

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Yinggarda, Baiyungu, Thalanyji, Malgana and Thadgari Country

Carnarvon, 15 April 2021, 11.00am – 2.00pm

Number of participants: 59


## 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 59 participants who were welcomed to Yinggarda, Baiyungu, Thalanyji, Malgana and Thadgari Country by Marion Crowe. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- One participant described the overarching principle of the voice proposals as “don’t do anything for me without me”. The participant outlined that an Indigenous voice is needed because the community has felt that government hasn’t been able to provide the right services to the mob. They emphasised the importance of the community selecting their own representatives.
- Many participants reflected on challenges that had been faced by the community, both in the past and the present. These included child protection issues, criminal justice issues, suicide and racism. Participants reflected on the intergenerational trauma felt by many members of the community, and the historical context of the Protection Acts and missions.
- Some participants felt that the community had internal divisions, and needed to come together and have a voice that works for everyone.
- Some participants felt that their voice had not always been heard by government. One participant said that they felt they were pushed to tone down their voice rather than holding service providers accountable. Another participant said that they felt that some service delivery organisations in the area lacked cultural competence. Some participants felt that the previous processes that have led up to current voice co-design process had not created change or results in their community.
- One participant emphasised the importance of the opportunity to co-design what a voice structure looks like for Carnarvon. They described it as a “blank page” for the community to say what it looks like for Carnarvon to have local and regional representation. Some participants expressed concern about a lack of consultation in developing the proposals. Co-design members outlined that the proposals were a framework for community feedback, and that it was up to the community in Carnarvon to decide what a voice looked like for them.

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- One participant reflected on how the current process connects with the Uluru dialogues. They felt that the proposals put forward were a good model that reflected what was discussed at Uluru. They emphasised the importance of bringing non-Indigenous members of the community along the journey. The participant also outlined that she felt the voice structure should be enshrined in the Constitution so that a future government could not dissolve the structure.
  - One participant put forward enrolment to vote as a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be heard, and noted that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had not voted at recent state and federal elections.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Several participants emphasised the importance of having the right people who could take their local voice up to the larger regional and state levels.
- Participants discussed accountability. Some participants felt that accountability for funding was sometimes more important than the amount of funding. They felt that money is available for programs, but is not always spent in an effective way. One participant emphasised that accountability should be to the mob, not just to the Government, to ensure that money was being used to benefit the community.
- One participant outlined how they thought the “empowerment” principle applied. They said that community members that are members of organisations should hold those organisations accountable and challenge the system.
- A range of views were expressed about traditional ownership and native title. One participant put the view that native title has caused division, with different organisations competing with each other for funding. Other participants emphasised the importance of PBCs and traditional owners as the people who should be speaking for the community at the regional level. One participant felt that cultural authority had not always been appropriately respected within the community.
- One participant felt that the Gascoyne region should have its own profile, and not be fully subsumed into a larger Midwest region. They felt that this made sense for Carnarvon as a regional service hub for Gascoyne. The participant felt there was a negative trend of moving services and decision making to Geraldton.
- Several participants expressed support for the data and evidence based decision making principle. One participant noted the power of data to influence Government. Another participant emphasised the importance of collecting data on what people say verbally, not just written responses. The participant noted that not all Aboriginal people have access to a computer to answer an online survey, for example.
- There was a discussion about the role of local government. One participant put the view that the Shire of Carnarvon was not being responsive to the needs of the local community. Another participant noted that the Shire does not have responsibility for issues like policing, and saw the role of the Shire to advocate for the community to higher levels of Government.
- There was a discussion about how different local communities would aggregate to the regional level. One participant felt there was a risk of a “numbers game” with certain communities overriding others by having more representation at the regional level. Another participant emphasised the importance of leaving past divisions behind and working together as a region.
- One participant suggested that an implementation committee should be formed with representation from each traditional owner group in the area to progress the work. The participant outlined that this would reflect the context of a town with a number of different groups. Another participant emphasised the importance of working with service providers and governments on how to set up the arrangements.



### *National Voice*

- Participants discussed how what is said by members of the community in Carnarvon needs to be heard clearly in Canberra. Several participants felt that existing organisations in Canberra weren't always responsive and weren't adequately representing the community.
- One participant queried what would happen if the advice of the National Voice was ignored. Co-design members outlined the proposals to create transparency about where the National Voice was consulted and what the response was. In particular, the proposed parliamentary committee could monitor what consultation has taken place on bills when they are introduced to Parliament.
- There was a view that the demise of ATSIC had a significant negative impact on the community, and that there had been a lack of explanation about why this had occurred. One participant felt that the abolition of ATSIC occurred in the context of certain individuals at the national level behaving badly, but that the regional councils had been functioning well. The participant suggested that one issue was the inability for regional councils to recall their representatives at the national level for misconduct.