

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Kaurna country

26 February 2021, Adelaide, Session 2

Number of participants: 13

Key points raised

Please note, this is a summary of the discussion and the views and opinions expressed by participants in consultations sessions. It is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of all points raised, but draws out the key points.

The afternoon session was attended by 13 participants who were welcomed to country by Mr Frank Wanganeen. Key points discussed are summarised below.

- There was some discussion about the proposed number of Local and Regional Voice regions in SA, referencing Aboriginal nations and previous SA government Regional Authority initiative. Given that under SA Aboriginal Engagement reforms there could be 5 electoral regions, participants raised the need for clarity about how this might work practically if there are only 2-3 Local and Regional Voice regions in SA.
- The group noted that the Voice needs to be complementary with any state arrangements and partnership between all levels of government is needed at the local and regional level.
- There was a broad agreement that the bottom up idea is good but the Voice needs permanency, so it does not change with political cycles. There is a need for a bipartisan approach so whoever is in government works with the Voice.
- SA Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement raised the importance of his office being engaged during the co-design process, to share information and provide input. He also noted the need for a strong relationship with state bodies and described the proposed SA model (representative state body, initially half elected and half appointed; 12 principles including involving young people, gender balance, elders; 5 electoral wards; working to start drafting legislation and establish electoral roll). The Commissioner noted the principles are consistent with those proposed for the Local and Regional Voices.
- Former and current SA Commissioners in the group discussed SA experiences with policy shifts due to changes of government or minister, noting these at times were more about form than substance and sometimes resulted in lack of resourcing as government changed the basis for engagement.
- It was noted communities need to be supported to not let their history of government engagement get in the way of them engaging in the Voice and achieving their aspirations; this needs to come with resources and funding.
- A query was raised about whether this process is about trying to get over the line something that government can agree to, with others noting the need to create opportunities and a unified voice, which is up to the Indigenous people and communities.

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- The group agreed that it is important to avoid confusion and come up with ways of clearly connecting the Voice and SA initiatives, noting communities are ‘consulted out’ and it’s up to people in this room as leaders to create clarity.
 - There was a broad view about the need for something that endures and has adequate resourcing, with all three levels of government involved at the local and regional level. It was also noted accountability of governments was important. Resourcing and tools are needed to ensure that community can have a voice, that governments are accountable to community and both can deliver on their partnership roles.
 - There was a discussion of learnings from ATSIC, including the need for independence, adequate resourcing, and the view that European based administrative structures are not suitable – all of this should be seriously considered in any new model.
 - The group discussed challenges arising from divisions within communities and family groups leading to lateral violence and making coming together with a collective voice difficult.
 - It was stated that this process should not mean giving up on a pathway to constitutional recognition.
 - It was stated that it would be important to consider how to ensure everyone has an opportunity to be involved, given a lot of people live on others’ country, and that all voices, regardless of where home might be, should have an opportunity to be heard.
 - A view was put forward that the local, regional, national proposition and proposed principles look pretty good, but there may be traps in how this translates into practical ways of involving individuals.
 - A suggestion was put forward that it may be useful to get industry and commerce to back this up.
 - It was stated that under the elected model for the National Voice there is a risk that it would become a political organisation and there would be a risk of politicising the Voice.
 - At the end of the session, one participant thanked all involved in the co-design process, expressing a view that what’s being crafted has made an incredible contribution and provides the best opportunity for Indigenous Australians in a long time. They hoped that the process will move quickly and result in the voice being put in place.