

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Gadigal of the Eora Nation

Inner Sydney, 10.00am 25 February 2021, Session 4

Number of participants: 10

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 morning session was attended by 10 participants and Aunty Yvonne Weldon gave an acknowledgement of country. Key points discussed are summarised below.

General discussion included:

- Most participants felt that it was clear that an Indigenous Voice is necessary.
- Participants felt that the Interim Report was a great piece of work and that there has been thoughtful consideration of what's come before and a recognition of what's been done and the lessons that can be learned from this.
- Participants felt that the proposals are a sensible set of recommendations and that there have been thoughtful consideration of how Indigenous Australians can be involved.
- Participants felt that there needs to be a big call of commitment of investment in capability development in order to meet Indigenous Australians in their commitment to this process. Participants stressed the need to ensure funds are utilised and distributed correctly.
- Participants felt that more awareness of the consultation process was needed.
- One participant felt that the results of the 1999 referendum were a failure to Indigenous Australians and that this needs to be remembered and recognised so that we can avoid this again.
- Participants felt that more substantial reform is needed and other participants felt that this could come from the Indigenous Voice putting pressure on Government when established.
- Participants stressed the need to work together and sit and learn from each other in order to work within the current system of governments.
- One participant felt that the proposals were a very corporate model of thinking and that there needed to be more to bring voices together.
- Participants felt the need to ensure respect for one another was crucial to the success of the Indigenous Voice.
- Participants were interested in what kind of influence non-Aboriginal people have had in the process to date and potentially into the future.
- Participants were keen to see Traditional Owners represented across the proposals.
- Participants commended the session, saying they felt safe to share their views.

Discussion about the Local and Regional Voice proposal included:

- There was discussion around the challenges in NSW which include Local Aboriginal Land Councils denying the existence of certain groups and dominating the conversations in the region. Discussion centred on the need to recognise all people and all voices before decisions are made, and there was a recognition that this will be very



challenging in NSW. A need to guarantee inclusive participation was discussed and some participants were concerned that this may not occur under the current proposals.

- Some participants felt that Local and Regional Voices were an opportunity for people to be listened to across Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, in particular for traditional owner groups that aren't being heard.
- Some participants felt that a Local and Regional Voice region could be the wider Sydney region.
- Participants felt there would be challenges:
 - In the flexibility of the model by using pre-existing groups and a need to ensure that structural inequality in existing structures does not continue.
 - In navigating those not living on country as some will find it difficult to engage with the proposed structures, but will want to participate and will want to have a voice.
 - In mitigating the lived local experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with high-level policy influence
- Participants stressed the need to capture people who don't want to be part of organisations but that are doing great work for the community, including a focus on youth.
- Participants felt that in the short term the Indigenous Voice needs to be established first and then it could establish longer term arrangements, for example membership of the National Voice could come from an election for the first time, and then after through Local and Regional Voices once established.

Discussion on the National Voice proposals included:

- One participant thought the National Voice could be like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elected body in the ACT.
- One participant suggested an alternate model could be reserved seats in Parliament for Indigenous Australians, which could also be state based.
- Discussion that larger family groups would dominate elections and smaller family groups would struggle to participate or be elected, and the need to ensure it is actually representative.
- General feeling that the elected model would attract a low voter turnout.
- Participants supported the idea of a guaranteed gender balance in membership of the National Voice as well as the permanent disability and youth advisory groups. There was a discussion around where the memberships of the permanent groups (disability and youth) would come from, with a suggestion they could come from national disability networks and youth bodies.
- One participant felt that a hybrid of the membership proposals for the National Voice was a good model.