

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Mantiyupwi country,

Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island, 10am, 30 April 2021

Number of participants: 65

## 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 65 participants who were welcomed to Wurlirankuwu country by Mr Wesley Kerinaia Junior. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- There was a view that all Indigenous people across Australia have similar concerns and it was time for them to have a say and make decisions for themselves. It was also recognized that how to 'get our voice up there' was a challenge.

### *Local and Regional Voices*

- Some participants spoke about the need for the Tiwi Islands to be a region on its own.
- A participant discussed issues faced by the community, including high rate of suicide and imprisonment as well as education and employment problems. They expressed a view that there was a need for arrangements that could provide for dealing directly with the federal government.
- There was also a view that people want to see something different from ATSIC, as it was felt some money was wasted, with an example of a house built in outstation where no one lives now.
- A non-Indigenous participant agreed the voice proposals were really critical and that local people should have more power. They said that currently 'it is government and white fellows running the show – we say we're listening, but at the end of the day we decide', and that if Indigenous people make their own decisions and make mistakes 'they will be their mistakes and they will learn from that' (quoting a local land owner).
- In response to a question about membership, co-design members clarified that members of each Local and Regional Voice would be decided by communities in each region and would represent all people in the region. To do that there would be a further community-led design process once regions are decided (providing government agrees to the final proposals from co-design members).
- It was acknowledged that while there were already a lot of advisory groups, usually the same people got involved while others also needed representation. It was also noted that to improve things all organisations needed to work together, and the community as a whole would be stronger working together.

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- A participant highlighted that ‘Tiwi’ meant ‘we the people’, and felt that the local organisations sometimes looked after their families but the voice needed the ‘voices of little people’. They went on to discuss the need for people who get onto the voice not to only represent their families - it needed to be not a family body but a community body, with young people also involved. This view was supported by a number of other participants.
  - There was a question about whether the Local and Regional Voice arrangements would allow the community to help design programs at a regional level, rather than everything being designed in Canberra. Co-design members clarified that there would be some flexibility so that local input can be provided, noting some of this would not happen overnight.
  - There was a view that the concept of the Local and Regional Voice is fantastic and the way to go. People felt that a Tiwi voice was needed. It was also noted that the local council is elected from all skin groups but young people were not represented and it was critical for every Tiwi to be represented. It was also suggested it would be good to do a session on the voice proposals in every school.

#### *Other Issues*

- Concerns were raised about the local council not listening to their suggestions about a dormitory for children and youth so they can sleep, have meals, and attend school. They felt that local people missed out on local jobs as some people were bringing their family members to work on the Tiwi Islands. They also felt that some organisations were not listening to local people, for example about issues related to continuity of culture, such as lack of hunting.
- Participants discussed the importance of education for young people, and the need for parents to be role models for their children, so they go to school and aspire to have jobs. They reflected that in the old days everybody went to school but this was not the case now. They said there were many problems in the community, including gambling and children going hungry. It was also acknowledged that there are many strong women in the community who could help to address issues in families.
- A participant expressed concern about what they saw as a lack of interest by community people in the Tiwi law and culture, indicating that they wanted to teach the kids the right way, Tiwi way. There was also a concern about other people not taking notice of Tiwi law and culture, for example when community people go to court and need the courts to understand the Tiwi way. Another participant commented that NT Corrections were trying to bring culture into the courts and detention system but it was not in place as yet.