

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Latji Latji, Ngintait and Nyeri Nyeri Country

Mildura, 30 March 2021, 9.30am

Number of participants: 21

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 21 participants. Arthur Smith welcomed participants to country on behalf of the First Peoples of the Wimmera-Mallee being the Latji Latji, Ngintait and Nyeri Nyeri peoples. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching

- Mildura is in river country, lying on the banks of the Murray, near the confluence with the Darling, known as the Barka to the Barkandji traditional owners. Participants talked about the importance of water to them, their culture and way of life. They saw failures to share water equally between communities, and to maintain the health of the rivers. They talked about how this has been impacted by, for example, cotton farming and a decline in fish numbers. Participants explored whether rivers could be used to inform regional boundaries.
- Just on the other side of the Murray is New South Wales, but this border isn't necessarily culturally relevant for Aboriginal people – their connections, communities and families extend to both sides of the river. However the border impacts government services, with rules about who providers can service, and where members of the community can get help. Participants expressed their frustration with these barriers.
- Some participants talked about how consultation processes require them to provide the same advice again and again. Some participants reflected on past policies which have divided Aboriginal people, and emphasised the importance of being united. One participant questioned how the voice process would be different to what has come before.
 - Co-design members talked about how the Indigenous Voice was an opportunity to do something new and improve on old ways of doing things.



- Youth was a major theme. Participants talked about youth as the next generation of leaders, and wanted them involved in consultation meetings like this one.
 - Co-design members discussed how the inclusion of the youth advisory committee as an element of the National Voice proposal could support this.
- Several participants expressed concern about funding for community programs. Key issues included ranger programs, youth diversion and employment programs. A number of participants reflected on the importance of a preventative approach that supported youth from the outset, rather than only addressing problems down the track once they have come into contact with the criminal justice system. They emphasised the importance of a strengths based approach.
- Participants were concerned about getting the right people into voice structures. They discussed the importance of representatives coming back to speak to the community so that the local community voice can be presented directly to that wider regional, statewide or national interface.
- Participants talked about the voice proposals as a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to talk to each other, not just to Government.
- Participants discussed the concepts of expertise and partnership. They reflected on the opportunities for members of the community to partner with experts who could work with and listen to the community. They discussed how this was reflected in the voice proposals, which are based on a partnership between communities and Governments.
 - Co-design members noted how this was reflected in the proposal for appointed members on the National Voice who could be chosen for their expertise, including cultural expertise and community expertise.
- Several participants reflected on their experience in jobs supporting the local Aboriginal community. They reflected on each other's dedication and generosity. However participants also expressed frustrations, such as feeling like they were not given enough resources or flexibility to achieve the changes that they wanted to see.