

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

**Arrernte country,**

**Alice Springs, 7 May 2021, 1.00pm – 4.00pm, session 3**

**Number of participants: 8**

## Key points raised

*Please note, this is a summary of the discussion and the views and opinions expressed by participants in consultation 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 8 participants. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- It was noted that if the Indigenous Voice were to be established governments would need to change the way they work with communities, and that this would be an opportunity for all parties to learn and grow, building better working relationships.
- Some participants expressed support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including the call to enshrine a Voice in the Australian Constitution.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Participants were drawn to the principles of ‘respectful long-term partnerships’, noting that all levels of government would be at the table with communities and regions, negotiating formalised agreements to work together. It was also noted that all parties would be expected to adhere to the principles-based framework.
  - Participants stressed the importance of ensuring all parties were held to account for abiding by any formal agreements that are reached.
  - Participants also commented that Local & Regional Voices would need to be properly supported by an independent secretariat, so as to be able to negotiate on an equal footing.
- Some participants thought the principles should include ‘independence from governments’ and ‘secure and ongoing funding arrangements’.
- One participant noted that the Interim Report mentions a potential role for Local & Regional Voices in strategic regional planning, and commented the role should be oriented to focus only on policy and legislation that impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- One participant raised the tristate region as potentially requiring its own Local & Regional Voice, which could in practice be underpinned by legislation in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia following the precedent of cross-jurisdictional policing powers that are currently in operation in these jurisdictions.



### *National Voice*

- Some participants commented that the National Voice would need to be established in a way that is completely independent from government, including with a sustainable source of funding and an independent secretariat.
- One participant expressed the view that the National Voice should be a voice to the Australian Parliament *only*, not also to the Australian Government. The participant also noted there is no mechanism proposed that would compel Parliaments to seek the advice of the National Voice. It was noted that as the Parliament is vested with the legislative power of the Commonwealth of Australia, it would not be possible to impose a requirement such as this.
- It was noted that it is intended the National Voice would be able to proactively provide advice to the Parliament and Government in the absence of a request for advice. This would be to enable the National Voice to respond in relation to issues it has established as relevant priorities. It was further noted that one of the transparency mechanisms being proposed is to enable National Voice advice to be tabled in Parliament.
  - One participant suggested where the government does not consider it necessary to consult the National Voice, an explanation should be provided alongside the relevant bills.
  - The participant also commented that there may be instances where the Government may consider an issue unrelated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but which may not be viewed as such by communities (e.g. climate change).
- Participants commented the number of National Voice members should be aligned with the number of Local & Regional Voices so there is representation from every Local & Regional Voice at the National Voice level.
- Participants felt the direct election model to selecting National Voice members may not be effective in terms of enabling broad engagement and legitimacy for the National Voice owing to the considerable under-enrolment of Aboriginal people in remote communities, and the lack of services in these communities to enable easy access to voting booths, mail delivery and other election services.