



The National Voice Proposal Webinar

4 March 2021

This is a verbatim transcript of the webinar. For further information and clarification on the proposals, please review the resources on the Indigenous Voice website.

Dan Bouchier:

Good afternoon and welcome to this webinar on the next stages around discussions of a national voice. This is coming to you from Canberra, the lands of the Ngunnawal people, I pay my respects to the traditional custodians, past and present here and I want to pay particular homage to the connection to stories and country and passing that on.

Dan Bouchier:

I'm Dan Bouchier from the ABC, my life has been about stories, about telling them, collecting them, sharing them. So much of that aligns with these big national conversations that we are having right now that bring us together. And I want to pay my respects as well to you and your traditional owners and custodians wherever you are in the nation. And I know we've got people watching and listening in from right around these lands. So welcome, thanks for joining us and I'm looking forward to getting stuck into these conversations very soon.

Dan Bouchier:

We are going to be having a big chat soon with who was the co-design group co-chair of the national group and a group member of the National Co-Design team. I'm going to stop talking and introduce our panel today. First is Dr. Donna Odegaard AM, a Larrakia woman, the CEO of First Nations Broadcasting, Australia's largest fully indigenous-owned radio, television and production network that does some incredible work there across the top end of Australia. And it was honoured with an Order of Australia for the work and the protection and preservation of indigenous culture. Dr Odegaard, welcome.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Thanks, Dan, much appreciated.

Dan Bouchier:

Also with us is Richard Weston from the National co-design group member. Richard was recently appointed as the first Deputy Children's Guardian for Aboriginal children and young people in New South Wales at the New South Wales Government Office for the Children's Guardian. Before this, he was the Chief Executive Officer at SNAICC, the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and co-chair of Family Matters.

Dan Bouchier:

As a descendant of the Meriam people of the Torres Strait, Richard has worked in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs for more than 20 years and as a part of that, he had a role right here in Canberra as the Chief Executive of the



Healing Foundation, a crucially important group that looks at how we deal with these questions of intergenerational trauma, look to the future while acknowledging the past. Richard, great to have you along.

Richard Weston:

Yeah, thanks a lot, Dan, great to be here and good to be here with Donna as well.

Dan Bouchier:

I just wanted to give you a sense of the process that's got us to this point. So over the last 12 months, 52 co-design members from around the country in three advisory groups have worked together to develop the Indigenous Voice proposals and I'm not sure if you've had a chance to have a read of it. But it is quite an incredible and detailed document that goes through those conversations, looks at what's happened in the past, what are the opportunities for the future.

Dan Bouchier:

Earlier this year, that interim report was released and it includes the proposals for the local and regional voices that will be discussed in webinars like this next week. Today, we're talking about the national voice and it's really great to have this conversation with those people that were there at the table, helping to facilitate and navigate what are very big issues about who we are as a nation, where we want to be as a country and a people and how we get there. That pathway is this conversation right now, this stage, the national consultations.

Dan Bouchier:

And this is going to be a very big part of going forward. One of a series of webinars, you can get more details on those and of course, the live events are happening around the nation, their online at the National Indigenous Australians Agency, you can get all the details there as well as plenty of information about the programme, the project, the process as well and how we got to this point.

Dan Bouchier:

Now, like I said, those questions, you can pop them in and get them through to us, we'll be getting into those very soon. But, I thought to start us off, we'd have a look at a little bit of what's been proposed and discussed right here.

Video:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would choose the members of the National Voice. All states and the Northern Territory would be represented by two National Voice members. The ACT would be represented by one or two members. The Torres Strait Islands would also be represented by one or two members.

Video:

There would be instances where the members from the Torres Strait Islands represent the views of all Torres Strait Islanders, including those living on the mainland. This would occur for matters of national significance to Torres Strait Islanders.

Video:

There are two ways members could be chosen. Model one is by choosing members from Local and Regional Voices. Model two is by choosing members through an election process. Under both models, there would be gender balance among members. There would also be a two-way formal advice link between the National Voice and Local and Regional Voices.

Video:

Under both models, there is also an option for a state or territory representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to select National Voice members, if one exists. The National Voice could have up to 20 members. This could include two appointed members to fill gaps where needed but only where the National Voice members and Minister agree.

Video:



For example, appointees could be used to ensure a mix of urban, regional and remote members. Membership would be open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There could be an ethics council to provide advice to the National Voice on governance matters and ongoing integrity.

Video:

50% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under 25 years of age and 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with a disability. Permanent youth and disability advisory groups would ensure those perspectives are captured by the National Voice.

Video:

The proposed National Voice would be an advisory body to both the Australian Parliament and the Australian Government. It would be made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It could provide advice on national matters it decides are the most important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These matters would be prioritised by the National Voice. They would be on nationally significant matters of critical importance to the social, spiritual and economic wellbeing of, or which has a significant or particular impact on, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Video:

The National Voice could be engaged from the early stages of the development of relevant laws and policies. It could provide both formal and informal advice. Parliament and the Government would be required to ask the National Voice for advice on laws and policies which only impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Video:

They would be expected to ask the National Voice for advice on laws and policies that have a big impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When a law is introduced to Parliament, it would be made clear if the National Voice has been asked for advice, if advice was provided and what the advice is.

Video:

The National Voice would add to what exists already. This means it would work with and talk to existing structures, not replace them. The National Voice would also connect with Local and Regional Voices, ensuring it reaches into local communities. This would be a two-way relationship.

Video:

The National Voice would seek community input through Local and Regional Voices. These elements support the role of the National Voice, to have the right and responsibility on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to advise Parliament and the Government on national issues that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Dan Bouchier:

So we got a sense there of exactly what is the art of the possible. Dr. Odegaard, give us a sense of how we got to this point.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Thanks, Dan. And I think it's really important at the outset to, again, pay respect to the traditional owners and custodians of the lands on which we are each gathering today and for my part, I'm here in far north Queensland, on the lands of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji and Yirrganydji peoples. So I appreciate being here today.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And I say that with all due respect because from the outset, when we were tasked, when I was appointed to this role, and our members, we came together with an understanding that we have a burden and responsibility on our shoulders, not just as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but all of our members who are comprised rather of a fairly broad range of expertise and also leadership roles.



Dr. Donna Odegaard:

It's a great mix and if I can just spend a moment just saying that at the outset of our national indigenous co-design group, our approach was to, at the outset of our meetings, was to acknowledgment of cultural protocols and ethics, to show each other respect at every single meeting and to value each other as group members, bearing in mind that membership of our group involved cultural authorities, some whose English wasn't a first language. Also, organisation, indigenous organisation leaders from right across the spectrum and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-indigenous members, leaders in academia and in the legal system. They did title representation and also authorities on treaty.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And what also is important is that we had good membership of youth, representing youth, the disability members with disabilities but also LGBTQI groups. So to that, it actually set the tone of how we would hold every single meeting and bear in mind also that this is an unprecedented task and process that we were given to undertake. We had to dig very deeply and widely and in the process bring forward all of the relevant legislations and reports and as many works that mentioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and not just the issues but also what we want from our governments, or more importantly, from our own leadership.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So, to that, being in roles that we had and have, charged with looking at options for National Voice to government was a very onerous task. So, where we are today, we have delivered on the interim report and so this has given us the courage to go forward in stage two. But these options, I must impress, it's about the voices of our people in the local and regional areas that we are looking for.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And, as you said, Dan, the work that we've done has looked at gender balance, has looked at complimenting existing structures and all the good work that's been done with various and different discussions, we are and were tasked with a very specific job to do and that was to codesign this voice.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So, it's now up to those who are with us today and what we're doing, endeavouring to go out to the wider community, local and regional regions and our organisations to pretty much encourage input of those many voices so that they may shape and inform going forward what the National Voice would look like.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And again, and I think I can safely speak for our group, we have worked very collaboratively, very respectfully and a lot of discussions were offline as well, so I'm really proud to be part of this group. But, we have a lot of work to do.

Dan Bouchier:

It does feel like the work's just got started and I guess this is the important stage that were at now is about hearing from Australians, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country about their reaction to this and the way to pave the way forward.

Dan Bouchier:

Richard, just getting you to weigh in on that about being a part of the process, what's your reflection?

Richard Weston:

Look, it was a real honour to be asked to be invited by the Minister to be part of the group, our first Aboriginal Minister, so that's quite a significant part of our story. You talked about story in your introduction, Dan, and for me, personally, I felt that this was personally an enriching experience, there was a lot of dialogue, discussion, as Donna said, pouring over documents, providing feedback, having debates, disagreements, discussion but done in a really good respectful way.

Richard Weston:



And I think where we've landed is it is an important time in our history, it's an important time in the history of Australia. And there is a lot of things going around our country. There is this discussion about the Voice, there is the closing the gap arrangements and there has been international events around Black Lives Matter which come out of COVID. There is a lot of things going on.

Richard Weston:

So the opportunity to be part of the discussion, the debate and helping to shape the design of the Voice or at least to put the options out now for consultation is what we're doing has been really stimulating and interesting process. And I feel very honoured and privileged to have been part of it.

Dan Bouchier:

We saw in that video touching on some of those groups, the committees that will be set up. Our first question is, young people play a significant role in our future and how do we ensure authentic consultation is undertaken with this group nationally, regionally and locally in particular disengaged youth? Donna, I know this is something you want to weigh in because it is something you talked about throughout the process.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Yeah, good question. And not so much interesting but I expect that it wouldn't be right at the forefront of the consultations that have commenced that I've been part of. And this is really exactly what we want. So these are the questions exactly what we want to hear because the youth, as we discussed in our very first meeting, Richard would agree with, is that we needed to have the youth in particular have a strong voice in this process and indeed from our group and the other groups, it has delivered upon that.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Now, importantly, the feedback and what I've experienced is that there are the young up and coming leaders who, for my part, are smarter, smarter than me, are well informed, have this very lateral view of what they want for the future and so it just made common sense and respect for those future and existing future leaders to have a critical role in this. And this is why we've come up with the committee that is specifically for our youth to be involved in.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And that's something that we established on day one and Damien who is one of our members on that is National Representative of Youth who actually brought that attention to us. So, every meeting following that, we've had those strong voices of the youth on our groups but who then brought along other voices. So we want that to continue. So as far as this whole process, this consultation process, I experienced that last week in South Australia in Adelaide with two sessions and listening to those youth in leadership roles who are bringing through other youth who are asking the same questions. How can we get involved? How can we make change, how can our voices and our decisions and our aspirations be heard?

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And that's exactly what we want. So we encourage those submissions and contacts from the youth. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth but also the wider community, there is a lot of interest.

Dan Bouchier:

And Richard, I want to get you to weigh in on that as well, but there is also another question that's just come in and I think it expands further in the arena you're working in and have been. This is from Sarah who is on Ngunnawal land here in Canberra where I am who asked, "Did the advisory group consider or envisage early childhood education as being an area to be part of the focus of national, local and regional voices?" I'll throw that one over to you, Richard, but feel to free to answer the earlier question as well.

Richard Weston:



Yeah, sure. Look, I think it's a related question. Thanks, Sarah, for the question and thanks for the first question. Look, I think without the data set, and it said it very clearly in that introductory video that 50% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are aged under 25. So, if I was a young person and I just fall outside the category of being classified as a young person, I would be right front and centre in these conversations now because they make up a large part of our population currently. And what we're talking about today is about the future.

Richard Weston:

And it's very clear that as this national conversation about the Voice unfolds, we are going to be needing leadership from our young people of today to be taking this forward in the next five, 10, 15 years. So, young people are very important. I think the first question talked more around vulnerable young people, people in probably juvenile justice, in the out of home care, those kind of issues. That's the reason the Voice will exist is to take on and be talking and elevating those national issues from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective into the dialogue with Parliament and with the law makers.

Richard Weston:

The second question about early childhood development, well, it's a good question because what we were trying to do, and I think we achieved it, we didn't want to prescribe anything in the design. There is some parameters that we're working with around what the Voice might look like. And it's come through in that video. There is language like it could look like this or it could be this. This is part of the ... What we're in now is this consultation on the design.

Richard Weston:

So we're going to take lots of information from these discussions and the questions that are going on now and around the country to influence how this is going to look. But, I just say that early childhood education and care is critically important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and to our future, strengthening that sector, strengthening the opportunity for our children to have access to early childhood education is vitally important. And that's an example of the type of issue, I think, I potentially think, could be elevated through the National Voice.

Richard Weston:

But, just going back to that representation, it will be very important for young people now to be asserting themselves into those local and regional structures that are going to be emerged because what we're talking about today is the future. And they are the ones that are going to be living with the consequences of the outcomes of what happens with the Voice going forward.

Dan Bouchier:

Yeah, that becomes a really shared responsibility from here. Thanks, Richard. Donna, there is a question in from Emma in Tasmania who says, "Thanks for the discussions. The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People states that we have the right to self determine our place in societies, Do you think", Emma asks, "That the Indigenous Voice is the right pathway for Australia to genuinely and truly meet the expectations of that UN Declaration?"

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Thanks for that, Emma and it's actually something that I've just jotted down just earlier and the approach that we've taken. And we actually raised this as important to the process and in effect, what this Voice and this process is doing, because I mean, let's face it, we're cognizant that historically, the laws and policies are in odds and in misfit with the realities of our cultural, spiritual, social, everything of who we are as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. And even our economies, everything.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So it's time that we have the opportunity, as stated under the UN Declaration, our right to self determination. We have the opportunity in what we're doing to determine what we want and also make decisions on how we want our government and policy makers and laws to change so that we are the decision makers. We have to be the decision makers. But we'd have to do it in such a way that it meets, at the very least, the standard of the UN Declaration.



Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Self determination I think is very, very important. And to keep that kind of narrative going forward in our discussions and consultations. So I think that's a really, really important question. Thanks, Emma.

Dan Bouchier:

Yeah, thanks, Donna. Richard, the next question we've got is from Trudy who says she is a non-indigenous Australian, welcome along, this is a conversation for the whole nation. And Trudy asks, "I would like to know the process going forward to make non-indigenous Australians aware of the Voice and gain their support. I ask this because it's my understanding this will go to a referendum and we need all Australians to vote to support the Voice. Your recommendations on this?" Richard.

Richard Weston:

Yeah, that's a good question. At this stage, it's not intended that this is going to a referendum but it's certainly a live conversation about whether the Voice is enshrined in the Constitution or whether it's a legislated process. At the moment, it looks like being a legislative process. But whether it goes to referendum really is out of the scope of our group and the design process. That's really a matter for Government and Parliaments.

Richard Weston:

But I think overwhelmingly, my observation is overwhelmingly in the broader community, there is general support for the idea of a voice enshrined in the Constitution. That's just my own personal perspective. In terms of non-indigenous people getting involved, this conversation isn't just about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, although we are very engaged and this is an important issue for us, but really, we want to have this conversation with the broader Australian public.

Richard Weston:

So there are resources. There is a website, the Voice at NIAA so get on the NIAA website and google the Voice, you'll find it will come up. There is lots of resources there. There is also a conversation started that people can take to start having discussions in their families, in their communities. We had non-indigenous peoples as part of our national group.

Richard Weston:

So, really important going forward whether it's a legislative voice or constitutionally enshrined, we have to have non-indigenous peoples support. We refer to them as the 97%. So non-indigenous people aren't left out of this conversation at all.

Dan Bouchier:

Yeah, it really is a conversation for everyone and in fact we kind of need everyone to be a part of it because you can't do nation building with only one part of the nation. I've got another question that's just came in from Romaine at Cadigal land, I believe in Sydney. Do you think opting for a maximum of 18 people membership for the National Voice can adequately represent the needs of this with the greatest need amongst our First Nations people, especially in rural and remote regions? I might open that up to both of you, I'll start with you, Donna.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Yes, and once again, look, these are the kind of questions, these are the discussions that we have had all the way through, particularly when we were looking at the composition. And looking at it in the context of what would be not so much pragmatic but practically possible to do. And of course, this is the reason for reaching out for a response. And also, in those responses to offer some recommendations as Renee has put forward.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And I guess every meeting we've had on that composition, we've raised the fact that we wanted to reach the hardest to reach places because very often, it's the voices that are unheard in those remote places. We know that. But, this is why the Minister has given us the task to do this broad consultation.



Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So, it will be up to the local and regional groups to then ensure that those hardest to reach places where those authorities, cultural or community members or representation, have a voice. We have discussed that many times and this is the opportunity also for all Australians to get on board and put in some submissions around that because that's something that pretty much weighs heavily on our shoulders to get those voices of those important people.

Dan Bouchier:

And by extension of that, Richard answer the question, I guess, if people that are watching think that it should be broader than 18, is that something they should be making a submission about?

Richard Weston:

Exactly, yeah. I mean, we did grapple with this. One of the very early proposals suggested a membership of 72. And look, Donna is right, I think one of the challenges for us was to come back with something that was realistic, something that was achievable and remembering that this has to get through a Cabinet process inside of our Government and it is a conservative government. So the fact that we're even at this point is amazing to me and I think the fact that we've got an Aboriginal Minister for indigenous affairs has had something to do with that.

Richard Weston:

But we've also had a very supportive Prime Minister in the process as well. So I think yeah, look, I think it's a great question and we did grapple with this but it does elevate the importance of those local and regional voices and that connection from that local and regional level into the National Voice. So, I think people really should put up different options. But one of the things that ultimately we come back to is what's going to work, what's going to be pragmatic, how much is it going to cost, for example. That's an issue governments are always interested in.

Richard Weston:

Notwithstanding that, I think there is an opportunity for people to put forward their thoughts on that. But I think it does, for me, it just highlights the importance and the need for those local and regional voices to be well established and developed over time. And they will play an important role in the National Voice.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And if I could just add to that, sorry Dan, if I could just add to that. And this is why we have in no way at all sort of want to undermine those excellent existing structures that are out there and encourage our local and regional organisations and peer groups without mentioning any of them, but this is where we are having the dialogue, we're having a conversation now about, okay, so, in your region, are we missing someone? Are we missing a group? Are we missing a community? So this is part of this conversation and consultation process.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

It's never been done before to this extent. So this is a really, really important question and it has been for us all the way through as Richard said.

Richard Weston:

And we're getting lots of questions through so I might have to keep you both on track as we try and whip through as many as we are getting. We got a question that's just come through. Is the design group open to arguing a case for expanding the 16 to 18 National Voice group to more voices from remote regions, for example, more voices from each of the states and the NT for remote voices. I might start with you on that one, Richard.

Richard Weston:

Yeah, look, I think the answer's yes. I don't know if it would sit with our group. I think it would sit in the submission process because the submission process is really about testing the ideas that we've put forward and put out there. I mean certainly, in my experience, my own personal experience, I cut my teeth in Aboriginal affairs in the Murdi Paaki region of



far west New South Wales which has a regional community governance model that's been operating for 16 or 17 years and very effective and I just can't talk more positively about it.

Richard Weston:

And I was open to the idea of having 72 members but it just gets pared back because of what's practical. But certainly, I think there's an opportunity to make submissions if it needs to be bigger. Take the opportunity if you've got some ideas about that because that's what this process is about, is the Government wants to hear from the community.

Dan Bouchier:

And Donna?

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Yeah, same. Look, pretty much the same story for me. My background is, I was born in a remote location and my work, all my work pretty much has been focused on remote locations. So we understand all of those issues around lack of access to services and running water and health services. We've done this for decades now, same as many of us have.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Right across Northern Australia, particularly in Northern Territory, we broadcast to about 2,400 Aboriginal indigenous communities right across Australia throughout what we do. And so we have that level of engagement but as Richard said, I mean we could have gone beyond 72 quite frankly. We wanted to but it's just not practical. We needed to get this very mindful, this co-design, you could look at it as a vehicle to get us through to a stronger place, to a standing where we actually have the strength of our voices influencing and deciding upon those policies and laws that affect us.

Dan Bouchier:

It's an interesting point that this isn't the end of the road, this is part of the journey, isn't it? And there is lots of questions coming in to that effect. This one, Richard, how does a non-indigenous person like myself, this is from Theresa, know what to suggest in a submission to the co-design of the Voice?

Richard Weston:

Yeah, good question, Theresa, I think this is a great opportunity to start having some discussions with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in your community. I mean it's a great conversation starter, finding out how important or how useful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people think it might be. I think my sense is that most people support the concept of a voice. But there is different ways that people want to see that manifest.

Richard Weston:

But whatever that way is, I mean this process that we're going through, the co-design process, has to happen, would have to happen anyway. But, great question. Start engaging with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and see what they think.

Dan Bouchier:

And Donna, a question in from Martin, the proposed Voice to Parliament in Government will consider acts of federal parliament, regulations that affect First Nations people. However, Martin goes on, the Commonwealth Government do not deliver services. How will the Voice influence the delivery of services by the states and territories?

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Well, this is the whole point of these options that we are asking people to respond to. I mean, what we want to do and what we're looking to do is to have a group, a national indigenous voice, a group that is elected by their state and territory through the process of the local and regional either election or process to be able to have not just the opportunity but to be part of influencing, changing the policies and the laws that affect our people. We'll raise issues of those, where you have disadvantage or where indigenous people need to have better policies, if there are going to be policies that are designed to improve the lives of our people, well, they need to be the decision makers.



Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And that is really where I see the strength in having the Voice to Government. It's a voice that has a relationship with the Government that is not just providing advice. It's actually influencing and that advice part of it speaks to the needs of our people. So, once again, and I encourage people to read the interim report because we go over those options and for those people who don't have the opportunity to read that report, I mean it is on our website but that's not always accessible.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

But once again, it's up to ... Or a Voice will give us standing in other words, will provide a recognised, well, a voice that sits alongside Government and Government is not talking down to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about matters that affect us.

Dan Bouchier:

And Richard, the next question is about something you and I have talked about before from Theresa. How will the Voice represent indigenous community members who either don't have cultural knowledge and or live in communities who do not have recognised indigenous spokespeople?

Richard Weston:

Well, I think it's probably going into the regional local discussion now. I think, as Donna says, if you get on the website and access the report, I think the way the local and regional design group have approached their task is quite brilliant and sophisticated where they've tried to accommodate structures that might already exist there, recognising that there are communities and regions that will need time to develop and grow and develop their leadership structures.

Richard Weston:

So, I think that's really important. In terms of people that are maybe a bit disconnected from culture or may not have grown up in culture, that shouldn't discourage them from asserting their rights as indigenous people. We've, as Donna said, our process in coming to where we are today has been inclusive and we've tried to be inclusive.

Richard Weston:

Certainly, what we're trying to do here in all the work that we do, whether it's working on the Voice or whether we're working in Aboriginal health or whether we're working in the communication space that Donna works, what we're trying to do is unpack 230 odd years, nearly 240 years of colonisation to assert ourselves into the life of our country and to have a say in our future.

Richard Weston:

Now, we're all dealing with the consequences of colonisation, all Australians are, whether you're an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or a non-indigenous Australian, there is different aspects that affect us. And one of the issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been the assault on our identities and our connection to country. That's a history that we are quite familiar with. So all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should feel, and I would hope that they feel and I hope they have that opportunity, to participate at their local and regional level and have their voice heard.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

And Dan, can I just also add that in terms of the national voice providing advice to the Australian Government, Parliament, this is going to be a work in process, in progress for some time. And we are continuing to refine those elements in the stage two co-design process.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So if you consider that there is a number of ways that the National Voice could provide advice to the Parliament and Government, it could be in response to a request from the Government, Australian Parliament. And another case is the National Voice would actually initiate advice. It would not need to wait for a request.



Dr. Donna Odegaard:

So, I mentioned briefly before, it's about a two-way working relationship that's never really existed before in this sense. And important, too, is the transparency mechanisms that are also proposed. So, you've got a system of consultancy, transparency, that would be non justiciable, in other words, couldn't be subject to a challenge in court. We have to consider these things so that they don't affect the validity of relevant law policy.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

But, I had a message just come through and said, "Well, it's about time that the public sector worked together with us to improve policies and laws." And I think that that's a fair comment, fair call. There is a lot of good will out there, quite frankly.

Dan Bouchier:

Maybe the broader point to your text message was about the country working together on this and perhaps the Indigenous Voice...

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Indeed.

Dan Bouchier:

It might be a good place to start. Look, we have gone over time. I'm sorry if we didn't get to your questions. There were heaps coming through though that had a focus on the local and regional component and there is going to be a conversation very similar to this one happening in about a fortnight although you can get all the specific details on the National Indigenous Australians website, niaa.org.au. And also, just on that, there are a number of ways to provide your feedback on what you've heard today.

Dan Bouchier:

You complete the survey and provide a submission by going online, heading to voice.niaa.gov.au, in fact. Submissions close on the 31st of this month, so only a couple of weeks left to go. And the website also has got plenty of resources including the report breakdowns of different components and aspects of it to get visually across it really, really quickly. I have particularly found it quite helpful as I was first reading the interim report.

Dan Bouchier:

And you can also find out more about the face to face consultations. Now, there are some coming up in the next couple of weeks. I just want to rattle through those. In Brisbane, Toowoomba, Western Sydney, Mount Gambier and Murray Bridge. All the details, the specific details of the where, the when and that are going to be on the website. And there is two webinars coming up. In about a fortnight's time, you'll hear from Professor Peter Buckskin, co-chair of the local and regional co-design group and co-design group member Mr. Chris Ingrey, that's coming up shortly. And also, the other discussion will be with Professor Daryle Rigney and Fiona McLeod and the Honourable Jeff Kennett as well.

Dan Bouchier:

So looking at a couple of different aspects of this. I'll be facilitating that chat and I'm looking forward to joining you as well. Thank you so very much for your company today. It's been great to have you along. Do get involved, have a read and as you've heard from both Dr. Donna Odegaard and Richard Weston, put in a submission, get your thoughts if you disagree with aspects and think that, as some of you were saying on the texts, maybe it needs to be broader, bigger, up around that 70 or so number that you heard there, then put that in as a submission because this is all part of having that conversation.

Dan Bouchier:

But for now, thank you Dr. Donna Odegaard, thank you very much for joining us today.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:



Thank you, Dan and thank you, Richard.

Dan Bouchier:

And Richard Weston, great to have you along as well.

Richard Weston:

Yeah, thanks a lot, Dan, thanks, Donna, really appreciate being here, thank you.

Dr. Donna Odegaard:

Me too.

Dan Bouchier:

And from me, Dan, here on Ngunnawal country in Canberra. Yarra. Good afternoon.