

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Whadjuk within Nyoongar country

Perth, Tuesday 6 April, 2-5pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 12


Key points raised

Please note, this is a summary of the discussion and the views 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 and were welcomed to country by Mr Olman Walley. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- There was general agreement that the timing for this work is good and there is an opportunity for genuine change. It was acknowledged that:
 - Aboriginal people are seeing the need for structural and systemic changes.
 - Governments all around the country are looking for ways to do things better.
 - For the first time, at the Commonwealth level, there is an Indigenous Minister for Indigenous Affairs.
 - States such as South Australia, Victoria, Northern Territory are all pursuing treaty processes and broader empowerment of Indigenous people.
- One participant expressed frustration that co-design members were a top-down, government appointed group. They wanted to see more community people leading and driving this work
- Another participant commented that the 'onus is back on people on the ground. We can't keep relying on forums, governments or committees. Change has to come with us'.
- Other participants agreed that the composition of the Voice arrangements should be led by Aboriginal people. However, they recognised that enshrining a Voice in the constitution would need the support of non-indigenous people.
- There was some discussion on the importance of wording for any referendum process and the history of failed referendums.
- The importance of including a cohort of young people in the conversation was discussed and there was some disappointment that more young people weren't present in the consultation session.
- One participant talked about the need for succession planning to bring younger people along on this journey.
- One participant felt the different gendered cultural responsibilities needed to be considered in the design. They acknowledged that women's voices are often overlooked and that 'too often, men are driving the agenda'.

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- One participant acknowledged that although they were making critical comments, they were also hopeful and optimistic about the proposals.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants discussed how Local and Regional Voices would hear the minority voices of people living in Remote communities.
- There was some interest in how the Local and Regional Voices would be funded.
- One participant expressed interest in developing more Aboriginal peak organisations in WA.
- Participants were interested in hearing about the level of interest from Local and State Governments and whether there were any commitments from them to participate in the Voice arrangements.
- Co-design members clarified that state and territory governments are engaged with this process through a Senior Officials Group. Some states will be making submissions. It was noted that some states are already working in this space with local decision making initiatives and working in partnership with communities.
- The number of regions was discussed and there was interest in how many regions there could be in WA.
 - Participants discussed how regions would work for communities that straddled state boundaries such as the NPY lands/Warburton tri-state region.
 - One participant suggested the geographic spread of WA should be considered in determining the number of regions and acknowledged that it can make representation difficult.
 - Another participant asked whether there would be scope for a larger number of smaller regions.
- There was some discussion about balancing the principles of inclusive participation and cultural leadership, particularly, when Aboriginal people may be living off country, have grown up in that region and may be dislocated from their traditional lands.

National Voice

- Some participants supported the elected model over government appointments, commenting that they wanted Aboriginal people to pick who they wanted rather than Government.
- Other participants felt the National members should be chosen at the local and regional level, acknowledging that 'you have to start at the bottom and feed it up'.
- One participant offered an alternative proposal to ensure Aboriginal Voices are heard in Parliament.
 - This included redistributing electoral boundaries to align with the ABS remote classifications.
 - It was suggested that this would increase the number of Indigenous people in Parliament and better align with representation of remote voices.
- One participant reflected on the importance of place and cultural identity to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. They noted that some issues are gendered e.g. women's business and wondered how the National Voice would navigate this.
- There was some discussion about how Aboriginal people might benefit from a National Voice including addressing priority issues such as deaths in custody, the stolen generation, and genocide.
- One participant was dissatisfied with the proposed role of the National Voice
 - They wanted to see greater accountability for government, particularly around program funding, social determinants of health, the removal of kids, suicide and mental health.
 - They called for a process of truth telling.
- Another participant expressed concern that the National Voice may create another gap between Aboriginal people and Government - "It could become a tool for Government to say they are doing something when they aren't doing anything".



- There was general frustration that there have been many reports and recommendations to government and a lack of transparency from the Commonwealth Government about what has been accepted, responded to or implemented.
- There was agreement among participants that transparency and accountability are important and need to be emphasised in the National Voice proposal.
- One participant questioned whether Government will request advice from the National Voice as well as give advice on 'our own terms'.
 - Co-design members confirmed the two way flow advice is central to the proposal and that the National Voice itself will be free to decide what it speaks on.
- One participant noted the challenges of implementing an elected model including low enrolment numbers and poor voter turnout.