

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Kunibidji country,

Maningrida (Gunbalanya community members), 4 May, 9:30am, session 1

Number of participants: 13

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 13 participants and were welcomed to country by Mr David Jones. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- One participant acknowledged that their voices had been collected by ‘researchers, academics, government bureaucrats and politicians for years’. They hoped that this proposal would offer an opportunity for community to take ownership of their voices and develop their own forums.
- There was some scepticism about the proposals and governments ability to deliver.
- One participant acknowledged there was some ‘arguing amongst community members about corporations’ and that this can make it challenging to bring people together.
- A few participants felt it was time for change to provide a future for the next generation. There was some concern that youth are ‘getting left behind’.
- There was broad agreement that policy making needs to include community consultation and co-design.
- One participant felt that the Voice should address institutional discrimination and people-to-people discrimination.
- Another participant commented that some of the proposal felt ‘like it was in the too hard basket’.
- One participant asked whether this work was leading towards a Treaty.
 - The co-design member clarified that the Northern Territory Treaty is a separate process being led by the Northern Territory Government. It was acknowledged that some other states are also pursuing treaty processes.

Local & Regional Voice

- There was some discussion about the number of regions there would be in the NT and how the boundaries would be determined:
 - One participant suggested land council boundaries might work.
 - Another participant suggested the boundaries should be based on language speaking areas and strong connections to family groups.
 - It was suggested Western/Central Arnhem Land could be a suitable region (excluding Jabiru).

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- There was extensive discussion of local issues a future Regional Voice could address, including:
 - Housing
 - Education e.g. numeracy and literacy rates, culture and language
 - Support to set up Aboriginal corporations and structures
 - Aboriginal leadership pathways
 - Roads and infrastructure maintenance
 - Jobs for youth – ‘there is no point getting a good education if there is no job in community’.
 - Homeland services.
 - One participant felt culture and language needed to be central to the principles.
 - There was strong support for the transparency and accountability principle – people want to understand ‘where the money goes’ and hold organisations to account.
 - Participants also supported the data and evidence principle to support informed decision making and reflect the realities experienced in remote communities. For example, national youth jobless rate figures do not reflect the local realities in remote NT.
 - One participant felt this was an important proposal and that it offered a model for the whole of Australia. They expressed some concern that the local and regional level would be restricted by existing silos.
 - Participants supported all levels of government receiving advice from Local and Regional Voices.
 - There was support for the non-duplication principle, however, it was noted that some existing organisations do not represent the views of Gunbalanya community members and may have lost community confidence.

National Voice

- One participant was concerned that ‘people in the bush and those who live out in community/grassroots’ would not be adequately represented in the National Voice model.
- There was some discussion about the role of the Voice in policy decisions. Including reflecting on previous Commonwealth policies:
 - Participants thought the former CDEP program was a good program that shouldn’t have ended.
 - They also felt the Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention had been a damaging, policy.
- Participants emphasised the importance of ‘working with’ Aboriginal people not ‘doing to’ them.

Co-design process

- One participant asked about the timeframe for the proposal development.
 - The co-design member clarified that the consultation sessions are wrapping up shortly and the final report will be delivered to government mid-year.