

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Wadja Wadja and Yungulu country,

Woorabinda, 8 April 2021, 11.00am – 1.30pm

Number of participants: 27

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 27 participants. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants generally agreed there needs to be a Voice, with the right structure and supports in place.
- The meeting was heavily focused on the Local and Regional Voice, with participants expressing the view that Woorabinda should have its own Local Voice that could be engaged at other levels of the Voice and speak to all levels of government, including state and federal.
- Participants expressed the view that people involved in the Indigenous Voice have to be well-supported to do the work of the Voice, including having adequate secretariat support.
- There was a brief discussion around whether or not the Voice would be constitutionally enshrined, with participants generally feeling that the eventual aim should be for enshrinement.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants agreed a blanket approach to setting up Local and Regional Voices would be ineffective.
- Participants expressed support for the principles-based framework, particularly principle of 'Transparency and Accountability'. One participant commented that transparency should be seen as a two-way requirement on dialogues with governments, where issues are discussed openly at the table rather than being considered from a distance without community input, and then having solutions imposed.
- There was a strong sense amongst participants that Woorabinda needs its own Local Voice, situated within the Woorabinda community that could feed into dialogues across the region more generally.
 - One participant suggested the work needs to start at the grassroots, with each community having a say on what they need, directly to governments.
 - There was some discussion about how to fund the start of community discussions, and consideration of a proactive approach within the community, prior to having discussions with governments.
 - It was emphasised that COVID-19 restrictions make it all the more important that a Local Voice be situated on the ground in Woorabinda to enable its members to walk around, see and deal with the issues directly.

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- One participant stated there needs to be support for families in the community first and foremost, to support them through the myriad of social issues they are experiencing, and that once this is being done right, the voices of families could form the basis of a Local Voice.

National Voice

- One participant commented that the proposed two-tier structure of the Indigenous Voice could be complicated, and affect the ability of grassroots voices being heard at the national level. The participant tied it back to the earlier point about governments (local, state and federal) coming directly to the community to talk, and doing away with the concept of the two levels of the Indigenous Voice.
- There was some discussion about how Torres Strait Islander people could be represented in the National Voice. One participant commented that Queensland has got the most Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland than other states, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are very different. It was noted that the proposal is for Torres Strait Islander people to have 1-2 representatives for the Torres Strait as well as for Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland on issues unique to Torres Strait Islander people.
- Another participant stated that in terms of community interactions with state governments, communities have “Government Champions”¹. The participant queried whether National Voice members could possibly perform this role at the national level.

¹ This is a Queensland Government initiative involving bringing together CEOs of departments and government ministers to partner with individual communities. Queensland ministers act as individual champions for discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, working closely with mayors and community leaders from their partner community to engage more effectively with Cabinet on the opportunities and challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (see: https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/government-champions#:~:text=The%20Government%20Champion%20program%20provides,people%2C%20in%20a%20collaborative%20partnership.)).