

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Wirangu country,

Ceduna, 20 April, 1:30pm, session 1

Number of participants: 17

## 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 17 participants and were welcomed to country by Mr Peter Miller. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### Overarching points

- Participants strongly agreed that they want to see action and ensure that any Voice is adequately protected.
  - The Voice needs to sit in legislation to be acted upon and given stability.
  - It should not sit with a government department where it would be subject to election change.
  - The Voice should be secured so it cannot be abolished like ATSIC.
  - First Nations people are the ones who are getting the least benefit of all when things do change.
- There was a general sentiment that Aboriginal people have lost faith in government and that ‘things are going backwards’.
- Some participants expressed doubt that governments were listening – ‘We don’t need to be fixed, we just need to be heard’.
- There was some discussion about what the timeframe for this work was and how it may be affected by the timing of a federal election.
- One participant felt there was a lack of entrepreneurial thinking in the Voice proposals. They noted the important role Aboriginal businesses could play and the different way of thinking they can offer (e.g. innovation).
- There was significant discussion about the role of governments in the proposed Voice arrangements:
  - One participant noted that part of this process has to be about educating bureaucracies – ‘There are consistent failures to turn advice from community into positive outcomes’.
  - One participant noted the challenge of getting government departments to work together to achieve outcomes for Aboriginal people. They wanted to see a strong emphasis on the need for governments to work differently, in a more coordinated way.

- Another participant noted the challenge of bringing all levels of government together to ensure that Ceduna, Adelaide and Canberra can work in alignment on priority issues such as housing.
- Participants strongly agreed that they want all levels of government to be involved and committed to the Voice.
- One participant was interested in whether a state voice was also being considered in the Voice proposals and how the state government 'fitted in' to the proposal. The following points were discussed in this context:
  - The SA Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement is working on a state representative body proposal.
  - States have been providing input and feedback to the co-design process through a Senior Officials Group.
  - There needs to be alignment, where possible, with state arrangements.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Participants agreed that significant work will be needed to determine the regions. There was some concern that places like Ceduna (that have done a lot of work to get a leadership group up) would 'get swallowed up' in a regional grouping. There was also a view that to have a really strong voice people and communities needed to come together across a larger region. Yalata, Pt Lincoln, Whyalla and Pt Augusta were mentioned as potentially parts of the region that would also include Ceduna.
  - Participants wanted to ensure that all voices in their region will be heard, including the voices of people who may be living in the region but off country.
  - There was broad agreement about the need for a local voice in Ceduna, as part of a regional voice.
  - It was acknowledged that culture and obligation may be different in each community within a region.
  - One participant suggested APY lands may prefer to be part of a cross border tri-state region.
- There was frustration at the perceived reduction in funding for Indigenous programs and the multitude of service providers in Ceduna.
- One participant noted that some regions are ready and could form transitional groups or evolve into the Voice.
- It was clarified that the design and make-up of the Local and Regional Voices will be determined by each region through further co-design processes.
- One participant referenced the Empowered Communities initiative (running in Ceduna) as an example of how a regional Voice may work. They noted it could include priority setting and potential redistribution of funding to align with a regional plan.
- Co-design members clarified that under the Local and Regional Voice proposals local and regional issues would be resolved at the local level, with shared decision making authority at that level.
- There was some discussion about challenges involved in bringing the community together and making inclusive participation a reality, with some participants noting how hard it is for various organisations in Ceduna to agree on a course of action.
- Participants discussed the principle of Data and Evidence, noting:
  - Context, narrative and qualitative data (the how and why) about what works is equally as important as the quantitative numbers (what and when).
  - The data needs to be culturally appropriate.
  - Data sovereignty is important and aligns with a self-determination approach.
  - One participant estimated there are 45 different bodies working with Aboriginal people in the area. It was noted that each of these organisations collect their own statistics but no one else knows what these statistics look like as a whole. There was some hope that the Voice could help bring these



groups together and provide a comprehensive statistical picture to support informed decision making and identify priority issues.

### *National Voice*

- There was some discussion about whether the proposed two members from each state would be sufficient and whether remote voices would be adequately represented.
- There was interest in who would run an election. It was clarified that the Australian Electoral Commission is the most likely option.
- One participant commented on Model 2 (via election) that there would still need to be a direct line of accountability to the community. “It would be disempowering to have people speaking on behalf of you at the National level if you don’t know them and don’t feel like they speak for you”. There was also a view that an election would result in people with the biggest families being elected.
- Participants agreed that they want to see ‘the right people sitting around the table’.
- There was broad agreement among participants that there needs to be a two way dialogue between the National Voice and the Local and Regional Voices.
- Participants saw lots of benefits to connecting the National Voice to Local and Regional Voices via the structurally linked model.
- One participant noted that the roles and responsibilities of National Voice members need to be really clear.
  - They reflected that the regions need to be confident that the National level will ‘take on their issues’ and advocate for them.
  - It was noted that this would help empower community members at the local level.
- There was some discussion about the support needed for members of the National Voice, including adequate resourcing to ensure they are able to do their job and engage appropriately with community on the ground.
- One participant suggested that additional, direct, Indigenous identified seats in Parliament should be pursued rather than the Voice. They suggested 10 members in the House of Representatives and 10 for the Senate.
- One participant was interested in the scope of the National Voice and whether it would include joint decision making.
  - Co-design members clarified that shared-decision making is proposed for the regional level, with advice only function at the national level, which would include advice on systemic issues that can’t be resolved at the regional level.