

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Derby, 4 May 2021, 11am


Number of participants: 31

## 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.*

### Overarching points

- Many participants raised the importance of community-led design. One participant felt that Aboriginal people had been marginalised from decision making and required to operate in structures that are “handed to us”. The participant wanted this to change, and for Aboriginal people to lead the design for the Indigenous Voice. Similarly, other participants raised the importance of programs and services being tailor-made for the Derby community with involvement from people on the ground.
- A number of participants raised concerns about the stability of the Indigenous Voice. They reflected on governments changing policies following elections and felt this had led to bad outcomes in the past. Bipartisan agreement, constitutional enshrinement and treaty were raised as possible ways to create greater certainty.
- Participants emphasised the importance of their voice being heard, with one describing the proposals as a way to “turn the volume up”. Other participants reflected on their frustration with not being heard in the past, with a feeling that government was “moving the goalposts”.
- Many participants described the struggles being experienced in the Derby community. Suicide, domestic violence, racism, poverty and housing were all raised. A theme that many participants returned to was employment opportunities. A number of participants felt that a lack of employment was strongly linked to issues with youth. One participant felt that key employment opportunities such as tourism had been missed by existing structures. The participant also identified emerging opportunities such as cotton and bush tucker. One participant felt that jobs such as plumbers, electricians and roadworks were being outsourced and had become less available to community members in Derby. Other participants felt that the Community Development Program was not providing the same opportunities as past employment programs. One participant felt that existing government requirements did not support young people to remain in remote communities.
- Several participants raised the importance of talking about the history and culture of Indigenous Australians in the school curriculum. One participant saw this as important for informing non-Indigenous Australians. Another participant raised the importance of young Indigenous people understanding customary law and their place in the community.

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- Youth was a major topic of the session. Many participants expressed concern about the need for youth having pathways to opportunity and being taught to be proud of who they are. This was coupled with concern about youth becoming disengaged or falling into antisocial behaviour. A number of participants reflected on the importance of youth as the next generation of leaders for the community, with one saying “one day we’re gonna get tired”. Participants saw culture as a crucial part of this, teaching youth who they are, what their role is and how to show respect. Some participants saw Aboriginal organisations as a possible solution by bringing young people into the organisation or onto the board, creating opportunities to learn and participate. Some participants felt that this was not happening at the moment.
  - There was a discussion about how schools could be made more suitable for Aboriginal students. One participant put the perspective that schools are too focussed on NAPLAN outcomes rather than culture. The participant emphasised the importance of partnership between schools and communities, and reflected on the cultural change this would require for schools.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Accountability was discussed. Several participants felt that it was important to hold Aboriginal people and organisations accountable, as well as government. One participant felt that “Aboriginal people want to be accountable but we’re not allowed to be”. One participant felt that there should be an “overseer” to make sure voice structures are representative and do not favour particular groups.
- There was a discussion of decentralisation. A number of participants felt it was important for services and administration to be located in Derby rather than being centralised in Broome. They felt that this had worked well in the past, with communities able to hold decision makers accountable at the local level rather than hiding behind an office in a larger centre.
- Some participants connected this decentralisation issue to the question of regional boundaries, and suggested that regional boundaries should reflect the local shire boundaries. This would mean a Derby/Fitzroy Crossing region, rather than a larger Kimberley region. One participant felt the community would not be comfortable with decisions for Derby being made in Broome. Another participant reflected on the experiences of shire councils, and felt that they had a stronger voice by cooperating as a combined Kimberley region, rather than as individual shire councils.
- The voice of remote communities was a major theme, particularly of communities along the Gibb River Road such as Mount Barnett. Participants felt that these communities were suffering and did not have a voice, with one participant using the term “forgotten souls”. A number of participants emphasised the importance of talking with people from those communities, for example with forums, roadshows or community boards. One participant suggested having a committee that could link Derby with the surrounding remote communities.
- Participants discussed the role of organisations that existed already. There was a clear emphasis on unity, with one participant saying organisations needed to “stand shoulder to shoulder”. Participants described the existing Derby CEO’s forum as a “good start” but felt that there needed to be stronger networks with other organisations such as PBCs and local government. There were different views on whether this should form the basis for a local & regional voice. One participant said that “the voice can’t be what came before, it has to be a new one”, whereas another supported building on what existed already, saying “instead of reinventing the wheel, we should have more collaboration”. Several participants reflected on the strength of the Derby community in coming together to address issues.
- Participants discussed how a local youth group might work. Some participants thought the main goal should be to bring a large group of local youth together to have a say. One participant emphasised that it needed resources, and suggested it could be hosted by a local organisation. Another participant felt that this could be a tool for empowering youth, building confidence.

### *National Voice*

- A number of participants were concerned with WA having only two National Voice members. One participant felt this was “painting us all with the same brush” and that it did not account for differences between communities across the state. An alternative suggestion from one participant was to have every shire sending two representatives.



- Several participants supported elections to select members, with one saying that it should be the same process as for local shire elections. One member felt that this could be a way to educate and engage youth with their responsibilities to vote.
- Different views were put forward about the appropriate age range for youth, with suggestions ranging from 15 to 30. One participant felt that year 10 was a good cut off. Others reflected on how 30 might still be considered young by Elders, with one participant feeling that this age group did not have enabling structures at the moment. One participant suggested that youth should be included on the National Voice membership so that older members could teach younger ones.