

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Wiradjuri Country,

Wagga Wagga, 19 May 2021, Session 3

Number of participants: 14

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 14 participants who were welcomed to country by Aunty Isabel Reid. Key issues discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- One participant questioned how and why co-design members were appointed. It was noted that they were appointed by the Minister for Indigenous Australians with input from the co-chairs.
- Participants discussed the need for people who are incarcerated to be involved in the process.
- Participants raised concerns that consultation sessions had been set without any regard to other events that were occurring in the community.
- One participant raised the importance for state and territory governments together with the Commonwealth government to be involved for any model to be successful.
- Participants discussed the impact of changes in government, including the timing of the next election and potential implications on this work. It was noted that the Joint Select Committee recommending the co-design process was supported from across political parties.
- Participants questioned if an Indigenous Voice would ever eventuate.
- Participants agreed that any structure both at the local and regional and national levels needs to have clear authority to speak on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- One participant noted the important role that non-Indigenous people have in the consultation process and supporting the establishment of an Indigenous Voice.

Local & Regional Voice

- It was noted that there are examples of existing arrangements in place, particularly across New South Wales with Local Decision Making. These structures could form the basis of Local and Regional Voices across New South Wales either in their current form or expanded, noting that the Local Decision Making structure in New South Wales is formed mainly by organisations which limits individuals being involved.
- There were strong views that any structure put in place would need to be supported by adequate funding and resourcing.

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- One participant raised concerns that the local and regional proposals in their current form could create division in the region if the intent was to replace any current structures in place.
 - A discussion occurred on the need for a flexible approach given each community is different noting that the intent is for any Indigenous Voice structure to not replace things that are working well, but to open opportunities or strengthen structures in place.
 - A number of participants noted that there is potential for an Indigenous Voice to hold service providers accountable for the quality of service they provide to communities (particularly non-Government organisations)
 - There was a discussion regarding the number of regions being proposed and a suggestion that boundaries could follow language boundaries and not state /territory boundaries.
 - It was noted that there are many considerations on how boundaries could be determined such as geographical, cultural affiliation or language. In any case, all communities within a region need to come together for this to be successful.

National Voice

- In response to the proposal in the Interim Report regarding eligibility to stand as a candidate on the National Voice, one participant raised concerns that some criminal convictions would hinder people from becoming a candidate.
- It was noted that members would need to have integrity and pass the ‘pub test’ and that the intent is to not exclude people as one of the guiding principles for an Indigenous Voice is inclusion. Noting that, the body needs to have integrity and consideration needs to be given on the activity in question.
- There was general consensus that New South Wales should have more than two members on the National Voice given the state has the largest population of Aboriginal people. It was also noted that there is a need to ensure that the geographical representation across the state was fair to ensure regional and remote locations were fairly represented.
- Participants discussed the option of members on the National Voice being directly elected or membership is formed from the Local and Regional Voices.
- Some members voiced concern regarding an elected model using the Australian Electoral System as not everyone eligible is on the electoral roll and people get penalised for not voting. Participants discussed alternatives and one option put forward that the Local and Regional Voices keep a list of people who are eligible to vote.
- It was noted that in some community consultation sessions a hybrid model had been discussed.
- One participant noted the importance of having a Voice to Parliament. There is no Voice right now and anything that is implemented is going to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Participants noted that once a National Voice was established, members need to be accountable to their state or territory community members. They should be obligated to advise other members if there is division or no consensus on a particular issue amongst their communities. Members should not represent their own personal views but that of their communities.