meara was the successful candidate for Region 1 and Mr Daniel Mitchell-Matthews was the successful candidate for Region 4.

Annual meeting

Under the Act, the State Voice must convene an annual meeting of all Local First Nations Voices.

The 2025 meeting, known as the Annual Gathering, took place on 13 and 14 October 2025 at Yitpi Yartapuultiku, on Kaurna Country. Members from all six (6) Local Voice regions travelled to Port Adelaide to connect, reflect and share community stories and experiences from across 2025.

Following a Welcome to Country from Voice Member Susan Dixon, members held yarning circles to reflect on their experiences in the SA Voice and ground conversations for the gathering. State Voice members also shared their experiences about working with government across the year.

Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi Member Deb Moyle facilitated a panel discussion between the Deputy Premier, the Hon. Kyam Maher MLC and the Presiding Members of the State Voice, Danni Smith and Leeroy Bilney. This was an invaluable opportunity for all members to hear about the strong relationship that the SA Voice has formed with the Cabinet and government representatives.

Members also spent time reflecting on the achievements of each Local Voice region in 2025, before providing feedback on the SA Voice model based on their experiences since their election. This will be used in the 2026 independent review of the operations of the Act.

The Annual Gathering was also used to launch the SA Voice Strategic Plan, a document designed by the State Voice to guide members into the future and communicate its priorities to stakeholders. The Plan will be launched publicly soon.

The event concluded with a discussion and Q&A session about the 2026 SA Voice Elections, and the upcoming work of members for the remainder of their elected terms.

3. State Voice

The State Voice consists of the Presiding Members from each of the six (6) Local Voice regions. This structure ensures strong two-way communication so that local perspectives inform State-level advocacy and feedback from government is shared back to communities.

In accordance with the requirements of the Act, the State Voice is required to meet at least four (4) times per calendar year. During 2025, these meeting were held in Adelaide, online, or a hybrid of the two.

The State Voice selected areas of focus for its activities during 2025 that were informed by the needs of their communities. These focus areas addressed housing, infrastructure, health, wellbeing, justice and policing, and were the theme for meetings between the State Voice and government across the year.

While statutory meetings are the foundation of their work, encouraged by the openness of government officials, Presiding Members Ms Danni Smith and Mr Leeroy Bilney sought out meetings with Ministers and Chief Executives during the year. These meetings were further opportunities to discuss how the Voice and government can work together to improve the lives of First Nations people, and all South Australians.

Meetings with the Hon. Nat Cook MP (Minister for Human Services; Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well), and the Hon. Nick Champion MP (Minister for Housing and Urban Development; Minister for Housing Infrastructure; Minister for Planning) allowed for authentic conversations and bringing together of ideas on housing maintenance, housing design and hubs for healing,.

A meeting with the Hon. Emily Bourke MLC (then-Minister for Emergency and Correctional Services) resulted in a joint visit to the Adelaide prisons, along with Members of Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi (Central) region, and Chief Executive David Brown. Members were also invited to get involved in working groups for remand and the Aboriginal Elders and Respected Leaders Visiting Program.

Meetings between the State Voice and government representatives, including Assistant Commissioner for Police Ian Parrott, AGD Chief Executive Caroline Mealor, DHS Chief Executive Sandy Pitcher, Department for Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) Chief Executive David Reynolds, and SA Housing Trust (SAHT) Chief Executive Julie-Anne Burgess enabled the Voice to workshop ideas to address concerns it had raised during the year. These meetings resulted in government visiting the hometowns of members to meet with their communities and hear directly from them.

A site visit to the Port Adelaide Nunga Court with the Hon. Kyam Maher MLC, Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Magistrate Mark Semmens, and State Courts Administrator Ms Penny Croser gave insight on the benefits and challenges of operating a culturally safe court process, and the importance of the work of the committed Elders who sit on the court or work within it.

During 2025 the Voice initiated conversations with the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (**SAACCON**), Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (**ALRM**), and regional ACCOs to form working relationships and help strengthen co-design and delivery in housing, justice, and wellbeing.

The State Voice also met with SA Ombudsman Ms Emily Strickland to learn about the most common areas of complaint her office receives from First Nations people. The commonality with the SA Voice's 2025 Focus Areas was validation that the Members had correctly targeted its work with government.

Presiding Members Danni Smith and Leeroy Bilney joined members representing all Local Voice regions at the NAIDOC March and Family Fun Day in Adelaide, where they spent time talking with community about their work. Many members also attended the NAIDOC SA Gala Ball to represent the SA Voice in this important annual celebration honouring the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Following a period establishing practices and protocols for Voice members in 2024, this year the State Voice commenced work to establish four (4) committees that would provide it with advice to guide and support its work in the years to come. We look forward to appointing members to these committees and working with them in 2026.

Members were reminded that many from outside of South Australia are watching their journey with interest and want to support their work as Australia's first state-based Voice to Parliament. Meetings with the Ambassador for First Nations People (Cth) reminded members of the importance of their work and opened opportunities for potential partnerships.

Presiding Member Leeroy Bilney, along with staff from the First Nations Voice Secretariat, also participated in a discussion panel about the SA Voice model for the Australasian Parliamentary Study Group Annual Conference. This session and the discussions that followed demonstrate that Parliaments across Australia and New Zealand are maintaining a strong interest in how South Australia is leading the nation in its engagement of First Nations people in the legislative process.

While the Act outlines the formal meetings in which the State Voice must participate, this represents only a fraction of the total time commitment for each member. During the year, State Voice Members contributed countless hours travelling to Adelaide for their State Voice work, in online and face-to-face meetings preparing for government meetings, in working groups to develop governance for its advisory committees and creating a strategic direction for the Voice.

This is all in addition to their roles as Presiding Members of their Local Voices, for which they prepare for and convene a further four (4) meetings, and travel across their regions to engage with their communities.

Membership during 2025

Mr Leeroy Bilney (Presiding Member)

Ms Danielle Smith (Presiding Member)

Mr Quentin Agius (from 1 July 2025)

Mr Mark Campbell

Ms Candace Champion

Mr Douglas Clinch

Ms Susan Dixon

Ms Lorraine Haseldine

Ms Kaylene O'Loughlin

Mr Robert Singleton

Ms Melissa Thompson

Mr Raymond Wanganeen (until 23 June 2025)

Mr Robin Wright

Meetings in 2025

Meeting 1: 27 February 2025, online

Meeting 2: 29 April 2025, The Terrace Hotel, Adelaide SA

Meeting 3: 26 June 2025, GPO Exchange, Adelaide SA

Meeting 4: 12 August 2025, online

Meeting 5: 15 October 2025, Yitpi Yartapuultiku, Port Adelaide SA

Focus Areas in 2025

In late 2024 the State Voice identified several key areas emerging from an extensive process of consultation and collaboration across the six (6) Local Voice regions.

Following discussions with Cabinet and Chief Executives in November 2024, the State Voice identified Housing and Infrastructure and Health and Wellbeing in addition to the SA Government priority of Justice and Policing (Incarceration), as its three primary areas of focus to guide its work throughout 2025.

- 1. Housing and Infrastructure:** Addressing the urgent need for safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing and infrastructure that meets the diverse needs of First Nations communities.
- 2. Health and Wellbeing:** Promoting equitable access to healthcare through culturally safe services and resources, including attention to child protection and family wellbeing matters.
- 3. Justice and Policing:** Reforming policing and justice systems to address overrepresentation of First Nations peoples and ensuring their human rights are respected within the legal system. The issues of drug and alcohol harm and the need for more rehabilitation facilities and reducing domestic and family violence and its intersection with the justice system.

These Focus Areas are designed to strengthen collaboration between First Nations communities and government, ensuring that policies and actions are informed by grassroots perspectives and aimed at achieving lasting, holistic improvements in the lives of First Nations peoples.

They are also not considered in isolation, as they interlink and build on the ongoing commitment to reducing incarceration rates for First Nations peoples, recognising the interconnections between justice, housing, health, and education outcomes.

Advisory Committees

Significant progress has been made toward the establishment of four (4) Advisory Committees provided for under the Act. These committees will strengthen the State Voice's capacity to provide specialised, representative, and culturally informed advice across key areas of policy and reform.

The four Advisory Committees are:

- Elders Advisory Committee
- Youth Advisory Committee
- Stolen Generations Advisory Committee
- Native Title Advisory Committee

Throughout 2025, the State Voice has undertaken detailed work to develop and refine the governance framework necessary for the effective operation of these committees, culminating in the endorsement of Terms of Reference for each committee in October 2025. This marks a major milestone in operationalising the advisory framework envisaged by the legislation.

The next phase of implementation involves finalising administrative arrangements, confirming logistical supports, and proceeding with the appointment of members to each committee through a transparent and culturally appropriate selection process in accordance with the individual member requirements under the Act.

Once established, these committees will play a vital role in ensuring that the voices of Elders, young people, members of the Stolen Generations, and Native Title holders are heard and are meaningfully represented in the State Voice's advice processes.

It is anticipated that the Advisory Committees will convene their inaugural meetings in 2026, establishing a formal mechanism through which specialised advice can be provided to the State Voice and, through it, to the South Australian Government.

4. Addresses to Parliament

Notification of Bills introduced

The Act requires the Clerks of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly to notify the State First Nations Voice of the introduction of Bills.

Throughout 2025, the State Voice was notified of the introduction of around 60 Bills in each of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly.

Addresses in relation to Bills

Under the Act, the State Voice is entitled to address either House of Parliament in relation to any Bill that has been introduced. Such an address is made through one (1) of the joint Presiding Members of the State First Nations Voice.

During 2025, the State Voice did not need to exercise the entitlement to address a Bill in the Parliament. This was largely due to the proactive and collaborative engagement from the South Australian Government that enabled the Voice to have its say during the development and drafting of Bills, prior to introduction of Bills into the Parliament.

In the reporting period, the Voice was consulted on ten Bills and provided formal submissions, or written or verbal advice, on five (5):

- *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill*
- *Education and Children's Services Enrolment and Attendance Amendment Bill*
- *Education and Children's Services Inclusive Education Amendment Bills*
- *Criminal Law Consolidation (Street Gangs) Amendment Bill*
- *Statutes Amendment (Recidivist Young Offenders) Bill*

Consultation on the *Criminal Law Consolidation (Street Gangs) Amendment Bill 2025* is demonstration of the benefits of the Government's early engagement with the Voice. The State Voice members considered the draft Bill and provided feedback direct to the Attorney-General during an online meeting. The views of the members were adopted through revisions to the draft Bill, prior to its introduction into the Parliament.

These engagements ensure that First Nations perspectives are embedded in the laws shaping the futures of children, families, and communities.

Although the outcomes of the State Voice's advice may not be immediately measurable, particularly where the passage of a Bill or the implementation of policy change is still underway, the influence of the State Voice remains evident through the incorporation of its recommendations into legislative drafting, program design, and departmental decision-making processes.

In many cases, the true impact of this advice will become apparent only over time, as proposed reforms are debated, enacted, and translated into practice. The State Voice's contribution at these formative stages ensures that First Nations perspectives and priorities are embedded early in policy and legislative frameworks.

Even where formal legislative or administrative changes are still in progress, the State Voice's engagement has already strengthened relationships between government and communities, improved understanding of cultural context, and influenced the direction of future reform. These are important indicators of progress toward systemic change, even before measurable outcomes are realised.

Reports presented to the Parliament

The Act enables the State First Nations Voice to provide a report to the Parliament on any matter that is, in its opinion, of interest to First Nations people.

During 2025, the State Voice did not provide a report to the Parliament in this manner as it did not need to do so. State Voice Members were able to engage directly with Members of Parliament through Engagement Hearings, Meetings with Cabinet (see Part 5, p 29), as well as face-to-face and online meetings. These interactions enabled members to advocate for their communities about the matters important to them directly with the responsible Ministers.

While it did not provide a report to the Parliament, the State Voice did make a written submission to the Parliamentary Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the *Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Bill*. This followed engagement on the Bill in late 2024 with the Minister for Child Protection, the Hon. Katrine Hildyard MP, and consultation with then-Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, April Lawrie, who is also a member of the SA Voice representing Region 1: Kumangka Warrarna Wangkanthi.

Requests for reports to the Parliament

Under the Act, the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the House of Assembly may also request the State Voice to provide them with a report in relation to Bills.

In 2025, no requests were received from the President or the Speaker.

5. Interaction with South Australian Government

The Act provides the State Voice and its Presiding Members with formal opportunities to meet with the Premier, Ministers and Chief Executives each year. The meetings in 2025 included:

- Three (3) Engagement Hearings
- Two (2) Cabinet Meetings
- Two (2) Chief Executive Briefings

The topics discussed during each of these meetings aligned directly with the State Voice Focus Areas and allowed for continued dialogue across the year that led to the Voice providing specific recommendations to government and it committing to action.

Importantly, the relationships formed between Voice Members, Ministers and Chief Executives during the year provided further opportunities to meet, undertake site visits and tours to key government services and facilities, and joint activities in regional locations.

The State Voice thanks the Premier, the Hon. Peter Malinauskas, his Ministers, and Departmental Chief Executives for working collaboratively with its members this year.

Meetings with Cabinet

Meetings between the members of the State Voice and Cabinet are held twice yearly and provide the SA Voice an opportunity to share the views of their communities and hear from Ministers about their priorities.

Agendas are set in consultation with the State Voice Presiding Members, with 2025 Cabinet meetings in 2025 centering on the State Voice Focus Areas. This year's meetings were held at the offices of the Attorney-General's Department, Adelaide.

15 September 2025: Justice and Policing

On 15 September 2025, the State Voice met with the Premier and Cabinet to discuss justice and policing matters affecting First Nations peoples in South Australia.

These discussions centred around recommendations that the State Voice made to the South Australian Government and resulted in key commitments, priorities, and policy areas for progress.

The Voice's recommendations offered grassroots feedback and community-driven solutions to address the life cycle of incarceration as it relates to First Nations people in South Australia. These were structured under the following areas:

- Prevention & Diversion
- Policing
- Courts

- Incarceration & Pre-release
- Post-release & Rehabilitation
- Drug & Alcohol.

Through these conversations, the State Voice provided the South Australian Government with valuable insights into how matters raised by communities, within each Minister's portfolio, affect First Nations peoples, and how the sustainable solutions identified by communities, through the Voice's recommendations, can drive meaningful change.

5 November 2025: Health and Wellbeing, Housing and Infrastructure, Justice and Policing

On 5 November 2025, the State Voice met with the Premier and Cabinet for their final meeting of the year.

Together they discussed the three (3) fundamental and seven (7) operational priorities that the SA Voice recommended government adopt to address the inequities in health and wellbeing, housing and infrastructure, and justice and policing that are impacting First Nations people (see p 34).

During the meeting, Premier Peter Malinauskas, Deputy Premier Kyam Maher, and Ministers Nat Cook, Blair Boyer, and Rhiannon Pearce spoke about how they and their departments would be responding to the Voice's recommendations. State Voice Members represented the views of Local Voices and community members in giving the government feedback on their proposals, as they advocated for meaningful and timely reforms that benefit First Nations people in South Australia.

Members continued their push for Truth and Treaty, frameworks for partnerships between government and the Community Controlled sector, and evaluation and accountability. They are working with government to deliver on hubs for services and healing, improvements to housing maintenance and design, more and better bail accommodation, and cultural and accessible information and supports for those dealing with the justice system.

Chief Executive Briefings

A Chief Executive's briefing provides the State Voice the opportunity to hear from, and ask questions of, the Chief Executives of administrative units of the Public Service in relation to matters of interest identified by the State Voice.

During 2025 there were two briefings with Chief Executives, both of which were held in a workshop format. This year's meetings were held at the offices of the Attorney-General's Department, Adelaide.

26 June 2025: Health, Wellbeing and Housing

The focus of this briefing was to discuss matters relating to Health and Wellbeing, and Housing and Infrastructure for First Nations communities in South Australia. Regional perspectives gathered by Local First Nations Voices helped shape the conversations.

The workshop, run in small focus groups and facilitated by Ms Katrina Fanning AO PSM enabled the State Voice members to share valuable advice to the SA Government on how these focus areas transcend government portfolios and impact First Nations people in South Australia. The conversations also allowed the Voice to highlight what they and their communities have proposed as solutions to many of the matters that impact their health and wellbeing.

16 October 2025: Education, Training, Economic and State Development

This briefing focused on key matters relating to Education, Training, Economic Development, and State Development.

With targeted questions used to guide small group discussions, this briefing explored how education, training, economic and state development intersect with the three Focus Areas for First Nations communities in South Australia: Health and Wellbeing, Housing and Infrastructure, and incarceration.

The information used by members during the meeting offered grass-roots perspectives and practical solutions identified by communities themselves. State Voice Members also provided important advice to the SA Government on how each Chief Executive's portfolio affects and impacts First Nations people, and where opportunities for meaningful improvement exist.

Engagement Hearings

Engagement Hearings are an opportunity for the Presiding Members of the State Voice to ask questions of Ministers and South Australian Government Chief Executives about the operations, expenditure, budget and priorities of administrative units they are responsible for.

Engagement Hearings are co-chaired by the Premier of South Australia, and Joint Presiding Members of the State First Nations Voice Ms Danni Smith and Mr Leeroy Bilney.

19 May 2025: Health and Wellbeing

On Monday, 19 May 2025, the inaugural First Nations Voice Engagement Hearing on Health and Wellbeing took place at Old Parliament House, Adelaide. The inaugural Engagement Hearing was attended by key government representatives including Premier Peter Malinauskas, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Kyam Maher, Minister for Health and Wellbeing Chris Picton, other Ministers and senior departmental officials.

The purpose of the hearing was to strengthen collaboration between the State Government and the SA Voice on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across South Australia, ensuring that community voices directly inform government priorities and actions.

During the hearing, Voice members sought clarity on how government funding was being distributed to Aboriginal health services, what mechanisms were in place to track progress against Closing the Gap targets, and how Aboriginal communities could play a stronger role in co-designing health programs and policies.

Members called for improvements to preventative health initiatives, mental health services, and culturally safe models of care, particularly in regional and remote communities. They also emphasised the need to address the social determinants of health, such as housing, employment, and education, which are deeply interconnected with wellbeing outcomes. Concerns were raised about data sovereignty, workforce development, and ensuring that ACCOs are resourced to deliver health services effectively and independently.

Government representatives responded by outlining ongoing initiatives, including commitments to Closing the Gap, the development of Preventative Health SA, and increased collaboration with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (**ACCHOs**). Ministers acknowledged systemic challenges and reaffirmed a commitment to genuine partnership, transparency, and shared accountability.

The hearing closed with a collective recognition that improving health and wellbeing requires long-term, community-led solutions that empower Aboriginal voices in decision-making. This engagement marked a historic step toward embedding the principles of Voice, Truth, and Treaty into South Australia's health system and policy framework.

25 July 2025: Housing and Infrastructure

The Engagement Hearing on Housing and Infrastructure was held in the Kingston Room at Old Parliament House, Adelaide. This hearing was attended by Premier Peter Malinauskas, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Kyam Maher, Minister for Human Services Nat Cook, and Minister for Housing and Urban Development Nick Champion, along with departmental executives.

The purpose of the hearing was to address critical housing and infrastructure challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and to ensure that future policies reflect the lived experiences and priorities of First Nations people.

Voice members presented a series of targeted questions and proposals focusing on the availability, design, and quality of Aboriginal housing, accountability in maintenance and service delivery, and the urgent need for culturally appropriate infrastructure. They also raised concerns about racial profiling in service delivery, maintenance delays, and the lack of healing centres, cultural hubs, and youth spaces that could serve as safe and unifying community environments.

Conversations covered progress of the Aboriginal Housing Strategy 2021–2031, addressing overcrowding, homelessness, and crisis accommodation, Aboriginal involvement in housing design and planning, and stronger communication between communities and departments around government initiatives.

Government ministers outlined current and planned initiatives, including commitments through the Housing Roadmap and the Housing Australia Future Fund, which supports remote housing upgrades and new builds. They acknowledged the need for better maintenance systems, culturally informed engagement, and a potential Aboriginal-led housing peak body to guide future policy and delivery.

The hearing closed with agreement that housing and infrastructure must be approached as integral to health, wellbeing, safety, and opportunity, not in isolation. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to genuine co-design, transparency, and long-term partnership, positioning this engagement as another step forward in South Australia's ongoing journey toward Voice, Truth, and Treaty.

25 July 2025: Justice and Policing

The Engagement Hearing on Justice and Policing (Incarceration Rates) was held at Old Parliament House, Adelaide. The hearing was attended by Premier Peter Malinauskas, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Kyam Maher, Minister for Correctional Services Emily Bourke, and other departmental leaders from SAPOL, DCS, AGD, and the Courts Administration Authority (CAA).

The session aimed to address Aboriginal overrepresentation in the justice system, strengthen relationships between the government and Aboriginal communities, and ensure culturally informed reform across justice and policing systems.

During the session, Voice members raised pointed questions and calls for action about systemic failures, accountability, and community trust. They asked for greater transparency in police conduct and the effectiveness of cultural awareness and reconciliation programs within SAPOL, highlighting persistent issues despite long-standing initiatives.

Members questioned the government about the lack of rehabilitation and culturally safe services, noting that many Aboriginal people re-enter the system due to limited post-release housing and support. They proposed the creation of an Aboriginal Parole Board, better access to rehabilitation programs, and investment in cultural healing spaces and community-based diversion programs to break cycles of trauma and incarceration. The State Voice also called for coordinated evaluation frameworks to track government progress and ensure shared accountability across agencies.

In response, ministers and agency representatives acknowledged the challenges and outlined existing efforts, such as expanding Nunga Courts, increasing justice liaison officers, and investing in bail and remand accommodation programs. They agreed to work with the State Voice to identify two or three measurable priority areas, with clear key performance indicators (KPIs) and to report back on progress within 12 months.

The hearing closed with a shared commitment to co-design, data transparency, and systemic change, recognising that reducing incarceration rates requires addressing underlying issues in health, housing, and wellbeing, and advancing South Australia's broader journey toward Voice, Truth, and Treaty.

Full transcripts of each Engagement Hearing are available on the SA Voice website (www.firstnationsvoice.sa.gov.au).

Recommendations to Government in response to Focus Areas

While the Act provides the mechanism to ensure that the State Voice can meet with and ask questions of Chief Executives and Cabinet Ministers, throughout 2025 a more collaborative relationship was formed. Prompted by productive discussions at Engagement Hearings that shifted from enquiry to problem solving, the Premier invited the State Voice to propose three recommendations in relation to each Focus Areas for government to work on.

In August 2025 State Voice Presiding Members Danni Smith and Leeroy Bilney, on behalf of the State Voice, wrote to the Premier to make their recommendations.

The letter outlined three (3) **fundamental priorities** to embed principles of accountability and oversight so that service delivery gaps are identified and addressed early through a genuine commitment to co-design and consultation with First Nations people.

The fundamental priorities recommended were:

- Establishing Truth and Treaty Commissions
- Developing a Joint Partnership Framework across Government with the Community Controlled sector
- Developing an inclusive Evaluation and Accountability Framework.

The State Voice also recommended Government commit to six (6) **operational priorities** to close specific service delivery gaps to achieve short- and medium-term benefits, with First Nations voices leading the design, implementation and evaluation of all initiatives to ensure they are culturally safe and effective.

The operational priorities recommended were:

- Community Hubs for services and healing
- First Nations involvement in the design and planning of housing
- Partnership with ACCOs for housing maintenance
- Bail and remand accommodation
- Disability and mental health assessments for residents of prisons at the time of incarceration
- Nunga Courts and suitable cultural supports for those who do not plead guilty.

The State Voice proposed pilot sites for these initiatives in metropolitan, regional and remote settings.

The State Voice is pleased that government has committed to work towards implementing many of its recommendations. Regarding its fundamental priorities, engagement with the State Voice to define the scope of its Joint Partnership Framework and inclusive Evaluation and Accountability Framework will commence soon. We also understand that the government remains committed to implement Truth and Treaty.

For its operational priorities, work towards the creation of community hubs is also expected to commence, with some new services and the expansion of existing programs, such as accommodation services used by those leaving incarceration, for which funding is being redirected towards an Aboriginal designed response to bail accommodation in Adelaide's North.

Targeted work to inform the design of future public housing new builds is expected to commence soon, ensuring that designs are responsive to the needs of Aboriginal families, particularly in regional and remote settings. Work has also commenced to increase the participation of Aboriginal businesses and Aboriginal workers in the delivery of SAHT maintenance works.

AGD will fund the development of culturally appropriate and accessible information resources to promote the culturally supportive processes already available in the criminal justice system, including clarifying the role of Nunga Courts, and has commenced discussions with ALRM and the Legal Services Commission (LSC) to progress the initiative.

In addition, the CAA will pilot an integrated legal and support service into the justice process at the Port Augusta Magistrates Court on a new list for male Aboriginal defendants in custody at Port Augusta Prison. AGD will fund an evaluation of the pilot to review its effectiveness.

As a result of its feedback, SAPOL will complete a review of the relationship between Murray Bridge Police and their community to better understand why it is held in such high regard. The SA Voice views this as an important first step in improving relationships between First Nations communities and the police.

While all the recommendations of the SA Voice have not been accepted or responded to, we acknowledge the genuine commitment demonstrated by government to listen to community views and regional perspectives, engage with us about matters we have raised and solutions we have proposed, and for those that will see action, the commitment to co-design them.

6. Administration and resourcing

Secretariat

In accordance with section 47 of the Act, the SA Voice is supported by a dedicated Secretariat, comprising public sector employees assigned to provide administrative, logistical, and strategic support to both the State Voice and the Local Voices.

The Secretariat plays a critical role in enabling the SA Voice to carry out its statutory functions, including the coordination of meetings, research and policy support, preparation of documentation, and facilitation of engagement between government, community, and Voice members. Through its work, the Secretariat ensures that the Voice's operations remain efficient, transparent, and aligned with legislative requirements.

The State Voice acknowledges with deep appreciation the dedication and professionalism of the small Secretariat team, whose commitment has been instrumental during the Voice's inaugural term. Their work has been vital in supporting the establishment of governance structures, managing consultations, and driving progress toward the Voice's priorities and outcomes.

The Secretariat's ongoing support continues to underpin the SA Voice's effectiveness and success, ensuring that members are equipped to represent their communities and provide informed, independent advice to government.

Resources

The achievements of the SA Voice over 2025 offer hope and proof that genuine partnership drives positive change. However, the challenges remain significant.

Across the six (6) local voice regions members are required to balance their SA Voice responsibilities alongside community, professional and cultural obligations. How this is achieved varies by person and region. A shift to online meetings in 2025 has helped to balance the time commitment of members, as has hosting community engagement events on the same day and in the same location as meetings being held in person. This also provides a cost efficiency.

In addition to this, many members are still navigating their SA Voice responsibilities and how this applies to the individual needs of their communities. Members must find ways to engage with and represent all First Nations people who live across the vast geographic Voice regions. Many members also reside outside of the regions they represent, requiring greater travel to truly engage.

This year was also the first in which the State Voice completed each of the prescribed meetings with government. Two (2) Cabinet Meetings, two (2) Chief Executive Briefings,

and three (3) Engagement Hearings required members to travel to Adelaide, in addition to other visits for State Voice meetings and other commitments.

While some efficiencies can be gained by undertaking multiple meetings during each trip, the tyranny of distance and challenges with transportation means that most State Voice Members are away from home for multiple nights to meet each commitment in Adelaide. We continue to learn from this experience and find ways to do things better.

Resourcing remains constrained, both for the SA Voice and for the Secretariat that supports its operations. The expectations are high, and while co-design is essential, it is time-consuming, yet the needs of our people are urgent. Although there has been success and outcomes to date of the Voice, at times there has been missed opportunities. Its success and regional reach could be expanded with adequate consideration of the resourcing requirement of the Voice model and the pursuit of legitimate independence.

In 2026 there will be a review of the operation of the Act will be undertaken by a First Nations person or organisation. The review will, necessarily, need to ensure that the views and experiences of the inaugural SA Voice members are considered to support the continued success of the model. Members have already started collating feedback to be provided to the reviewer.

Audited Financial Statements 2024-25

The 2024-25 financial statements for the State and each Local Voice are currently being audited by the Audit Office of SA.

Once the audit is complete, and the financial statements have been signed, the Auditor-General will publish them on the Audit Office of SA website.