

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Turrbal, Jagera and Yugara country,

Brisbane, 10 March 2021, 9.30am, Session 2

Number of participants: 9

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 9 participants and Damian Griffis gave an Acknowledgement of Country. Key issues discussed are summarised below.

Participants raised numerous concerns about the way in which the Indigenous Voice should and should not operate:

- There was agreement the diversity of voices in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities needed to be enabled, including women, young people and children in regional areas.
- One participant raised the experience of the National Congress and how it became a group that was not completely representative, and lacked grassroots legitimacy.
- Another participant noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not normally governed by a “voice”, but rather through councils of Elders, both male and female, and that the Indigenous Voice structure needs to reflect and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs and community structures.
- Participants were generally open to further discussions about how the Indigenous Voice might be structured and operate, but many stated they were not yet in a position to make strong recommendations on the design. Some design elements and principles were commented on, as follows.

Participants commented on some of the proposed principles to guide Local and Regional Voices and how Local and Regional Voices might operate:

- One participant stated that the proposed principles look to be potentially powerful, but for Local and Regional Voices to be able to successfully execute the principles, they would need sufficient funding.
- Another participant noted the principle of inclusive participation, and commented that it was difficult to give voice to people who do not normally have a voice. This includes people who feel disempowered, and people who are not involved in representative structures or organisations normally.
- Participants strongly agreed any Local and Regional Voice structures need to include native title holders and Traditional Owners, but also need to be able to include the diversity of people in the community.
- Another participant commented that with a maximum of 35 regions, Queensland would potentially have seven (7) Local and Regional Voices, which he could not see being workable in light of the great regional and cultural diversity throughout the state.
- A concern was raised that the proposed numbers of Local and Regional Voices, and the process to determine the regions to be covered in Queensland, could contribute to conflict within communities. To avoid this, it



was suggested communities would need considerable support, including capability building, to work their way to agreeing on genuinely representative and inclusive Local and Regional Voices.

- Participants agreed the relationships set up between Local and Regional Voices and local and state governments needed to build in accountability so that governments had to properly consult with Local and Regional Voices and ensure no particular groups of people were ignored.
- One participant commented that Queensland does not have cross-border communities, and so any Local and Regional Voices there would largely be contained within the Queensland borders.
- It was agreed advice from Local and Regional Voices needs to be publicly accessible, and potentially be presented in a report form that includes dissenting/minority views. It was strongly agreed a consensus approach was needed for the successful operation of Local and Regional Voices, but also that having dissenting/minority views available for public scrutiny would ensure such voices are not silenced.
- Participants generally agreed any representative positions on Local and Regional Voices needed to be remunerated positions, as the roles would be highly demanding.
- This led to discussion about how Local and Regional Voices could obtain sufficient resourcing. One suggestion was an endowed fund that Local and Regional Voices could draw down on, similar to the mechanism in NSW to fund land councils.
- Another participant suggested Local and Regional Voices could also be enabled to generate their own incomes.
- There was general agreement Local and Regional Voices should not be set up to enable any one or two dominant groups or organisations (e.g. land councils) to be in charge, but rather to enable genuine community control.
- One participant raised a concern that the non-duplication principle could lead to smaller community organisations being excluded from Local and Regional Voices.

There was consideration of some design elements of the National Voice:

- Some participants queried what “an advisory function” means. This led to discussion about the National Voice bringing an additional level of accountability, to the making of laws and policies federally, that have impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- One participant stated that the advice of the National Voice could not simply be delivered behind closed doors – there needs to be transparency so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be able to see its views being legitimately provided to the Australian Parliament.
- There was considerable interest in the proposed Youth Advisory Group and Disability Advisory Groups as permanent structures advising the National Voice.
- It was suggested there should also be advisory groups for children in out-of-home care and incarcerated people.

Participants explored the concept of constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice, and what that might mean:

- It was observed that constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice does not guarantee funding for a Voice to be able to perform its functions.
- Another person suggested guaranteed funding for an Indigenous Voice should be enshrined in the Constitution.
- Participants agreed should any changes be made to the Constitution, the change needs to be substantive, not just symbolic.