

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Kamilaroi, Gomeroi and Gamilaraay country,

Moree, 15 March 2021, 9.00am, Session 1

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 session was attended by 13 participants and Uncle Leonard Waters gave a Welcome to Country. Key points discussed are summarised below.

- All participants agreed that ‘we definitely need an Aboriginal voice and it must come from community’.
- There was a long discussion about the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
 - One participant stated he was saying no to the Uluru Statement and the elements outlined in it. He was present at the National Convention at Uluru, which he pointed out was held at Yulara resort and not Uluru. He told his story of walking out at Uluru and explained his position of opposition to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The participant argued that there were no leaders at Uluru, it had not spoken to community, and that the Voice called for in the Statement is being pushed by ‘black politicians’ and large organisations, and the Voice ‘should not be imposed on our people’ as there is no mandate.
- Participants pointed out that trauma is physical and visible locally, and they are losing people to cancer, other illnesses and trauma every week.
- A discussion was had on the three tier structure of land rights, which some participants noted in their view is flawed. It was argued the proposal for a Voice will be a new three tier structure and this will not work, as the regional voice will usurp the local voice, and the national voice would usurp the regional voice.
- A discussion was had on the three tier structure of land rights, which is flawed. It was argued the proposal for a Voice will be a new three tier structure and this will not work, as the regional voice will usurp the local voice, and the national voice would usurp the regional voice.
 - One participant asked the question:
 - How will you guarantee a local voice will be heard? Will it be trumped by regional issues? Will it be trumped by the national voice? Then it is up to the Parliament whether they listen and consider, and commit to action. How are we genuinely going to be heard? A direct voice from Moree to the leaders?
 - Another participant argued that a local voice should speak directly to the National Voice. Local issues are truly local and local law is intrinsically local.
 - It was noted the importance of clarity on understanding the role of each level of a voice, and not creating a hierarchy is important.
- One participant noted there are 72 non-government organisations locally in Moree.

- One participant said the Coalition of Peaks structure could be used rather than the Local & Regional Voices. Another participant stated they do not trust the peak organisations.
- Participants questioned the use of the name “Indigenous Voice”, as they are not Indigenous, they are Aboriginal. One participant noted the Voice could be called the “Aboriginal and Islander Voice”.
 - One participant said the co-design process needs to differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as they are not the same people.
- There was criticism of the Voice Co-design process and consultation from the participants. It was stated that they hadn’t heard of the process before and emphasised that local people needed to know about the consultation.
 - One participant stated that the proposals are already formulated and they are not informed by community. Feedback is being asked for after the proposals have been developed and community needs to be asked what they need.
 - It was also argued there is a lack of access if the submissions are only digital, and there needs to be more face-to-face meetings.
 - One participant stated there is no mandate for the co-design process and they don’t trust the co-design members. There is no representative from Moree on the Local and Regional Co-design Group.
 - A participant argued this process is regurgitating the process from Uluru, which had no mandate. There is nothing wrong with starting from scratch again. There should have been elections to the co-design groups.
 - A participant noted that a pre-consultation session is required.
- It was clarified that this consultation session is only the first meeting. The proposal is for a framework and no model is prescribed. It would be up to each local and regional community to design and develop their Local and Regional Voice. This is also a conversation that community needs to discuss.

National Voice

- One participant argued that the National Voice must have South Sea Islander representation. This participant noted:
 - Aunty Faith Bandler and Aunty Dr Evelyn Scott are both South Sea Islander women who fought for Aboriginal rights and were instrumental in the 1967 referendum. We must respect their voices.
 - South Sea Islander peoples were brought to this land as slaves. They married into Aboriginal families. Their voices are missing.
- There was a discussion on how the National Voice would work in practice.
 - One participant stated that the proposal looked like it would be a 'tick the box' exercise for government.
 - It was asked how it would be guaranteed the government will engage from the early stages of policy development? Sometimes the government works fast, with ‘streamlined process’. But the government needs to take time and talk to community. The government needs to also come back to the community and engage, not just engage once. The National Voice needs to ensure this is done.
 - How is this engagement ensured?
 - It was also asked what guarantee is there that the government will take on the advice? There needs to be a guarantee the government will consider the advice and take action.
 - It was pointed out that the government can engage with community now, and a participant asked why this is not already happening?
- There was a discussion about how the National Voice would be guaranteed to exist? If established in legislation, the government can change legislation – ‘how do we have substantial guarantee that this structure will not be changed by the government?’
- A participant said there needs to be a guarantee the National Voice engages with the Local and Regional Voices, and it is two-way.
- A ‘youth parliament’ could work but in guidance with Elders – it will need cultural authority.
- One participant pointed out that they will be consulting with the queen's representatives, but ‘where are our sovereign rights?’