

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Yolngu country,

Nhulunbuy, 7 May, 1:30pm, session 2

Number of participants: 12

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 12 participants and were welcomed to country by Mr Witiyana Marika. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants felt the proposals offered a new way of working with Indigenous people across the nation.
- It was noted that community has been voicing their views for a long time, but that governments have not been listening.
- Participants felt the relationship between government and community needed to be mended.
- The importance of healing and ‘mending the spirit’ of Aboriginal people was also raised.
- Participants shared their hope that community will ‘come together, stop fighting, work in partnership and stand strong’.
- Participants agreed that policies and laws have to be co-designed with Aboriginal people – ‘We already have the answers and the systems already exist. There is no need to reinvent the wheel on country’.
- Participants were supportive of constitutional enshrinement and discussed the odds of success for a referendum. There was general support for starting with legislation first.
- There was some discussion about the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Participants felt it had worked well in East Arnhem Land and one participant suggested something similar should be implemented.

Local & Regional Voice

- There was discussion about existing representative governance structures in the region, including:
 - The Dilak Authority, which comprises of 13 Yolngu clan nations. It has long operated as a traditional system of governance and has begun working with the Empowered Communities Program for the Miwatj region.
 - The Yolngu Makarr-Dhuni (Yolngu Nations Assembly), which includes clan leaders from Galiwinku, Ramingining and Milingimbi.
- Some participants wanted to see the Voice come from these existing groups.

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- Another participant felt the Dilak Authority was ‘not there yet’ and that some clan groups were ‘too scattered’.
 - Participants felt government needed to look at existing cultural and language boundaries to determine the regional boundary.
 - Participants agreed it can be hard to bring people together, particularly those who may think differently. The importance of having a clear focus and a clear goal about what community want to achieve was emphasised.
 - One participant noted that ‘officials need to work diligently to ensure these new structures don’t create conflict and divide the community’.
 - There was support for the non-duplication principle and links with existing bodies.
 - Participants also supported the inclusive participation principle, making specific reference to fairer skinned Aboriginal people and those who may feel disconnected or like they don’t belong.
 - There was some discussion about implementation and participants agreed there will need to be more consultation on how the Local and Regional Voice will work in this region.

National Voice

- Participants supported the National Voice proposal for a Voice to Parliament and a Voice to Government.
- There was also support for strong linkages between the Local and Regional Voice structures and the National Voice.

Co-design process

- There was some discussion about the timeframe for this work,
 - Co-design members clarified that they will be listening to the feedback from face-to-face consultations, online survey and submissions to refine the proposals they are putting forward for a Voice. A final report will then be delivered to Government for consideration.