

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Barkandji country,

Broken Hill, 24 March 2021, 2.00pm, session 2

Number of participants: 6

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 6 participants who were welcomed to country by Aunty Maureen O'Donnell. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants raised that community are coming to these consultations with an element of hope.
- One participant asked how often will the co-design process be coming out to communities to talk about this proposal?
 - Co-design members clarified this is the only consultation session in Broken Hill as part of this co-design stage, but there are other ways to be included. However, if Government supports implementation, there will be much more discussion, with community designing and developing their Local and Regional Voice.
- Participants discussed the need to involve the younger generations in these conversations on the Voice. This is because the young ones will be the ones who will be in management and leadership roles into the future.
- One participant raised the idea of reserved seats in Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in addition to the Voice. "Without reserved seats, we are not guaranteed an Aboriginal person as an Indigenous Australians Minister."

Local & Regional Voice

- One participant stated that resources must be provided to the Local and Regional Voice, and this must include a physical premises, under Aboriginal control, that can be used by government agencies to come to community.
- One participant noted the local operation of Murdi Paaki has both its positives and challenges. The Local and Regional Voice would need to consider individual communities, as governments often deal at the regional level and local communities can be left out.
- One participant discussed for the principle of Transparency and Accountability. They stated that information is not currently shared with community and therefore community is unable to make informed decisions. "We need access to our own information."
- A participant discussed how many people live off country but still must be able to raise issues they are facing as an individual.



- Co-design members agreed, saying the Local and Regional Voices are about elevating the voiceless. Each community would come together to design and develop their Local and Regional Voice - there is not a single model.
- One participant discussed how there would appear to be enough resources being allocated to the community and not necessarily a need for finding new money, but it is about directing service and funding to the areas most in need, as prioritised by community. Local government engagement is also critical. Partnerships at the local level need to be in place.
 - Co-design members agreed and confirmed the proposals intend involvement by local governments.
- One participant stated that community will require capacity building as part of the Local and Regional Voice.
- Another participant noted there still exists a lot of strong cultural practices and connections – this is the community’s strengths. Community will need to select its own leadership.

National Voice

- Participants support the call for a National Voice.
- A participant noted that it isn’t about who is sitting at the table, rather the issues they are talking about.
- One participant raised that there needs to be a two-way flow of information. Input up into a National Voice and then feedback down on how this input has been used.
- One participant stated that the Government’s priority areas need to be transparent, when these are policy priorities which would impact on the need to engage the National Voice. “Would the National Voice be able to raise its own issues, or would it just be the Government raising issues with the National Voice?” Another participant asked about the types of issues and the volume of issues being brought to the National Voice, including from the Local and Regional Level.
 - The co-design members clarified that the National Voice can provide advice to the Parliament and Government on any matter it believes is important. Further, if the Voice is asked by the Government for advice on a particular matter, the Voice is not required to provide advice. This could be the case if the matter wasn’t considered to be of critical importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Where the Voice does provide advice, it cannot force the Government to act on this advice. However, there would be accountability and transparency with the advice being tabled in Parliament, and if the advice is not followed, the Government can explain that.
 - The Voice provides an opportunity to better influence the development of laws and policies. There will be matters specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but there are other national issues that impact on the whole country, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we are also interested in being part of that national conversation.
- Another participant asked if the National Voice would only be providing its advice to the Minister for Indigenous Australians? There were concerns that this could create a bottleneck.
 - The co-design members clarified that it will be both a Voice to Parliament and to Government.
- One participant asked if there will only be 20 members of the National Voice? The stated that with 35 regions, a male and female representative from each results in 70 members.
 - The co-design members provided detail on the discussions of the National Co-design Group’s on this matter. A body with 70 members was seen as too many members for an effective and efficient body. However, there was discussion about using those 70 people to come together and choose members for a smaller body.
- One participant said that National Voice members will need skills in negotiation and need to be inclusive of everybody in their jurisdiction. “Otherwise we will see what we see in the state land council where some people have the numbers - where other communities miss out and information does not flow.”
- Participants discussed the drawbacks of holding an election.
 - “If there is an election, it favours people with large families and networks.”
 - “I wouldn't like to see some of the election processes seen out here replicated. You don't necessarily get the best people, just the people with the most votes.”
- Participants discussed the need for the Voice to be well-resourced and sustainable.



- Co-design members agreed, saying that the government has heard how serious this proposal is for the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for cultural continuity. It is the strong view of the co-design groups that the Voice has to be appropriately resourced.
- Participants preferred the membership being drawn from Local and Regional Voices, with the National Voice needing to fit the mould of the local and regional level.