

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Larrakia country,

Darwin, 27 April 2021, 5.30pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 54

## 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 54 participants who were welcomed to Larrakia country by Aunty Bilawara Lee. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- There was some discussion about truth telling. One participant felt that school students learn more about overseas history than the “honest truth of what happened” to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
- Several participants raised the idea of treaties, including discussing processes underway in Canada. Co-design members noted that there is a separate treaty process occurring in the Northern Territory, and raised the issue of how a Treaty would deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living off Country.
- One participant strongly put forward a view that sovereignty had never been ceded and remained with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that the Indigenous Voice Co-design process was illegitimate.

### *Local and Regional Voices*

- A number of participants expressed concerns about whether government really will deliver on an Indigenous Voice, or if it would be heard by government. Some participants felt that they had sat down and talked to government in the past but that it had not met their expectations for change. Other participants expressed a feeling that they could not trust government to follow through on promises. One participant was concerned that the proposed Voice would not have any control over funding.
- Some participants linked these concerns to past decisions to abolish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies such as ATSIC or programs such as CDEP, and take resources away from Indigenous organisations. Co-design members outlined that the proposals were about trying to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to influence governments so they take the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians into account when making decisions.
- It was noted that while there are many fora and peak bodies, such as health organisations and Land Councils, there are also many gaps. One example given was the lack of an education peak body. One participant connected this to what they saw as “the system failing our kids” in areas such as child protection.

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- One participant emphasised the importance of having people that “come from the community” as representatives on voice structures.

#### *National Voice*

- One participant was highly concerned about representation of Torres Strait Islander people on the mainland. They did not feel that members chosen by residents of the Torres Strait Islander region would be able to represent those mainlanders. Co-design members raised the idea that one member of the National Voice could be chosen to perform this role if this is what the Torres Strait Islander people wished.
- One participant raised concern about the resourcing for the secretariat, noting that the National Voice would need to advise on a very broad range of issues. A comparison was drawn to the large bureaucracies set up to advise government on policy issues. Co-design members noted that the proposal includes a fully independent secretariat that would include policy and research support.
- There was a discussion about how transparency could work at the national level. Co-design members raised the idea a “Senate estimates-style” process conducted by the National Voice as a way to create transparency about how Government is providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It was noted that this model is currently used by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.