

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Barkandji country,

Broken Hill, 24 March 2021, 9.30am, session 1

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 Maureen O'Donnell. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Most participants said the voice of the community is critical, it must be heard and must receive a response. There has been an organisation-based voice for a long time. Peak bodies are not representatives of all people as you have to be a paid registered member to have a say through those bodies.
- Participants discussed being tired of seeing new structures and bodies established, start to work well, but then be abolished. 'They took the voice from our people'.
- A participant said services needs to be provided in community rather than in other larger towns. This is to ensure people can have their family with them when they are accessing these services.
- One participant said that it is important for the government to change the way it does business and start at the local level and stay there.
- Participants discussed the importance of funding and resources for the Voice - that people shouldn't just be volunteers, as they already do a lot of work for free. The co-design members agreed that it does take resourcing and the co-design groups emphasised the importance of this.

Local & Regional Voice

- Some participants discussed the importance of inclusive participation - that all people should have a voice where they live, as many families have people from outside of cultural boundaries.
 - 'People who move to different regions, they should have a voice, all people should be part of the decision making'.
- A participant said that the government needs to engage with smaller communities, to reach out to the voiceless ones, the smaller families, because they are usually missed.
- One participant stated that when it comes to traditional matters, the government should talk to the traditional owners, but social matters should be addressed by all Aboriginal people in a community.
- One participant said that Broken Hill is in a unique position of dealing with two states, and people from different diverse regions. The Local and Regional Voice needs to be designed to work for this cross-state region.

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- Participants discussed the need for community people to be able to get involved and have their voice heard, it shouldn't just be 'old style leaders in positions of power'. Community people should be able to have their voice heard and go back to their life.
 - There was support for not duplicating existing representative bodies. The co-design members clarified this was a principle of the proposals and will not replace anything that already exists. This will be about giving primacy to local and regional voices.
 - Participants discussed the need for the Local and Regional Voice to not create division. It shouldn't be people fighting for the same funding. One participant talked about the community having no control over the money coming into the region. Another participant spoke of large amounts of funding going into towns with little evidence of seeing that funding 'hitting the ground, it stays with the organisations, many of which are not based in the town'.
 - The co-design members clarified that the Voice would not deliver services. However, the community could have a say in the way funds are allocated to services and programs with the proposals.

National Voice

- A participant brought up the concern about the Indigenous population being so small, there needs to be something to ensure nothing is imposed on Indigenous people without consent.
 - The co-design members clarified that in previous reports the importance of ensuring Parliament doesn't have its authority affected was stated, otherwise the proposal for a Voice will not be supported. However, there is accountability mechanisms proposed to ensure the Voice is heard, such as tabling in Parliament of National Voice advice.
- Participants discussed the proposed membership boundaries.
 - One participant said there needs to be more than two representatives per jurisdiction because there is huge cultural diversity and different needs, as well as geographical diversity. Communities need to be able to see themselves reflected in the National Voice.
 - One participant said the membership needs to be proportional to population size, and reflect differences in geography. Another participant said the NSW representatives cannot both come from the same geographical location.
- One participant didn't support the elected model because they said it would deliver two Sydney representatives. Further, if the membership model requires remote representation, this would be accounted for overall, and those remote representatives would be chosen from the NT, rather than western NSW.
- One participant didn't agree with the proposal for a National Voice, as it would centralise power. The breadth of issues is also too much for a small national body to engage with. It is better for decisions to be made at the local level.
- The participants discussed how the National Voice could develop its advice.
 - One participant raised a concern that advice from the community at a local level could be misinterpreted or diluted by the time it reaches the national level.
 - Another participant said the government is not listening to people at a local level now. The government implements a program nationally without speaking to local people.
 - A participant said that the National Voice wouldn't be able to come to a consensus as states will just compete against each other.
 - The co-design members clarified that not all matters are national matters. However, there are some national issues and the National Voice would be focused on these. The National Voice members would also seek input from the Local and Regional Voices on particular matters to ensure the perspectives of local people are included.