

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Miriwoong country,

Kununurra, 29 April 2021, 9:30am

Number of participants: 22

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 22 participants who were welcome to country by Mr Ted Yumbun Carlton, who said this process about an Indigenous Voice was 'for our kids and our future'.

Overarching points

- Clarification was sought on the history of referenda. Co-design members noted in particular the republic referendum in 1999, where the outcome was not what had been initially expected based on public opinion at the time. It was clarified that the co-design process is not addressing the referendum issue, as it is not part of its Terms of Reference. It was also noted that the Voice could be created by legislation, which would be an easier process.
- A participant discussed their views about the processes leading to the 'Statement from the Heart', including concerns about a lack of appropriate representation from Miriwoong people and the Kimberley more broadly. They indicated they supported the treaty agenda, felt that the Voice without veto power would be just another 'talk fest,' and that Indigenous people should strive to convene their own parliament instead.
 - Co-design members outlined the rationale for the proposals not including veto powers, including the sovereignty of Parliament and providing an example of UNDRIP which does not override laws of any of the sovereign states' who are signatories to it.
- Another view was that the Voice was a great and optimistic idea and that there would be a risk with a referendum as the question could be formulated in a way that may be detrimental to achieving positive change.

Local and Regional Voices

- A participant stated they were heartened by the proposals and felt they were a step in the right direction as the status quo was not acceptable. They also hoped the Voice would mean structural changes and that governments would take it on board and treat seriously, as they felt tired of explaining the different world view of Indigenous people to the majority of Australians.
- A view was expressed that complexity was the biggest challenge, noting a range of issues that would need to be addressed, including community diversity in Kimberley and the need for broader participation, given relatively low attendance at the session.
- Support was expressed for including the voices of women.
- There was a question about how to ensure at the local level that the Voice is listened to. Co-design members indicated that under the proposals a Local and Regional Voice would work with all governments to set priorities which can lead to real changes, and that the arrangements would be set in legislation.

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- There was also a question about any backlash in consultation so far on the proposals in relation to regions. Co-design members clarified that no details or boundaries have been determined as yet, as settling regions, as well as governance arrangements, will require many more conversations. They said this would occur after the proposals have been finalised if government supports the proposals. It was also highlighted that the Local and Regional Voice proposals are about how people work together across the region, with nobody meant to speak for anybody else.

National Voice

- There was a question about ministerial appointments, with co-design members clarifying that under both options the majority of National Voice members would be selected by Indigenous people, but there would also be scope for the Minister to appoint up to two people to fill any skill or representation gaps – but only if both the National Voice and the Minister agree.
- There was a view that having the Voice was a good idea as it would help prevent unilateral decisions by government, with the participant referencing the cashless debit card trial and the power and water turn off in Oombulgarri.
- A participant expressed their view that the Voice needed to be connected to grass roots community people with cultural authority, and that the cashless debit card has not helped people.
- There was support for ensuring that voices of people who usually do not get a say are heard, not just the big voices, and that the arrangements should not involve people who only look after their own families. The need for evaluation and ability to adjust arrangements over time was also raised.
- In response to a question about the timelines to establish the Voice co-design members clarified that would be up to the government, but hoped the outcomes of the process should be known soon.
- Accountability and transparency were seen as important, as well as strong standards for members of the Voice and people of excellence and substance representing Indigenous people.