

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Walbunja, Yuin Nation,

Narooma, 31 March 2021, 11am, Session 1

Number of participants: 12

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 12 participants who were welcomed to country by Aunty Vivienne Mason. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching and general points

- Discussion at the consultation was focused on a local and regional Voice, with more limited discussion of the National Voice.
- There was a majority of non-Indigenous attending this session.
- A participant noted that the attendance is not representative of the diversity of Aboriginal people on the south coast. It was discussed how important it is to engage with the south coast community and the Regional Manager agreed to return when requested by the community, which may be after the consultation period.
- Indigenous people on the south coast often feel forgotten as they don't receive enough support. Co-design members addressed these concerns by noting that the regional voice could be a platform to have south coast voices heard.
- Non-Indigenous participants were keen to engage with the local Indigenous community and were supportive of the voice in-principle.

Local and Regional Voices

- A participant questioned if the Voice will have any specific focus. For example areas like industry, environment or grants. They particularly wanted to know what the body will do for the south coast. The participants raised the issues of being locked off their own country and denied fishing rights.
- It was also raised that government grants are often being accessed by the same organisations, but often some alternative local organisations miss out. It was noted that a regional voice can advocate for change, and that similar issues have been raised at other consultations.
 - It was agreed by the co-design members that shared decision making is critical and The Voice has the potential to impact change at a local level.

- Co-design members also noted that often groups are in competition, instead of working together on common interests. The funding grants are also managed by different levels of Government. The Voice has the potential to support local feedback to the correct area of Government.
- A participant also discussed the issue of seasonal work on the south coast. Often Indigenous people will be employed on short term projects like building a bridge, however there are not enough ongoing roles for Indigenous people in the community.
 - Co-design member also noted that locals should reach out to their local member, Andrew Constance.
- Participants were also surprised that local council representatives were not at the consultation.
- It was noted by a participant that Indigenous people have been advising for years but not being listened to and questioned if the Voice would be anything different. It was also raised that Indigenous people are always going to the government and that government should be coming to Indigenous people.
 - Co-design members stated that it's important to have an organised Voice, otherwise it has the potential to lose influence.
 - It was also noted that after ATSIC folded, there has been no organised Voice to government that is across a broad range of issues.
- One participant questioned the influence of the National Voice, since it will only an advisory body.
 - Co-design members advised that Parliament is a sovereign entity and that the Voice needs to operate within those parameters. However this did not mean it could not influence policy.
- A participant raised the issue that Indigenous communities like Wreck Bay sit within ACT jurisdiction and asked if they will align with ACT or NSW?
 - Co-design members stated that the decision has not been made and it will be decided with the community.
- A participant questioned if peak bodies will sit within the Voice structure.
 - Co-design members clarified that no person will be representing a peak body.
- One participant noted that the government should perhaps review the Native Title Act [Note this community is currently going through a Native Title claim].
 - Co-design members explained that historically, many reviews of particular legislation like the Native Title Act are undertaken, but that these are not always actioned by government. This is sometimes due to the lack of support by political parties but that a Voice.
- It was noted that self-determination is particularly important and the government should be supporting south coast Indigenous people to achieve self-determination.
- It was acknowledged that closing the gap has had a positive impact on the community. In particular the health programs have influenced positive health outcomes for Indigenous people on the south coast.

National Voice

- Co design members explained the National Voice model and the potential for sub committees. No participants had any objections, just wanted more clarity on the models. All participants were impressed with the videos used to explain the Voice. They noted that they will visit the website for further information.
- It was clarified that while there are some similarities between the Voice proposal and ATSIC, the Voice
- There was discussion around the ethics council with concern over the purpose, not the design. It was explained that the purpose is to make sure that the people who are on a National Voice are the best people to speak for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- It was also agreed by participant's that the ethics council could lead by example and perhaps influence other structures to lift governance standards.