

Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Kariyarra country,

Port Hedland, 13 April 2021, 5.30pm, session 1

Number of participants: 8

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 8 participants who were welcomed to Kariyarra country by Uncle Alfred Barker. Key points discussed are summarised below.

Overarching points

- Participants identified several elements that they saw as critical to the voice proposals:
 - Several participants emphasised that the process to select members for all levels of the voice should be transparent and inclusive, not based on whether someone is already known. Several participants also emphasised the importance of having members who live in the Pilbara region.
 - A strong theme was the need for direct engagement, where members of the community hear directly from the different levels of the voice. A view was expressed that this should be on the basis of open forums, rather than existing social connections. One participant emphasised that reading about the Voice in the media would not be sufficient.
 - Transparency was raised by several participants, who felt that the community needed to hear what the voice was saying and what the response was.
- Participants discussed the importance of effective marketing to bring people into the process, including those who are hard to reach. Participants felt that there were people in the community who expressed their opinions in private who could be brought into a new structure and have their voice heard. Social media and local government were suggested as possible channels. Another suggestion was to take advantage of trends and events such as NAIDOC week so that people could be reached at a time when they are already engaged.
- One participant discussed the importance of members at all levels committing to their position within the voice structure. This included ensuring the commitment was understood from the outset, and that the person was able to meet it.

Local & Regional Voice

- Participants discussed the unique characteristics of the Pilbara region that they felt would inform how a Local & Regional Voice should be designed. This included the mix in the community of traditional owners and people who have come to the Pilbara from elsewhere, and the impact of the mining industry.

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- Participants felt that the Pilbara was a familiar and longstanding regional boundary, and therefore could be suitable as a Local & Regional Voice boundary.
 - Several participants put forward the view that the Pilbara Local & Regional Voice should represent all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents of the area, including traditional owners and other residents.
 - Participants reflected on the community's experience of negotiations between Aboriginal people and mining companies. They observed that this gave some members of the community expertise in negotiating. Other participants suggested this could create a risk for the voice proposal. If senior members were asked to participate in a new structure, this would create a significant burden in the context of significant mining and native title related responsibilities. This created a risk of burnout. Participants discussed how this could be managed by coordinating how meetings were scheduled, or bringing different people into the structures.
 - Ensuring that structures had sufficient resourcing was a recurring theme, including as a way to address burnout. Some participants reflected on existing structures such as the Pilbara Aboriginal Voice, which they felt had experienced difficulties due to a lack of resourcing.
 - Several participants emphasised the importance of alignment between different levels of government in engaging with voice structures. They felt that, if different structures were set up by different levels of government, this would undermine the Local & Regional Voice. A participant noted that the WA government is developing its own strategy that they viewed as being broadly aligned with the voice proposals.
 - Some participants reflected on the divisions within their community, which they partly attributed to native title. Participants reflected on the opportunity for the voice proposals to be unifying for the community. One participant emphasised the role of Government in helping to bring different groups together and mend relationships.

National Voice

- Several participants expressed strong support for the involvement of youth in the voice proposals. One participant proposed that there should be separate consultation sessions for youth and people with a disability in the community.
- Participants reflected on the challenge of having two members represent the whole of WA at the national level. The participant felt that this highlighted the importance of transparency and direct engagement feeding up through the different levels of the voice proposals.
- One participant suggested that one of the criteria for members at the national level should be that they are not affiliated with any political party or organisation. The participant suggested that this would avoid the risk of members using their position to advance the interest of a particular group.
- One participant put forward the view that an election process would be a good way to select members at the national level. Other participants raised concerns about the risk of a low voter turnout.