

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Ngemba Country,

Bourke, 20 May 2021

Number of participants: 13

## 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 13 participants who were welcomed to country by Phillip Sullivan. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- Participants agreed that there was a need for any structure to be independent from governments and that its role to be clearly defined from the outset.
- It was noted that it was important to get the ‘unheard’ voices at the table.
- Participants agreed that the success of an Indigenous Voice would be based on community confidence, and transparency and good governance is important.
- Participants agreed it would be important to ensure there was opportunity for cultural authority, elders and young people to participate and that a culturally safe space was provided to ensure everyone could have their say.
- It was agreed that one of the key features for a Voice to succeed is to ensure local and regional voices are flexible to allow each community to set it up how it will work for them.
- Participants discussed local issues, in particular the need for improvement in the justice system, particularly the lack of appropriate cultural support.
- There were strong views that any structure put in place would need to be supported by adequate funding and resourcing and that it was structured in a way that government can’t just remove it.
- It was noted that interim arrangements may be put in place in some regions until capability is built to ensure the Voice can stand on its own.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Participants discussed the Local and Regional Voice proposed principles as detailed in the Interim Report and provided broad support for them in their current form. In particular there was a discussion around the importance of principles of inclusion and transparency and accountability and that cultural safety should be an additional principle to the Framework.

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- A discussion occurred on the need for a flexible approach noting that the intent is for any Indigenous Voice structure to not replace things that are working well while ensuring there is the opportunity for cultural authority, elders, and young people to participate.
  - There was broad support for the framework to improve local partnerships and relationships between communities and governments noting that it is important that all governments work together. It was noted that each community is different so a flexible approach is required.
  - Participants discussed the need for Local and Regional Voices to be accountable to communities in adhering to the Local and Regional Principles based framework. A number of examples were discussed around how this might work, in particular, suggesting the establishment of an Independent Ombudsman (similar to the NSW Ombudsman or the Commonwealth Ombudsman), or creating a similar type of office that could investigate community complaints about non-adherence to agreed principles. This Office could then report on these to the National Voice or the Australian Parliament / relevant jurisdictions.

### *National Voice*

- There was a general discussion about how an individual could nominate to be considered for membership on the Indigenous Voice. It was noted that this will continue to evolve but there would be a process for this.
- A number of suggestions on how membership could be formed for the National Voice based on similar bodies already established (such as those in the ACT, VIC and TAS).
- There was support for an ethics council to undertake roles including guiding the membership process.
- Participants generally agreed that an elected model is risky given there is a poor turnout amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people turning out to vote in general elections.
- Participants discussed the need for a strong relationship between Local and Regional Voices and a National Voice and noted if an elected model was put in place that there is a risk that this relationship won't work.
- The question was asked if any Aboriginal person could nominate to become a member noting there is potential for conflicts of interest if a person was to have the ability to 'wear two hats'.
- It was noted that in some community consultation sessions a hybrid model (one elected and one nominated from Local and Regional Voices) had been discussed and this might be one way to ensure a system that is fair and equitable.