

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Anindilyakwa country,

Angurugu (Groote Eylandt), 5 May, 11am

Number of participants: 104

## Key points raised

*Please note, this is a summary of the discussion and the views 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 104 participants and were welcomed to country by Mr Tony Wurramarrba. The session included separate men and women breakout groups. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### Overarching points


- Participants expressed some frustration that governments are not listening to community and ‘think they know what’s best’.
- A few participants were sceptical about the proposals. They felt there was nothing new being said and it was just more talk without action.
- Others felt the proposals offered an opportunity for change and greater autonomy - ‘We need to change the paradigm. This is the time for our voices to be heard. Indigenous people have spent too long in the back seat and we want to be in the front seat’.
- Participants agreed that governments will need to change the way they work and learn how to engage appropriately with the proposed Voice groups.
- There was some discussion about the Northern Territory National Emergency Response (the Intervention) and how disempowering and damaging it was for communities.
- There was very strong representation from the women's group breakout discussion for increased support to reduce violence against women.
- There was brief discussion about the Groote Eylandt Mining Company Operation (GEMCO) manganese mine and the need to prepare for its eventual closure. Participants felt seeking alternative economic development opportunities was a key priority.
- There was brief discussion about the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the gap that was left when it was shut down. One participant felt it was shut down prematurely and wasn't given the chance to work.
- Participants felt it was important to ensure the voice was adequately protected so it can have time to evolve – ‘If there are teething problems in the first couple of years, it has to keep going. You can't give up too soon. If it doesn't work straight away, it might take longer.’
- Participants agreed they want to make arrangements sustainable and better for the next generation.



## Local and Regional Voice

- There was discussion about what a Local and Regional Voice could look like:
  - Participants felt Anindilyakwa should be its own region and should not be grouped with the mainland.
  - There was a general preference for 35 regions to accommodate this.
- Participants discussed the challenge of capability and getting good people participating in the Voice:
  - There are many boards and there aren't enough strong people to cover them all. Many people are wearing multiple hats and people are exhausted. There is too much pressure on a handful of leaders.
  - It's important to grow more leaders and strong women who want to participate in boards and organisations.
  - One participant noted the *Future leaders Program* has been running in Anindilyakwa for two years, but felt it would take time for the next generation of leaders to develop.
- Participants agreed there needs to be good support, funding, secretariat staff and training in order to successfully implement a Local and Regional Voice.
- One participant discussed the Local Decision Making (LDM) agreement signed between the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) and the Northern Territory Government:
  - It is now in its third year and is considered to be a successful working partnership.
  - Participants felt significant developments have come from local decision making including the approval of the local housing corporation as an Aboriginal housing provider and a bilingual curriculum in the local schools.
  - ALC have aspirations to become a regional authority and pursue a treaty process.
  - The agreement between ALC and NT Government includes an in principle commitment to create a separate local government for the three Anindilyakwa communities.
  - It was suggested that the Local and Regional Voice representation should be based on representatives from ALC and any new Groote Eylandt Local Government structure.
- Co-design members clarified that what's being proposed won't interfere with existing arrangements or statutory functions. The voice structures are intended to build on and leverage existing approaches, not duplicate them.
- Participants supported shared-decision making and wanted to see all levels of government involved.
- There was discussion about local priorities that could be addressed by a Local and Regional Voice, including:
  - A safe house in Umbakumba and on Bickerton Island for women and children who are victims of family violence – participants expressed great concern about the increasing levels of violence and the urgent need for support for women.
  - A men's shed and programs to support 'strong men' – e.g. a *Men's Behaviour Change Program* to support boys and young fathers to have respectful and violence-free relationships.
  - Education e.g. low attendance rates at school, bilingual curriculum, teaching culture and language.
  - Health
  - Crime prevention and substance abuse program to 'stop the drug dealers in their tracks'.
  - Income management programs and culturally appropriate service providers e.g. Community Development Program (CDP).
  - Centrelink e.g. getting cut off from payments, long wait times etc.
  - Programs for young people in the justice system to keep them connected to community and culture.

## National voice

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- Most participants supported 3-4 year staggered terms for National Voice members.
  - They felt that representatives need to be ‘totally supported by community’ at both levels of the Voice.
  - Participants supported gender equality and the Youth and Disability advisory groups.
  - There was interest in how people in prison and juvenile detention will be represented.
  - Participants wanted to ensure the National Voice was accountable to communities.
  - They were supportive of the National Voice coming from Local and Regional representatives rather than via an election process.

#### *Co-design process*

- There was some discussion about next steps in the Voice co-design process, including speculation about Commonwealth election timing,
- Participants felt there were a lot of things to think about and further discussions that needed to occur, particularly with people who were not able to attend the session.
- In particular participants wanted further discussion on how they might set up Local and Regional Voice arrangements in their region if government supports the proposals from the Co-Design groups.