

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Gadigal of the Eora Nation

Inner Sydney, 10.00am, 24 February 2021, Session 1

Number of participants: 31

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 morning session was attended by 31 participants and Aunty Yvonne Weldon gave an acknowledgement of country. Key points discussed are summarised below.

There was a general discussion on the co-design and consultation process:

- Initial discussion centred on why there wasn't more extensive consultation ahead during the first stage of co-design and there were some concerns about the appointment process to establish the co-design groups. Concerns were raised that hand-picked people were handpicked for membership on the co-design groups. It was clarified that people were picked on their experience with input and advice from Senior Advisory Group Co-chairs Prof Dr Marcia Langton and Prof Tom Calma, and the Senior Advisory Group members.
- Some individuals felt they were not advised of the consultation sessions nor given enough time to prepare for the meeting and be across all the material. It was discussed that further discussions would be needed, including specific discussions in La Perouse and Redfern. Co-design members discussed opportunities to hold further conversations, as well as highlighted other opportunities to provide feedback.
- There was clarification that the co-design process was focussed on the first recommendation of the Joint Select Committee which was to co-design the details of the Indigenous Voice and that the legal form will be considered by Government at a later stage.

General discussion on the Indigenous Voice proposals included:

- There was a general consensus that individuals wanted a 'Voice'.
- One participant expressed a view that the 'Voice' name is not original and should be changed.
- There were comments around what was being proposed had not been guided by communities and final proposals needed to be guided by communities.
- There were concerns from some participants that the Indigenous Voice will be controlled or abolished without constitutional enshrinement. However it was clarified that it will be independent of Government, that Government will decide on what form it will take and that the Indigenous Voice will need to have a working relationship with Government and the Parliament.
- Some individuals felt that the Indigenous Voice would be another ATSIC, with some commenting that this would be a positive but others warning that this meant it could be abolished in a similar manner.
- There was a comment that the Interim Report did not mention the 1938 day of mourning, and it was identified by participants that this was a call for a voice for Aboriginal Australians.
- There was discussion about the importance of getting state and territory governments on board.

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- It was noted by a participant that the Indigenous Voice is really important to have input into the budget process, expenditure review committees and similar forums when policy is created quickly by Government.
 - There was discussion around eligibility and the need to define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There was a suggestion by one participant of an audit of identity is required, and a suggestion that the statutory declaration process for confirmation of Aboriginality is not working.
 - There was support for the need for the Indigenous Voice needs to represent all levels, from local to state/territory and up to federal and that the Indigenous Voice could be a vehicle to influence at all levels.
 - There were some comments that current systems may be broken and that the Indigenous Voice needs to address systemic issues.
 - There was a hesitancy on an ability to support what is being proposed as it is different from the Uluru Statement from the Heart, however some participants were critical of the consultation process for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Discussion about the Local and Regional Voice proposal included:

- The need to not duplicate was stressed by many participants and that communities already have representative bodies, noting it is a key principle set out in the proposals. It was noted that to be effective non-duplication was key as any duplication would thin out already overused resources. This included not duplicating previously failed national bodies.
- There was discussion on the Aboriginal Land Rights structure in NSW and the need to not reinvent the process in NSW. Some participants felt like ‘Voices’ should be land councils, native titles councils and traditional owners only, however others disagreed with this.
- Some individuals felt they should not be forced to have Empowered Communities or Local Decision Making models throughout NSW.
- There was a discussion on the need to focus on transparency, which will provide avenues on advocacy.
- There was a comment that the Indigenous Voice needs to empower people and the need to build capability and capacity in communities. There was discussion about the need for self-determination.
- Participants generally supported the principles for Local and Regional Voices. Participants reflected on the purpose and deliverables of the Local and Regional Voices, and how the principles would work in practice
- Some participants raised examples where they identified Indigenous bodies have been successful at managing funds, including land councils, and the positive view that this had with the community. There was a suggestion that a voice could play a similar role.
- Some participants felt that the Indigenous Voice was an opportunity to provide real change at the local level on the ground, particularly on the Central Coast in NSW.
- There was discussion around representation and regional boundaries and that there will be some issues when these are decided.

Discussion on the National Voice proposals included:

- There was suggestion from one participant that the chair and deputy chair of state land council should be the NSW representatives.
- A participant noted the Voice should be a gatekeeper to ensure nothing is imposed on Indigenous peoples without consent.
- There was discussion on proportionality and the suggestion that four National Voice members are needed in NSW.
- A participant suggested do not use Australian citizenship as a criteria for eligibility, and not use eligibility criteria around convictions and convictions for crimes of misconduct. This was not correct as certain individuals with criminal records should still be included due to higher rates of incarceration for Indigenous people.
- Some participants commented there needed to be a guaranteed Elders group for the National Voice, similar to guaranteed Youth and Disability Advisory Groups.