

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Yolngu country,

Galiwin'ku, 7 May, 1pm, session 1

Number of participants: 35

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 35 participants who were welcomed to country by Mr Ross Mandi. Many participants spoke in Yolgnu Matha (Djambarrpuynngu, Gupapuyngu, Djintang). Their comments were interpreted by Mr Trevor Gurruarum. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants welcomed the proposals and spoke of the importance of culture and truth telling - 'We have been waiting for this moment for a long time. All my ancestors have gone before me and their voices were not heard by government. This is the right timing.'
- Many participants agreed that the Voice was critical to building sustainable futures.
 - One participant acknowledged that Yolgnu voices were vulnerable and that the proposed Voice was not an easy pathway.
- One participant drew inspiration from Slim Dusty's song 'Looking Forward Looking Back' commenting that 'we've come a long way down the track but we've got a long way left to go'.
- A few participants commented on the challenges in Galiwin'ku:
 - 'There has been lots of dysfunction...People are lost and confused. There is so much frustration and no real connection in this community'.
 - They called on community members to come together and 'stop discouraging each other'.
- Participants discussed priority issues in Galiwin'ku, including:
 - Overcrowded housing and homelands – e.g. there are houses filled with 30 people, moving people out to homelands doesn't resolve the problem, it just creates a problem in the homelands.
 - Pathways for young people – too many young people are hanging around at night, throwing rocks, vandalising and getting into fights.
 - Education – e.g. proper care for students and students with families
 - Unemployment – e.g. there are no jobs here.
 - More funding for mental health services
 - Lack of community support and respect for the Art Centre



- Participants expressed frustration at the short funding cycles of governments – suggesting 1-2 years was not enough time to see meaningful change in community outcomes. One participant wanted to see long term projects, with 10 year outlooks.
- Several participants spoke about the relationship between community and governments:
 - “Government have to change the way they do business here. We want government to engage with Yolgnu. I hope in the near future we will work together to sustain a betterment for community”.
 - One participant spoke about the importance of cultural training for bureaucrats to ensure they engage respectfully with Aboriginal and Torre Strait Islander people.

Local & Regional Voice

- There was some discussion about the ‘data and evidence based’ principle. Participants wanted access to data to understand what it contains, how it is being used and inform their own decision making processes.
 - ‘Information collected on the community level needs to be transparent’.
 - One participant raised the importance of data sovereignty and ownership.
- Participants supported inclusive participation and saw it as a solid foundation for an effective voice.
- There was support for the ‘community-led design’ principle and linking local voices to regional governance bodies/all levels of government.
- Participants felt shared decision making and working in partnership with government was very important.
- There was some discussion about what support and resourcing would be available in Arnhem Land to support leaders and the Voice structures.
 - Co-design members confirmed that the proposal being put forward strongly supports the need for adequate resourcing and greater transparency around funding decisions.

National Voice

- Participants were ‘really encouraged by the idea of a voice at the national level’.
- One participant suggested learning ‘from the past, to see the path ahead’:
 - They referenced the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC), established in 1973 under the Whitlam Government, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), established in 1990 under the Hawke Government.
 - They wanted to see the National Voice be adequately protected so that it would not be shut down as these two structures were.
- Another participant discussed the number of members proposed for the National Voice. They felt East Arnhem Land/grassroots people should be represented.
- One participant suggested the Voice should have its own chamber in Parliament. However, co-design members clarified that this was not part of the proposal and there would not be a third chamber of Parliament.

Co-design process

- Participants wanted to see Government come back and do further consultation.
- One participant felt Millingimbi had been ‘left in the dark’ from the conversation as participants had to travel to Ramingining or Galiwin’ku to have their voices heard.
- Another participant felt the timing of the consultation was too rushed to provide feedback. They noted that English was a fourth or fifth language for many community members and that there was a lot of detail to understand.
- It was noted that some senior leaders and capable women were not present.
- Co-design members confirmed that this is the first step only. There will be further consultation that will need to occur if the Government supports the proposals in the Final Report.
- Many participants thanked the co-design members for their sustained efforts and advocacy.