

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Pitjantjatjara country

Pukatja, 25 March 2021, 11:00am

Number of participants: 145 registered


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 145 participants who were welcomed to country by Mr Philip Marshall, the Chairperson of the Pukatja Community Council. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- One participant spoke about the APY Lands not needing a National or Local and Regional Voice. Rather, they wanted only a focus on Anangu leading at the local level, referencing the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap speech in February 2020 where he talked about Aboriginal people across Australia determining their lives. This participant also indicated their opposition to the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- There was a general view that APY Lands community councils have been disempowered, have no money or resources and so are not able to support their communities. This was contrasted with funding available for organisations to deliver services regionally at the expense of funding going directly to community councils.
- Several participants spoke about the lack of opportunities for young people on the APY Lands. There was a strong view that if the community controlled the funding this would change and they could ensure that there were programs and services for young people. They wanted people to be engaged and employed, but felt that at the moment services did not employ local people.
- A question was asked whether the National and Local and Regional Voice would be like ATSIC, or different, with the participant noting that they felt ATSIC did not work for the APY Lands.
 - Co-design members clarified that the Indigenous Voice would not be like ATSIC. It would not manage program funding but would advise governments on how things should be done. At the local and regional level the model would be flexible so that community can decide what it looks like, and would support self-determination at the local level and governments listening to community. At the national level the voice would not be about delivering services, but about advice on policy and legislation.
- One participant spoke about their history as one of the founders of the lands rights on the APY Lands, noting that at that time communities had lots of power, but this power was given away by communities or taken away by governments. The community needed to work out how it can get that power, and the funding, back to community, so that they can be powerful again. Their view was the co-design process needed to continue as this may be the last time community gets to look at something giving them for a voice for a long time – it is the only opportunity.
- A view was expressed that in order to work towards a strong voice community people needed to get to the table and be involved in the system and institutions as that's where the authority is at the moment.



Local & Regional Voice

- Concern was expressed by one participant about the APY Lands being told what to do by outsiders, noting that they do not want a regional structure, rather a local structure which allows Anangu on the ground to have a voice.
- A number of participants shared stories about the lack of resources for the Pukatja Community Council and indicated that they wanted to take back funding and service delivery for their community to show the young people a positive way forward. They expressed a strong view they wanted to have more say in how activities and services are run on the APY Lands, so that the young people can see a future here.
- There was a strong view that the community wants to make things happen, but that there are no jobs, little opportunity, and that community is asking for help. At the same time, community needs to stand together and have one voice.
- There was also a view that different voices from different people are needed to contribute to improving the situation and talk about how community are going to make a better future for their children.
- A number of participants shared stories about how things had worked in the past when community had funding and could support community activities, but with funding being taken away from councils these things are no longer able to happen. They noted that if money was given back to councils the communities would feel empowered and could stand strong as one.
- One participant observed that there are outsiders making decisions for APY Lands communities without understanding what community want. This needed to change and the APY Executive needed to listen to Anangu voices. They also reflected that improving lives for the kids needs to start from mother and father.
- One participant shared a story, pointing to a big tree and saying that it has a solid trunk and lots of stories from the land (the branches). Anangu fought hard for their land and they got it back but now were not standing together and were not strong, with no opportunities for young people. They noted that Anangu were now on a different path, and are getting lost and need help to get back on the right path to bring opportunities for young people, and to bring back control for Anangu communities.
- One participant noted that having had the opportunity to work as part of the NPY Empowered Communities initiative and becoming aware of the level of services and resources going into the Anangu communities in Western Australia and the Northern Territory they felt that the APY Lands communities are very lucky and have lot of services and activities trying to support Anangu.
- There was a view that the community needs to stand together and make government listen, to be role models for the young people.

National Voice

- It was noted that this is an opportunity to tell government directly what people want in the communities and to let them know what needs to happen.
- One participant restated their opposition to the National Voice and Uluru statement, noting they did not want anyone from the APY Lands elected to the National Voice.

Other Issues

- A concern was expressed about recent changes to power meters arrangements on the APY Lands, with the request for this to be taken up with the government.
- Another person indicated support services were doing a good job helping young people with literacy and other issues, whereas previously there was nothing for them and there was a lot of drug problems.