

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Arrernte country,

Alice Springs, 7 May 2021, 9.30am – 12noon, session 2

Number of participants: 9

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 9 participants who were welcomed to country by Kumalie Riley. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants commented that ensuring access to interpreters could assist Indigenous Voice members who do not speak little to no English to be well-informed when engaging with governments and parliaments.
- Participants also noted the need to ensure there would be adequate time to connect with people in community, particularly in remote and regional areas, to enable everyone to have a say up through the levels of the proposed Indigenous Voice.
- Participants noted it is not intended for the Indigenous Voice to manage programs or funding.
- One participant stressed the importance of two-way respect being integral to the establishment of strong relationships to build an effective Indigenous Voice, amongst diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as with governments and parliaments.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants were drawn to the principles of ‘cultural leadership’, ‘inclusivity’, ‘non-duplication of existing bodies’, ‘respectful long-term relationships’ and ‘transparency and accountability’.
- One participant noted cultural tensions would need to be managed in some areas when determining Local & Regional Voice boundaries – in particular in cross-border regions such as the tristate area between SA/WA/NT.
- It was noted governments and bureaucracies would also be expected to abide by the proposed principles-based framework.
- One participant shared that in the Northern Territory there are communities with already-established bodies with cultural authority; these would need to be navigated carefully to ensure communities have clear understandings of the various levels of decision-making in their region and to ensure Local & Regional Voices work alongside these established bodies and are not duplicative and do not undermine them.
 - It was observed that some of these established bodies could in fact form the initial basis of Local & Regional Voices.

- 
- One participant commented that it is currently difficult to see how the Indigenous Voice structure supports Local & Regional Voices in practice to enable grassroots voices to be heard at the local level and up to a regional voice. The participant raised the Great Artesian Basin Stakeholder Advisory Committee as a good example of a regional representative body that has been set up to be gender balanced and also skills-based.
 - It was commented that the Local & Regional Voices could provide a clear pathway for corporate entities to have conversations with the right people in communities in relation to commercial enterprises proposed in those communities and on country.

National Voice

- Several participants felt the option to directly elect National Voice members would be difficult to execute well in practice and has the capacity to cause disengagement with the Indigenous Voice.
 - One participant commented in the Northern Territory, given the majority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population resides in Darwin, direct election results could be heavily dominated by Darwin voters, and subsequently mean more urban candidates being selected.
 - It was noted the management of electoral rolls has been a longstanding issue, with many Aboriginal people falling off rolls, particularly in remote and regional areas due to myriad reasons.
- One participant noted the proposed tiered approach to consultation with the National Voice by the Parliament and Government, and queried whether there would be a reciprocal obligation on the National Voice to provide advice every time its advice was sought.
 - It was noted the proposal is to enable the National Voice to determine its own priorities, and require the advice of the National Voice to be made public. It was also noted there is no requirement on Parliament or Government to take on the National Voice's advice, but the decision not to do so would be on the public record.
 - The participant also queried whether there would be any legislated minimum time requirements for consultation. It was noted this may be determined once a legal form for the National Voice has been settled.
- One participant suggested if the number of National Voice members were limited to 20, there could be a larger group established and made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with particular expertise and skillsets that could be drawn from to work in the National Voice as required so as to ensure the advice is well-informed.