

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

**Wagyl Kaip within Noongar country,**

**Albany, 7 April, 12:00, Session 1**

**Number of participants: 25**

## Key points raised

*Please note, this is a summary of the discussion 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 25 participants who were welcomed to country by Mr Mark Colbung. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*


- There was some discussion about the Uluru Statement from the Heart and constitutional recognition.
  - One participant felt the Voice co-design process was ‘diversionary and tokenistic’. They noted that the Uluru statement From the Heart was about having Aboriginal people recognised in the constitution.
  - One participant noted that there have been voices to parliament for a long time and felt that Aboriginal people were 'sick of giving advice to people that don't listen'.
  - Participants called for something stronger and more concrete ‘with teeth’.
  - Another participant expressed frustration that previous initiatives such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) were abolished and suggested this occurred because they ‘became too strong’.
  - One participant commented how insulting it was that Australia is the only modern democracy that doesn’t recognise their first peoples in the constitution.
  - Another participant felt the symbolism of constitutional recognition was important.
- There was some anti-government sentiment expressed by a few participants.
  - There was frustration over the lack of action on previous recommendations from Government inquiries.
  - One participant felt government programs like Close the gap, justice and child protection were ‘hitting a brick wall’ and not achieving any outcomes or meeting the needs of Aboriginal people.
  - A couple of participants felt that speaking out, being honest or disagreeing with government would have an impact on program funding and may put it at risk.
- One participant suggested a new political party should be formed e.g. an "Indigenous Voice Party".
  - It was acknowledged that this has been attempted at the state level before and is quite possible.



- It was also acknowledged that elected members have to represent all constituents, not just their Aboriginal members.
- One participant noted the word “Voice” didn’t resonate well with them.
- The importance of working with a grassroots people was emphasised in relation to both the Local and Regional Voice and the National Voice.
- Many participants spoke of the importance of young people and encouraging them to get involved.
  - One participant felt there was global movement for change - “I look at what’s happening around this world, there is movement and there is change. The world is going to be different. We’re a little bit more educated, we look at things differently. The change will come from young people.”
  - Another participant was inspired by the way youth think and talk about issues facing community. They acknowledged that youth often have different interpretations of Aboriginal issues.
- Most participants were optimistic about the proposals
- There was general acknowledgement that ‘it’s going to be a hard road’ but that the proposals have ‘every potential to work’.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- A few participants raised questions about how the Local and Regional proposal would work in practice, including how it will be implemented and what the role of community will be beyond this current phase.
- Participants agreed that the Local and Regional Voice should be developed, owned and run by communities.
- They acknowledged that they can see where this work has come from and where it is trying to go.
- It was clarified that there will need to be further co-design processes in every region in the next phase pending government decision.
- Co-design members also clarified that they do not represent government, they are developing these proposals for government to consider.
- There was general consensus that four regions would be too few for WA.
- Participants discussed transparency and accountability and noted that ‘without accountability, there will be no empowerment’.
- There was strong agreement that state governments need to commit to and support the Voice as full partners. There was interest in seeing local government included in the commitment.
- State Government representatives attending the consultation session confirmed that they will be making a submission as part of the co-design process and are committed to working with the Western Australian Aboriginal community. They want alignment and noted the importance of regional representative structures.
- Participants generally agreed that it will be challenging to reach consensus within the Noongar nation. However participants also recognised that having a structure to bring the groups together will be a ‘fantastic outcome in itself’ and that people need to learn to work together.
- It was acknowledge that once designed, the Voice structures will need to be periodically reviewed and may continue to evolve.
- An existing voice example from the Albany region was shared:
  - The Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group has over 30 members who represent the different communities around Albany.
  - Young people came together to fill a gap, be a voice and show initiative in the Great Southern region.
  - The group have organised an annual ‘March against Meth’ which has become a significant event in Albany.
  - They also held an inaugural leadership conference with elders and community members in October 2020.

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- The group have ‘separated money and gain from the conversation’ and have focused on the needs of Noongar people. It was noted that money can change the dynamic of these types of groups and that the group is supported by some volunteers.

#### *National Voice*

- Two participants expressed concern about the obligation on Government to consult the Voice.
  - There was a lack of clarity about what legislation would fall under the obligation and who would determine when Government/Parliament are obliged.
- One participant was interested in how members for a Joint Parliamentary Committee would be identified and how to ensure they have a genuine interest in the needs of Aboriginal People.
- There was some discussion about the role of the Coalition of Peaks and it was noted that the work of the Voice would be complementary and non-duplicative with existing bodies/organisations.
- There was some discussion about the potential programs a National Voice could influence including the Community Development Program, Aged Care, the Cashless Debit Card and NDIS.

#### *Co design process*

- One participant was interested in the timeframe for feedback to community, the final report, government decision and possible implementation.