

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Barngarla country,

Port Augusta, 22 April, 9:30am, session 1

Number of participants: 40

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 started with a smoking ceremony performed by Mr Vince Coulthard. The session was attended by 40 participants who were welcomed to country by Ms Linda Dare and Ms Jeanne Miller. The session included separate breakout sessions for men, women and youth. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Several participants expressed frustration that Aboriginal people do not have a strong voice and are not heard when it comes to shaping policy - 'It's about having the right people listen to that voice and act on it. That's the biggest issue...We've been saying the same things for so long'
- One participant expressed a general lack of faith in government.
- Participants agreed that funders, government and politicians were largely unseen in community, rarely coming out and sitting down to hear and address the priorities on the ground.
- One participant questioned whether there is commitment from the Prime Minister after the Uluru statement process and iterated the importance of Aboriginal people having input towards government policy.
- There was a view that it will be important to have assurances that the Voice would be protected and not disbanded as ATSIC was.
- Participants discussed the need for culturally safe environments especially for their young leaders.
- One participant emphasised that the community needs to speak the language of young people and recognise the role of digital media. They also suggested avoiding the use of government jargon.
- Youth participants agreed that engaging with young people requires different approaches and suggested seeing examples of other youth participating in the Voice would help encourage others to join in. They used the analogy of sport, 'if young people see others playing a sport, they will also want to play that sport'.
- The importance of making services accountable to community was emphasised by participants.
- A number of participants discussed the local challenges and disunity in the community, including the context of 45 language groups in the area and reflecting that 30 years ago local organisations used to work together but now do not collaborate.




- There was agreement that the community needs to unite as ‘otherwise no one has a voice’. To do that people need to work together and reconcile with each other.
- Another participant spoke of colonial trauma and the importance of healing. They noted being connected to land and culture was where healing begins.
- The importance of voices for people who don’t have a voice was also raised, including members of Stolen Generations.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants discussed the need for a return to the old cultural ways in thinking about the boundaries for regional representation and agreed that whatever model is determined for the region needs to reflect the cultural ways.
- It was noted that there has been some ongoing confusion about native title and defining boundaries.
- It was noted the community will need to address the local politics first prior to discussing boundaries.
- One participant discussed the previous ATSIC model and how effective the three regions were in representing South Australia. They felt the delineation of these boundaries made sense along with the process that supported the regions’ representation.
- Youth participants proposed four regions for SA. They suggested their region could include Port Augusta, Quorn, Hawker, Leigh Creek, Whyalla and Marree.
- A participant expressed their view that Traditional Owners need to play a lead role.
- There were different views about how members of the Local and Regional Voice would be selected. Some felt an election process can be very political, while others felt that an election could be a good foundation for authority but will require community support and that connection to country is very important.
- One participant stressed the importance of bringing the leadership structure back to culture and not just relying on family groups as the foundation.
- There was some discussion about Aboriginal identity, including the importance of being recognised by the community as Aboriginal and challenges faced by members of Stolen Generations and their descendants. The importance of acknowledging the pain people carry and the need for healing was emphasised.
- Youth participants discussed inclusive participation, suggesting youth ambassadors and mentoring would help empower young people.
- They also discussed cultural participation and leadership, reflecting that it’s important to respect Traditional Owners, but that youth should also have a say in the Voice forum.
- There was some discussion about local priorities a Local and Regional Voice may address, including:
 - Mental health, substance abuse
 - Funding for the Port Augusta youth centre
 - Training to support and build Aboriginal leadership to manage community service organisations.

National Voice

- There was some discussion about how Torres Strait Islander community members who live on the mainland would be represented on the National Voice.
- One participant questioned whether gender balance was needed and noted there is not currently gender balance in Parliament. The majority of other participants supported gender balance and felt it was an opportunity for Indigenous people to lead the way.
- There was interest in how the National Voice would engage with Local and Regional Voices and how the views of the Port Augusta community would be fed up into the National Voice.
- One participant expressed concern about the capacity of National Voice members to speak on behalf of regions outside of their own and their ability to have knowledge across the national platform.

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- One participant felt the youth advisory group was ‘not enough’ and didn’t give sufficient representation. They suggested there should be avenues for youth to be nominated to be on the National Voice.
 - Another participant felt that young people shouldn’t speak on behalf of elders and that youth should have a separate forum.
 - Youth participants suggested an annual youth summit to bring people together from across the country.
 - Participants generally supported the disability advisory group and noted that additional support systems would be required to support their participation.
 - One participant noted that layered models of representation are important and supported the structurally linked membership model.
 - There was some discussion about the importance of building capability to enable people to participate confidently and have the required skill set.
 - One participant supported the scope of the National Voice and stated that ‘it is important for government to retain the management/politics of programs’.
 - One participant spoke about elections and stated that ‘there needs to be informed discussions with local Aboriginal groups about any election processes’.
 - One participant suggested that there should be three Aboriginal people nominated from South Australia to be part of the National group – male, female and a young person. They also noted the importance of having remote/traditional people represented, as well as transient Aboriginal people.
 - One participant noted the importance that those who are elected are the right people – they need to commit to the process.

Co-design process

- One participant committed to taking the information back to their community in Whyalla for further discussion. They noted their ‘mob is small, but they should have a voice and be included’.
- One participant spoke about the barriers to participation in the consultation process (and the future Voice structures) including transport, access, and information dissemination.