

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Katherine, 28 April 2021, 6.00pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 14

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 14 participants. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants provided a clear message that members of the proposed voice structures should be selected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Participants emphasised the importance of having the “right people” who would represent everybody, not just one group, especially in the context of the diversity of the community in Katherine. One participant outlined the importance of the voice of “real people who are being affected” being heard.
- Several participants emphasised the importance of putting culture at the heart of any model. The participant linked “breakdown” of culture to incarceration rates and other social problems, and outlined the challenge of reconciling cultural and corporate governance.
- One participant emphasised the economic context. They outlined what they saw as the urgent skills shortage and economic opportunity in the community sector and health industry. The participant suggested this could be a focus for the voice once established.
- Several participants expressed concern over resourcing, noting the systemic problems and complex systems that the voice would have to engage with. Co-design members outlined that the proposal included secretariat support for voice members.
- Participants queried whether the voice would be supported or heard. One participant emphasised the importance of a two-way conversation between Government and the voice. Another participant emphasised that the structure should be something “with teeth”.
- There was a discussion about whether there was support in Parliament for the proposals. Co-design members outlined that the Parliamentarians Working Group was one forum for discussions across political parties on the proposals.
- Accountability was a major theme. Participants raised the issue of funding given to the Northern Territory Government to provide services to Aboriginal people. There was a feeling that there was a lack of accountability or community say in how this money was spent. Participants suggested that voice structures could provide this accountability. Another participant emphasised the importance of holding Aboriginal organisations and individuals accountable as well



- Youth was a significant theme of discussions, described by one participant as the “tomorrow people”. Participants reflected on the importance of youth participation and potential opportunities to continue to engage you people, including an NLC youth forum.

Local & Regional Voice

- One participant felt that their voice was not being heard within the region under existing arrangements. The participant felt that organisations and services were based in Katherine and were disconnected from surrounding remote communities.
- The existing Local Decision Making structure was raised. One participant felt that it did not properly include traditional owners. The participant also noted that it was only advisory, and felt that this limited the effectiveness.

National Voice

- A number of participants raised concerns about having only two National Voice members from the NT. Participants felt that cultural differences would make it very difficult for two people to speak to the whole community.
- There were mixed views about how National Voice members should be selected. Some participants felt that an election would be a fair approach. Others commented on the risk of low turnout in any election. Some participants felt that turnout was already low among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mainstream elections for local and territory government. Participants also raised concerns about voter confusion between different elections.
- One participant raised concern about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs are currently evaluated. The participant felt that measures for different outcomes become obscured and that organisations struggle to understand what the measures are. There was a suggestion that the National Voice should tap into this process to influence government investment decisions.