

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Turrbal, Jagera and Yugara country,

Brisbane, 10 March 2021, 1.00pm, Session 3

Number of participants: 23

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 23 participants and Damian Griffis gave an Acknowledgement of Country. Key issues discussed are summarised below.

Cultural diversity

- The diversity that exists within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the country was emphasised, noting that people can only talk for their mob and any model for a Voice needs to appreciate and value this.
- A number of participants shared their views that the term 'Indigenous' should not be used, noting it doesn't align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Participants also discussed how the views they expressed would feed into the consultation process, and the importance of transparency around this.
- Due to the great cultural diversity within individual communities in the state, it was observed that the really valuable and interesting things each community brings might get lost in a general group.
- It was agreed that care would be needed to ensure no voices were being silenced as a result of the mix of voices in the Indigenous Voice structure.
- In addition to governments understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural diversity, customs and bloodlines, there was discussion amongst participants that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples needed to be speaking together, and establishing, or reinforcing, treaties with each other, so as to be able to work with governments on a unified basis.
- Participants strongly agreed, the impetus for representation and participation needed to start at the grassroots level to avoid tokenism and having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples treated without regard for cultural diversity.

General governance structures

- One participant commented that having different tiers of an Indigenous Voice, talking to local, state and federal governments, was confusing. The participant suggested that rather than having tiers of an Indigenous Voice, discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be able to talk directly to all levels of government as needed.
- There was general agreement that the various layers of government were very confusing for people, and that it would be very difficult to acquire general community understanding of what the various layers do, let alone knowing how to get the right people elected. It was argued a simpler structure that people would understand,



would be one person from each tribal area/catchment, who is chosen to represent their peoples in the area/catchment, and deal with all levels of government.

Proposed numbers of members

- One participant raised a concern that in light of the great cultural diversity in Queensland, the proposed structure for the National Voice in the interim report (in particular the proposal to have two National Voice members for Queensland) might be challenging.
- Similarly for Local and Regional Voices, there was general concern that the proposed collective number of Local and Regional Voices for the country would mean Queensland would have only six Local and Regional Voices. It was suggested that previously representation would have been worked out proportionally.

Resourcing Indigenous Voice members to perform their functions effectively

- There was general consensus that all members of the National Voice and Local and Regional Voices should be fairly remunerated for the considerable amount of work they would need to undertake to remain in touch with the regions. It was thought that if the National Voice co-chairs were fulltime but everyone else was parttime, this might be insufficient to enable all members to be truly representative.
- This concern applied especially to Local and Regional Voices, in terms of doubt the various Local and Regional Voices could work towards the nine proposed principles.
- One participant noted that the members of the Indigenous Voice would not be operating on a “9 to 5” basis, because the work is about peoples’ everyday lives, and those of their communities and families, and that this would be a very intense process to be involved in.

Local and Regional Voices

- One participant proposed that Local and Regional Voices could only be effective if they were comprised of Elders. The participant raised one particular Queensland community as an example of the myriad of communities with a diversity of opinions, and conflict, where issues would not be easily resolved under the proposed model.
- There was strong agreement that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples needed to stick with customs and traditions if Local and Regional Voices were to work.
- Another participant agreed, and further stressed that Local and Regional Voices had to be designed by the peoples in the relevant regions. The participant commented that the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee had been designed with two options for member selection – either by election, or by traditional ways.
- There was recognition that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (such as people from the Stolen Generations) do not know how to identify as such, and that their voices were also important and should not be lost. One participant suggested the law of adoption as a solution.

UNDRIP

- One participant noted a lot of words in the proposals align with the UNDRIP, excepting the use of words such as “would” and “could”, which had been used to describe the Indigenous Voice for the purposes of consultation. The participant argued that the Indigenous Voice structure needs to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to flex their rights (including as Traditional Owners and native title holders), and for this to happen, the Indigenous Voice needs to be underpinned by the UNDRIP precisely and avoid passive language.

Non-Indigenous framework

- Participants felt that in order for the country to move forward with an Indigenous Voice, there needs to be a truth and justice process so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and nonIndigenous people could be properly reconciled.
- It was stated that this current process needs to be genuine to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, including agreement making and truth telling.



- In the absence of these, it was argued, the country continues to view and construct frameworks around Aboriginal and Torres Islander peoples that is neither reflective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures nor customs.