

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Dharug Country,

9.30am, 10 March 2021, Mt Druitt (Western Sydney), Session 2

Number of participants: 22

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 22 participants and Professor Tom Calma AO gave an acknowledgement of country. Key points discussed are summarised below.

General discussion included:

- There was clarification that previous bodies such as ATSIC were examined prior to designing the proposals.
- Concern was raised about government quality assurance practices and the need for good quality assurance for the Indigenous Voice.
- Generally, participants felt that once Indigenous Australians start getting their representation right, it will be really beneficial.
- One participant raised the issue of needing to notify the community earlier around these sessions.
- One participant felt that there was a need for Aboriginal people to be facilitating this with communities, and that it was good to see this during this process.

Discussion on the Local and Regional Voice proposal included:

- Some concern was expressed about proposals using 'soft' words such as voice and influence and question about who would make the final decisions. It was clarified that would remain with Parliament and government because of constitutional provisions, but at the local and regional level there are already good examples of the power of community coming together and having one voice about its priorities in getting governments to the table and funding those priorities.
- It was acknowledged there were challenges in how to come together and this needed a systemic approach and all communities (not treat Mt Druitt as unique).
- It was noted community coming together to create one voice would be very important, and that a consistent set of principles create opportunity, but next step would be communities designing their own arrangements.
- It was acknowledged that Mt Druitt has one of the largest Aboriginal populations.
- Some participants felt that Western Sydney could be a potential region, encompassing Mt Druitt, Blacktown, Penrith and the Hawkesbury area, but that it should not include the Blue Mountains or Campbelltown areas.
- One participant felt that the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) and NCARA in NSW do not capture the voices of the community.

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- There was recognition that Local and Regional Voices would be a good forum to help prioritise issues in the community, such as youth issues and drug related issues. Participants felt that there was a need to look across the board and across the issues and for the community to come together and unite.
 - Some participants felt that the Local and Regional Voice could be the place where there could be a unified community view, but there were also concerns it would not work and just be another body.
 - There was clarification that Local and Regional Voices would help influence where funding is allocated, but would not manage money or programs.
 - One participant felt that the divide in the community, or between communities, will be a challenge to overcome.
 - There was discussion around the need for a residential aged care facility around Mt Druitt that has been needed for many years. It was noted that this could be addressed if community agrees with governments it's a priority through Local and Regional Voice forums.
 - There was also clarification that the design of a local and regional voice in the community would be community-led.
 - One participant felt officials should be elected to Local and Regional Voices and that candidates should have to present why they should represent the community.
 - One participant questioned if positions on Local and Regional Voices would be paid or voluntary, and it was clarified that there would be funding associated with the proposals but it would depend on their design.
 - A participant also expressed a concern that if representatives are based on organisations, what would be the impact if they were sacked from their position.

Discussion on the National Voice proposal included:

- One participant felt that the two NSW reps will need to make themselves known to all the regional voices in their state.
- There was clarification that Elders could be part of the two appointees or members themselves. One participant felt that Elders should also be represented across the youth and disability advisory groups.
- There was some a question on eligibility of members and the issues around confirmation of identity and heritage.
- There was a discussion on the Northern Territory Emergency Response and if it would have looked different if the National Voice was in place, and some participants agreed it would have, while others were sceptical and felt it would have changed nothing.
- One participant felt the National Voice would help create a conscience for Government.
- One participant felt the National Voice would not be successful as there would not be local voices.
- One participant felt that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have input into every law.
- Some participants were concerned about popularity contests in the elected model.
- It was clarified that the National Voice would help communities come together and agree on issues and be accountable to each other, and not just be spectators on the sidelines for where decisions are made.

Other issues raised included:

- One participant cited the example of Aboriginal workers positions in schools that are being abolished by decisions by principals alone.
- One participant gave an account about why the community is not trusting in Government. This related to two big issues over the last 10 years, including a childcare centre that Elders built being lost because Government didn't listen and a community controlled health service which was taken from the community.
- The issue of drugs in the community (particularly Ice) was discussed.