

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Muwinina country;

Hobart, 15 April, 5.30pm, Session 1

Number of participants: 11

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 11 participants and started with acknowledgement of local traditional owners by Professor Tom Calma. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- One participant expressed hope that government will listen this time, as they feel that the same conversation is being had again and again.
- Participants raised the need for the Voice to lobby private sector to be allies, with co-design members noting this is already in train, and much of corporate Australia is coming out in support of the Voice.

Local and Regional Voices

- There was discussion about the importance of data for making informed decisions, with participants noting scarcity of useful data and challenges involved in collecting data that relies on people being asked to self-identify.
- One participant noted that while there are many flaws people need to look to the future, as some things are changing and improving, such as data on children in out of home care.
- It was noted the proposals have a significant focus on young people, with strong agreement they need to be involved.
- A view was expressed that the principles look really sound, noting they are aspirational and implementation will be very complex.
- There was some discussion about the involvement of state governments, with a question about the likelihood of Tasmanian Government supporting the proposals. Co-design members expressed their hope state and territory governments will come to the table, pointing to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which they believe has changed the conversation and will make the Voice arrangements hard to ignore.
- Participants asked about mechanisms to allow individuals not belonging to organisations to get involved. Co-design members suggested some possible approaches, such as 'town hall' style meetings or zoom meetings. It was noted the voice would not be organisationally driven, with the way to select representatives yet to be determined.

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- The Tasmanian Children’s Commissioner noted lack of sufficient attention on empowering youth from a young age.
 - Participants discussed the importance of Indigenous kids learning their history, language and culture, noting the lack of this in many schools. They said in some places it used to be taught but has stopped more recently because of a lack of resources. In this context, the importance of governments not discontinuing pilot programs, and not constantly changing policies was also discussed.
 - A view was expressed that for all the aspirations of the principles a fundamental weakness in the proposals was that the Voice won’t be able to guarantee funding.
 - A view was put forward that real self-determination means sourcing funding yourself, with some skepticism expressed about governments’ willingness to fund priorities identified by communities. Co-design members provided some examples where this is already happening around the country, with approaches such as shared decision making and in Indigenous health, but acknowledged in other places it won’t happen overnight.
 - In response to a question about the election mechanism co-design members clarified that nothing has been set and Local and Regional Voices will be able to determine their own arrangements, but co-design groups looked at what may and may not work. This included ATSIC elections (noting low participation rates), organisations nominating members, and also the possibility raised in some consultation sessions of an expression of interest process against set criteria, with assessment by an independent party.
 - Noting that under the proposals Tasmania would only have one region, there was a query about how it could be ensured that not everything is based in Hobart and voices from all smaller places are heard. It was noted that Local and Regional Voices would be designed by community in each region, after a government decision on the final report.
 - There was a view that the TAC / land council based election won’t work, as this approach does not recognize some peoples’ Indigenous identity.
 - One participant, while supporting the flexibility included in the proposals, thought such arrangements may be administratively burdensome and queried whether resources would be available to facilitate the work of the voices. Co-design members clarified that the need for resources has been discussed in the Interim report.

National Voice

- The Tasmanian Children’s Commissioner queried if the age range for involving young people has been determined, expressing her view that it should be reframed as voices of children and young people, and could link with the work of children’s commissioners around the country. The importance of teaching civic and citizenship rights and responsibilities from an early age was acknowledged.
- A participant asked if the Voice will be another peak body at the national level - such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation - which could conflict with other peak bodies. Co-design members clarified that it will bring people together, and noted that the Coalition of the Peaks only represents their members, with around 50 percent of Indigenous people belonging to an organisation.
- Participants noted it would be useful for them to keep the conversation going among themselves and keep abreast of the progress of the co-design process.
- A participant expressed concern about the ability of getting representatives from Tasmania, given some people can’t get their identity recognised.

Other Issues

- One participant raised concerns about doctors who don’t want to use the Medicare item that provides for Indigenous people to obtain cheaper prescriptions. It was suggested issues such as these could be raised with the Equal Opportunity Commissioner.