

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Wongatha Country

Kalgoorlie, 19 April 2021, 5:30 to 7:30pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 17

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 17 participants who were welcomed to country by Gary Cooper. Host facilitator Jamie Lowe also acknowledged country and traditional owners past, present and future. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- There was a broad discussion of local issues within the town, the cost of living, inclusiveness, the large amount of movement of people into and out of town (including remote people for dialysis and funerals etc). Others mentioned the justice system, education support services and concern for young people. One participant was a youth engagement worker and wanted more targeted services.
- A few people cited rape, domestic violence, alcohol, drugs, racism, relationships with police, and incarceration as a few examples of the challenges and were concerned about limited access to services i.e., *“women’s refuge where people are getting turned away”*.
- A few people said there are cultural differences between “town folk” and “remote” peoples. Homelessness and transiency are issues. There needed to be equality in all systems.
- One participant said there was too much politics in local government and people whom treat Aboriginal people as second class citizens. *“We are losing young people. We need more mentors and we need to pay them. We need to make the local government support us and make them accountable.”*
- Another participant said *“People sit talking for long time at community meetings, but the Aboriginal community is stagnating because of no voice. We need to get skilled in IT because we are the long lost people.”*
- One participant raised some concerns about native title and the speed this was being doing and lack of transparency around Prescribed Body Corporate meetings.
- Another participant talked about the need for more men’s health and support services.
- A few people said there are too many non-Aboriginal agencies in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and *“we don’t know outcomes”* and *“we have limited access.”*
- In terms of the voice proposal, one participant outlined her views on representation and noted *“we need to hear from more than just the same people.”* She said empowerment was key along with transparent criteria. It cannot *“just be your family – we need people who can understand government and take the knowledge and heart to fight.”*

- The same participant said *“Membership to the Voice must have criteria:*
 - *Same mindset as Wongi people*
 - *Interpreters to let the community know what’s going on*
 - *Heart and knowledge to fight*
 - *Make changes to ensure equality for all.*
- One participant said *“Get rid of people who don’t assist the community....the yes people.”*
- Participants felt the voice needed to have ‘grassroots’ support – one participant said *“we need to empower the community – being part of the community – at the end of day – all we want to do is give knowledge and transfer it to young people.”*
- Overall the group felt “elders’ voices are important” and “kids are our main future.” One participant felt ‘we are failing our kids.’”
- Some participants expressed frustration that these conversations have been ongoing with little progress – *“enough is enough – we want our voice to be heard – we want a guarantee.”*
- Some questions were asked about who the co-design group members were and how they had been selected. There was a general view that co-design must come from the people.
- One participant who has worked in many government agencies said *“we are hitting brick walls – we need to get some voice up there, to be accountable, we need to get the structure right.”*
- Generally, participants also wanted the Minister to spend more time in community.
- One participant commented the WA Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (WAAECG) had 24 members whom were Aboriginal and had direct access to the Minister

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants noted that up to 35 regions are proposed across the country, with up to 7 for WA.
- One participant reflected on the ATSIC model and said the regional councils were positive and gave people a local voice to talk to.
- Participants noted there needed to be better gender balance in the voice proposals than in the ATSIC days.
- Participants noted the proposal to include all levels of government but expressed concern about the level of commitment and whether an agreement had been signed – *“it needs to be there in black and white.”*

National Voice

- Participants noted the options for forming a National Voice and that it is proposed as a voice to both government and parliament.
- One participant asked for further information about the ethics committee and noted there needs to be checks and balances and nominees need to be identified by people in the community.
- One participant noted a preference for an election to also give a voice to young people.
- Participants noted the large size of WA and the need for more diversity of representation around the different language groups. They noted that there were 13 language groups in Kalgoorlie.
- There was some discussion about the legal form, noting the harder it is to put in place, the harder it is to undo (referendum vs legislation vs executive).