

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Yamaji country,

Geraldton, 12 May 2021, 2:00pm, Virtual session

Number of participants: 16 Participants

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 16 participants. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants were supportive of the critical need for an Indigenous Voice.
- Participants spoke of young people as the next generation and future leaders- and the need to engage young people, along with Elders as part of a Voice.
- One participant raised the issue of treaty and noted “hopefully we can continue on this track and keep talking, and maybe one day will have a treaty in Australia”.
- Participants noted a Voice needs to be resourced effectively at the regional and national levels, with the capacity to consult on the ground to communities in region, secretariat support and a budget.
- One participant noted, if Government is serious about this, it needs to “get the model right, get consultation (with communities, feeding into Voices) right and get representation right”.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants discussed existing groups which constitute a local voice in the mid-west and Murchison region, including the Mid -West Aboriginal Organisations’ Alliance, and noted similar Aboriginal organisations in existence covering the Mount Magnet and Meekatharra areas. Co-Design members welcomed submissions from participants on the detail of existing regional representation and youth models in the region.
- Participants discussed the need for Voice proposals to cover the whole region and provide for gender balance and representation of Elders and youth. Co-Design members confirmed diverse representation and gender balance were key to the proposals. Co-Design members also noted feedback is being sought on how local communities would come together to form a Local and Regional Voice in the mid-west.
- One participant spoke about work currently underway with NIAA to create a youth and Elders committee for Geraldton, and acknowledged it could be a helpful model for surrounding areas.
- Participants also spoke of the need to find a way to include kids of all ages as part of the Voice. One participant noted that one option could be for kids to be included in Local and Regional Voices.

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- One participant spoke of the importance of transparency, accountability and data, for Local and Regional Voices to be able to make informed decisions. The same participant spoke of the strong need for an Indigenous Voice and noted that “Government likes talking about us, but not to us”. The participant also raised the need for Voices be adequately resourced to bring people in communities together periodically to “have a yarn about issues important to them”, to be connected with, and accountable to community.

National Voice

- Participants were supportive of a National Voice which could advise and “have a conversation” with both Government and Parliament.
- In relation to the critical need for a National Voice, one participant spoke about areas where they thought a Voice could add value, including mental health; and talked about the importance of bringing youth and Elders along, and listening to them. Another participant noted they had been part of these conversations before, and they “just wanted to get it done”. The same participant spoke of the critical need in community which hasn’t been addressed, in particular in housing. The participant also spoke about the need to start improving services; and that with a National Voice “we would hope there’d be less talking and start doing”.
- In relation to the number of members on a National Voice, participants felt strongly that two members for the whole of WA was inadequate, given the geographic scale of the state. One participant suggested six for the state would be more realistic, given the existing regional borders. Another participant noted the WA Regional Development Commissions as a model, which had nine regions in WA.
- Participants discussed briefly the ideal characteristics of members on a National Voice. One participant noted people who are “not frightened to speak up for people and what we want”. The Co-Design members spoke about the importance of encouraging quieter voices as part of a Voice, and another participant noted they had personally never had the opportunity to sit with others in the state and “talk about how to make things better for our mob”. Participants agreed there needed to be a good balance of representation as well as “grass roots people representing the grass roots”, expressing a view that people on the ground working in community are better equipped to fight for community.
- Participants generally agreed there should be an explicit membership requirement that members of a National Voice not use their position to further their own personal interests and affiliations.
- Participants discussed Youth representation. Several participants suggested having dedicated positions on a National Voice for youth (aged 18-25 years). The Co-Design members gave an overview of the proposed Youth Advisory Group. One participant suggested the Youth Advisory Group could be structured in the same way as a National Voice, in terms of the number of ‘seats’ and representation for WA (i.e. Six WA ‘seats’ on the Youth Advisory Group). Co-Design members noted this feedback had been echoed by some participants in consultations in the north of the state also. One participant also spoke about the different age ranges used locally for existing youth engagement initiatives (sometimes 12-25 years or 10-25 years, depending on the service and activity).
- In relation to a preferred model for a National Voice, one participant had a preference for Direct Election (Model 2), similar to Regional Councils (Local Government). Other participants did not indicate a preference for either Model 1 or Model 2. One participant queried how people would nominate themselves under a Direct Election approach. Co-Design member gave an overview how it could work and how it works in Victoria as an example (online) and also noted the importance of maximising voter turnout. One participant raised access to remote polling places as an issue and queried if voting online or via social media could be an option (e.g. Facebook). The same participant raised the need to ensure adequate resources to support strong voter engagement, including in remote areas.