

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Kaurna country

26 February 2021, ADELAIDE, Session 1


Number of participants: 33

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 morning session was attended by 33 participants who were welcomed to country by Mr Michael O'Brien. Key points discussed are summarised below.

- The group noted that co-design of the Indigenous Voice is a step in the right direction. Participants discussed the need for it to make a real difference and the importance of government listening and not just the voice talking. It was also noted that lack of representation has real impact.
- The group raised the importance of a link between local/regional, state and national levels of a voice, and states working with local and regional voices.
- The need for the proposed voice to work with existing bodies and arrangements, such as those under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, was also discussed.
- It was also noted that it could be easy for governments to just have voice from organisations, but community voices are needed as well.
- There was a general view that empowerment is key, but for this to be real access to resources is needed. The scope of the Local and Regional Voice should not be just coordinating services, but also involvement in decisions on how funding is allocated.
- A view was expressed that there is a compelling argument for the Indigenous Voice, but at the same time some weariness and lack of trust in government given previous experiences and concern government may cherry pick advice that matches its agenda.
- Participants discussed the importance of representation and involvement of young people, along with the need for capability building and investing in young people (noting very young demographic in SA).
- In respect of regions, the group noted that government structures do not work for Indigenous people and that different state governments need to come together in cross border areas– cultural links/country/language groups are important, not artificial borders.

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- The group also noted the importance of learnings from ATSIC, including regarding the need for governments to change how they work so they can better work together on issues affecting Indigenous people.
 - The group raised the need for the Local and Regional Voice to have a seat at the decision table, and the commitment that these voices will be respected and valued.
 - There was a general view that the role of the Voice is very important, noting checks and balances will be needed to ensure independence and sustainable long term resourcing. Participants drew on the ATSIC experience to raise a risk of resources being taken away arbitrarily.
 - The group also indicated that Local and Regional Voices need to be resourced so they can link back to community, which will be an essential role.
 - Participants spoke about 'silent voices', such as individuals, Indigenous government employees, people who don't belong to community organisations or are not in defined or traditional leadership roles, and the importance for them to also have the opportunity to contribute.
 - Participants indicated that they were optimistic about the process and supportive of the principles for the Local and Regional Voices. They noted while there are no guarantees, Indigenous people can't walk away from this, Indigenous voices are powerful, can do this and it is time to act.
 - It was noted that while communities may not get it right from the beginning, there is a need to start and the proposed approach is practical. It will be a matter of unpacking principles and working through what it looks like at the local level.
 - The group also noted it is worth thinking about the Indigenous Voice as a precursor to referendum. To get there will require working with non-Indigenous people, media, etc.
 - There was also discussion about how diversity is picked up in Local and Regional Voices, including youth, elderly, people with disability, LGBTQ+ , with a focus on importance of ensuring that there are broad avenues for diverse groups of people to get involved.
 - It was noted that data sovereignty is important, noting ABS data does not always represent the reality on the ground.
 - It was stated that the National Voice needs to have access to information to decide what it needs to have input on and what has an impact on Aboriginal peoples (rather than government deciding this).
 - The group raised the need for criteria for determining who would be best to represent Indigenous people so there are better outcomes for communities.
 - The group agreed it will be important to get representation right, so that people that speak for Indigenous people understand the local issues in communities/regions. It was noted that Coalition of Peaks (CoP) does not represent all Indigenous people (for example does not have focus on education). It was suggested CoP should provide advice to the National Voice.
 - There were some discussion from the group on the elected model, focusing on how an Indigenous electoral roll could be established, including the need for criteria for who could be included and possibility of establishing a special roll for the Voice purposes (e.g. Congress, Victorian Assembly).
 - Other issues raised included challenges involved in policing and child protection, as well as cultural safety, including resourcing and the need for reforms.
 - At the end, a participant summarized their view, indicating they thought at the start of the session that the process may be a distraction, but now felt this could be the strongest and best opportunity in almost a decade.