

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Dharug Country,

6.00pm, 9 March 2021, Mt Druitt (Western Sydney), Session 1

Number of participants: 18

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 evening session was attended by 18 participants who were welcomed to country by Uncle Greg Simms. Key points discussed are summarised below.

General discussion included:

- There were concerns from some participants about non-Indigenous Australians being involved in consultations. Co-design members leading the session noted that given the importance of this issue it was useful to hear views and seek support from non-Indigenous people.
- Several participants felt that this was the opportunity for the community to come together, to be united and not divided over internal politics between families. This includes working at the grassroots level and breaking down existing silos in the community.
- One participant questioned if there would be funding for the National Voice and Local and Regional Voices for things like secretariat services and there was clarification that there would be, once established.

Discussion about the Local and Regional Voice proposal included:

- Participants supported the need for a voice to represent Western Sydney. Some stressed the need for a united holistic voice, so each group does not need to separately negotiate relationship with government. There was also a discussion about the importance of cultural authority versus cultural leadership.
- Participants stressed that Mt Druitt and the wider Western Sydney area is very unique given its history and multicultural nature, and issues around racism exist across the region. It was also acknowledged the fast growing Indigenous population in the region presents an opportunity.
- There was a view that the region has to be 'Western Sydney'. This could include Blacktown and Penrith areas.
- One participant felt that the land council model was not currently representing the people in the community.
- There was a discussion around a Western Sydney Local Decision Making model that is in the very early stages of establishment. It was noted this could be a great start for the region, but there were some suggestions that a Local and Regional Voice would have to incorporate a larger region. How to bring local government to the table was also discussed.
- The possibility was raised of community running elections at a local level for representation on their local voice, which would feed into a larger regional voice.

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- Some participants were concerned that voices would not be heard if there isn't enough representation. It was noted that for this to be successful everyone in the community would need to come together and unite and work even with those they don't like.
 - Some participants were concerned that the number of regions was already decided, however it was clarified that this was not the case.
 - Participants acknowledged the need for governments to be brought together at the table to make agreements with local people. This would stop the need for Indigenous Australians going to several different agencies with different responsibilities and would allow governments to hear the priorities first hand.
 - The importance of data sharing was discussed, and for the allowance of cultural authority over the data of Indigenous Australians. One participant felt that Aboriginal people need to be at the table interpreting the data with a cultural lens and taking control of the data, which would provide data sovereignty.
 - One participant questioned how you would identify who was Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This included discussion on blood lines and the need for Aboriginal people themselves to work this out. It was acknowledged that the Indigenous Voice would not address identity issues, but could be used as a mechanism to bring the issue to governments if this is what communities wanted.
 - One participant noted there have been multiple committees and forums but felt no one listens to the voices of local people in Mt Druitt. Participants were hopeful that something will change under the Local and Regional Voice proposals because they don't want to have the same conversations multiple times.
 - Some participants felt that those known in the community should be the local and regional voice representatives.
 - One participant favoured 35 regions over 25 regions as it would provide greater representation.

Discussion on the National Voice proposals included:

- There was a discussion on eligibility and the need to have parameters around people identifying as Indigenous. This included around people who newly discover their heritage, and around how the Indigenous people in Canada approach the issue of identity.
- One participant felt families are most important and should be the basis for representation. Others noted families are a part of community.
- Several participants noted the National Voice is needed and is long overdue. The co-design members leading the session agreed the time was right but noted that if some stakeholder don't want it is not compulsory, but saw it as a way forward.
- One participant felt that Elders needed to be included and ensure they are represented.
- There was a general support for drawing National Voice members from Local and Regional Voices, as long as it is a fair and transparent process.

Other issues raised included:

- The high rates of incarceration and high levels of police brutality towards Indigenous Australians was discussed, in particular towards Indigenous youth. Participants felt that the youth in the area are being abandoned by the government and non-government organisations in the area. Specific examples given were the lack of infrastructure as well as the lack of training or job opportunities, and the need for a rehab centre.
- Participants were concerned about non-Indigenous organisations gaining funding for programs over Indigenous organisations. This included when mainstream services partner with Indigenous organisations, which was seen by some participants as tokenistic.
- One participant felt that it is a shame that Aboriginal people are being charged to live on their own land, for example paying rent on very limited Government payments. This included payments for water and payments to bury people on their own country.
- One participant called for greater truth-telling in schools to prevent people (especially those part of the Stolen Generations) to have to tell their stories over and over again.
- One participant felt that non-Aboriginal people need to demonstrate cultural competency when working in Indigenous policy and Indigenous affairs.



- The recent Victorian government announcement of an inquiry into the impacts of colonisation was raised and acknowledged as a great step forward.