

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Gooniyandi country,

Hall's Creek, 6 May 2021, 9.30am, Session 1

Number of participants: 23

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 23 participants. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Several participants emphasised having local people on the ground providing a voice. Some participants felt that existing structures where people went to Darwin or Broome did not feed back to the community. One participant felt that leaders like Minister Wyatt should sit with people in the community and listen to them directly. Participants discussed how providing a real voice would allow Aboriginal people to bring their culture to the table in informing policy.
- There was also a discussion of deliberation within the community. A participant discussed the importance of “good conversations” where the community can discuss and deliberate. The participant felt that some Aboriginal organisations do not facilitate good deliberation.
- Some participants felt that government would not listen them and that their efforts to participate in meetings and discussions in the past had not led to changes. Some participants reflected negatively on the term “advice” in the proposal, and were concerned about whether that advice would be listened to. One participant felt that there was a pattern of government “asking us things they’ve asked before”. This led to concerns about the voice being abolished in the future and having to start again, with participants discussing the idea of “locking in” the voice. Another participant looked at this from a funding perspective, and felt that secure funding would be an important part of ensuring a voice for Aboriginal people, rather than a voice determined by government. Other ideas put forward included setting aside seats in Parliament and creating an Aboriginal constitution.
- Youth crime was a major topic, with many participants linking this to the importance of culture as a way to teach youth to be confident and respectful. One participant reflected on their own experience of engaging in antisocial behaviour as a young person and being able to change their ways through their connection to family and culture. Education, recreation programs and parental responsibility were raised as key factors.

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- Transparency and accountability was a major theme of the session, including for both government and Aboriginal organisations. One participant discussed how they thought organisations could become less functional over time without proper oversight, with small acts of corruption turning into big ones, and small numbers of wrong people eventually taking over an organisation. The participant felt that some past organisations had favoured certain people rather than spreading benefits around to everyone. Some participants felt that government agencies such as the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations needed to do more to regulate and audit Aboriginal organisations.

Local and Regional

- Participants discussed what a regional arrangement would look like for them. Participants generally supported including Hall's Creek in an East Kimberley region that might also include Kununurra. Some participants emphasised having Hall's Creek represented by people "from here" and felt that they wouldn't be well represented from Broome. One participant emphasised the importance of having a local group in Hall's Creek, even if this was within a larger region. Another participant talked about how technology such as zoom or social media could be used to allow a local Hall's Creek voice to be heard.
- Some participants raised issues with the existing Empowered Communities (EC) arrangements in the Kimberley. One participant felt that East Kimberly and West Kimberley EC regions did not talk to each other. Another participant felt that East Kimberley EC had experienced significant challenges engaging with communities due to local divisions.
- One participant emphasised the importance of having a voice to local and state government, and felt that the state level was a gap in the proposals. The participant talked about the importance of influencing local government, giving the example of recreational facilities for youth as something that could be better utilised.
- One participant reflected on the role of various government services and the need to make sure they were being delivered effectively, rather than expecting the community to fill in the gaps. Another participant felt that reporting on the outcomes of services only reflected the ability of providers to "get good at reporting", but that the community had the knowledge about whether the service was good or not.
- One participant reflected positively on the Woombooriny Amboon Angarriya Partnership Initiative on the Dampier Peninsula as a model for evaluating government services which they thought could be applied in Hall's Creek. The initiative did a review of over 100 services coming into communities on the Dampier Peninsula and asked individual households about which ones had an impact. The participant reflected on the lessons for Local & Regional Voices, including the importance of giving the community a say over services, and of maintaining the connection between advice given at the national level with the experiences of households on the ground.
- Several participants reflected on the role of Elders as part of the voice structure. One participant raised the idea of using a group of Elders for debriefing and accountability. They felt that this would provide context around cultural issues, create stronger connections back to the community and provide checks and balances.

National

- Several participants expressed concerns about having only two National Voice members for WA, with participants noting the large size and dispersed population of the state. One participant suggested having at least three members representing northern, southern and metro regions of WA.
- There were a range of views about how members should be selected. One participant felt that "we have gone past" using elections, whilst another thought that some members could be selected by election with others selected by local & regional voices. One participant raised the idea of selection criteria for National Voice members, including whether they have the skillset to "digest the jargon of politics". Another participant emphasised having National Voice members "from the grassroots", rather than "CEOs or administrators".
- One participant suggested that, if people at the local & regional level were not happy with the performance of a National Voice member, they should be able to say that they're not the right person, for example through a recall mechanism.