

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Darkinjung Land,

Central Coast, 12 March 2021

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 country by Aunty Bronwyn Chambers. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants showed strong support for many of the elements of the Indigenous Voice proposals, and were positive about the prospect of bringing many sectors together.
- Many participants raised the importance of the Indigenous Voice having a degree of permanence and not being just another proposal that would not eventuate or get caught up in bureaucratic processes, for example through legislative backing or constitutional enshrinement.
- There was a discussion on resourcing, and ensuring both Local and Regional Voices and the National Voice are resourced adequately. Some participants expressed concerns over the risks of under-resourcing.
- Some participants felt the Indigenous Voice should be progressed as a priority before other work already undertaken, such as the Uluru Statement from the Heart, truth-telling, agreement-making, constitutional recognition and treaty development.
- Participants raised questions on how the relationship between the National Voice and Local and Regional Voices would work, and the need for clarification on the relationships and responsibilities of local members in working with all levels of government.
- One participant queried if the Indigenous Voice proposal has bipartisan support, and it was clarified that it does, however noting that there are differing views on how the Indigenous Voice will be implemented.
- One participant felt the Voice is a distraction to keep Aboriginal people from the real issues of incarceration rates, suicide, and land issues. The participant said Aboriginal peoples have never ceded the land.
- One participant felt that identity was a large issue for the Central Coast community, and there was a discussion on the need to reduce crisis and to lift culture.



Local & Regional Voice

- There was strong agreement from participants that there needs to be a Local and Regional Voice on the Central Coast.
- There was a general consensus that there should be 35 regions across the country at a minimum.
- Participants commented that the proposed Local and Regional Voice would provide a forum to bring the Central Coast community together, noting the community representation has been divided over other previous and current regional governance models.
- Particular support was given for the principle of *Inclusive Participation*, as its inclusion in the principles-based framework gives an assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are not normally heard can be heard through their Local and Regional Voice.
- Participants felt there would need to be more clarity around the relationships of Local and Regional Voices with established bodies such as the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks (NSW CAPO) and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA).
- One participation queried how representation through existing bodies continue, especially with organisations such as the Coalition of Peaks (CoP) and NSW CAPO already claiming to be ‘the voice’. The principle of *Non-duplication and Links with Existing Bodies* was pointed as one which intends to ensure Local and Regional Voices do not undercut or undermine existing bodies – including not overriding NSW CAPO or CoP.
- Participants reflected on the principles-based framework, and it was commented that the structures in the Central Coast are built on strong principles, which lead to their success.
- One participant reiterated the importance in the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the strength that could be achieved in bringing the diversity together.

National Voice

- There was not strong support for Core Model 1 (Direct Election) as the model for selection of members to the National Voice. Some participants felt that under an election model there would be nothing to stop a political party nominating people or funding people for their own interests.
- Another participant commented that the election model will be a problem as people will need to be registered to vote and low voter turnout would be an issue.
- Many participants felt the NSW representatives on the National Voice should come from local/regional representatives, with strong linkages between them, especially around youth and disability.
- Participants also felt there should be strong public accountability mechanisms to ensure the National Voice seeks and considers feedback from Local and Regional Voices.
- There was a discussion on how seriously the advice from the National Voice would be taken by the Australian Parliament and Australian Government, with many participants expressing cynicism. One participant felt the National Voice would not be powerful enough and that it would need a decision-making power over policies, and a veto power.
- There was a question on whether the National Voice would have a policy statement and a resolution statement. It was clarified that it would set its own priorities.
- Many participants felt the Indigenous Voice would need to be built based on lessons from the past, including lessons from ATSIC – it was explained that this type of research was included in the development of the proposals.