



# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Wiradjuri country,

Dubbo, 22 March 2021, 2.00pm, Session 2

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 and Aunty Narelle Boys gave a Welcome to country. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching and general points*

- There was discussion about the non-duplication of existing bodies and structures. One participant asked why the Voice proposal appeared to be duplicating existing organisations and structures, as these should be used. This included using Murdi Paaki. Another participant noted that NSW Local Decision Making initiative ('LDM' is an Aboriginal community governance initiative) exists already in NSW. A participant also noted that in NSW there are land council representatives for each of the Land Council zones. However, another participant noted that not every community has existing structures, and smaller communities surrounding the larger towns need to feed in to those local structures, according to every community's needs.
- One participant asked if the Voice will be setting up something different to the existing structures and bodies?
  - The co-design members clarified there is no single model being proposed for the Indigenous Voice. There are options for a National Voice and a proposed principles-based framework for Local and Regional Voices. It will be up to the community in every region to design their Local and Regional Voice against this principles-based framework according to their needs.
  - It was acknowledged there are local and regional structures in place, but not every state has LDMS or similar structures, and LDMS do not cover the entire state of NSW. The Indigenous Voice proposal is not intended to replace anything, it is intended to support and expand on existing structures like LDMS.
- Participants agreed there needed to be more youth voices, because the decisions made today are going to affect them into the future.
- Participants agreed this will need to be a voice of community, not the voice of the elites.
- One participant asked about the long term viability of the Voice and if there was a chance it would be abolished? Another participant talked about how community have been building their voices through structures such as land councils, AMS' etc, and that in their opinion, when a structure becomes too powerful, the government seemingly withdraws support and funding, and moves to another body. Other organisations



did work well in the past. If issues arise in the organisation, try and address those issues rather than abolish the organisation altogether. Another participant noted there will be teething issues in establishing the Voice.

- The co-design members said it was intended that the National Voice would be legislated and there appeared to be bipartisan support at the moment, but things can change.
- Participants said that affordable housing is critical.

#### *Local and Regional Voice*

- There was strong support for the Accountability and Transparency principle. One participant said that government agencies should be more accountable to community.
  - Another participant queried how community will know how the Voice has handled their questions and input. Voice members will need to feed back to community so they know they are being heard.
- Participants said there should be jurisdictional plans. There currently appeared to be no long term planning or funding for services and programs. It also appeared to be that there is a lot of funding for services in some towns, more than others, and there needs to be accountability on this.
- A participant said there needs to be work on sustainability and economic development in community, because there is still a welfare mentality in community.
- One participant noted that cross border communities are a challenge with service delivery, as some state and local government boundaries cut through Aboriginal clan regions.
- One participant asked about the desired outcome of the Local and Regional proposal, is it about political change, or about changing policies and advising on issues and laws?
  - The co-design members said this is about the empowerment of local and regional voices, to enable communities to have more control about the services coming in to their towns and communities, and about their aspirations for the future, as well as accountability for organisations.
- The co-design members said there will be further work and longer conversations with community, with grassroots people, on the design and development of Local and Regional Voices. The current process is working towards a final report, but there will be more conversations if Government supports these proposals.

#### *National Voice*

- There was a discussion about how the National Voice fits into existing structures and arrangements. A participant stated that there are already peak bodies, and asked where would the National Voice sit amongst those bodies, or would it sit above them and be a voice for those existing structures as well? Further, what would the National Voice do that is not already being done?
    - The co-design members clarified that the National Voice would be able to talk directly to the parliament and government. The National Voice could influence policy from the local level to the national level. It would provide advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, based on input fed up from the Local and Regional Voices. How this works in practice would be developed. Some issues will just be local or regional and would be handled by the Local and Regional Voice. The Local and Regional Voice would work with all levels of government so it can cover all local and regional issues.
    - The National Voice would also have relationships with peak bodies. It is anticipated that the National Voice would engage with the relevant peak body on a particular matter, and would not replace any existing structure. This is about trying to consolidate and amplify Indigenous Voices not to reduce them.
  - A participant stated that there will need to be accountability from the National Voice back to the Local and Regional Voices.
  - One participant said the National Voice should use structures that have already been established - utilise and connect to existing Aboriginal organisations and grow from those.
  - One participant said the National Voice should be involved in discussion on how funding is invested or even involved in allocating the funding.
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- There was a discussion on resourcing the National Voice. One participant stated that the National Voice members must be paid appropriately, such as politicians are paid, to recognise the large job the members will have working with community.
  - The co-design members said the importance of appropriate resourcing has been emphasised.
- One participant asked about the membership model of the National Voice and if the representatives from the state land council could be the National Voice representatives.
  - It was clarified the National Voice member from NSW could be the state land council representative, if that is what the community of NSW chose through their local and regional voice arrangements.
- One participant noted that it made sense to use the state borders as the boundaries for the National Voice because that is the way services are organised.
- There was a discussion on the number of National Voice members being proposed. The co-design members outlined the design discussion from the co-design groups for the number of members. If the number of Local and Regional Voices is 35, and there are two people from each region, that creates a body with 70 members. This 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.
- The option for an election of National Voice members was discussed. It was noted the low voter turnout of the Victorian Treaty Assembly election and low voter turnout in the NSW land council elections. One participant stated that with low voter turnout, it would undermine the principle of democracy and authority of the Voice. There was some support in the room for voluntary voting as well as support from others for mandatory voting.
- It was agreed that only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could choose their representatives.