

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Darumbal country,

Rockhampton, 8 April 2021, 11am-2pm, Session 1

Number of participants: 14

## 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 14 participants who were welcomed to country by Nhaya Nicky Hatfield. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- Participants agreed there needs to be a voice for their community, and that this will take time to establish through relationship building within the community. Participants strongly agreed this needs to be done from the ground up, rather than being led by governments.
- Participants were interested to know if there would be equity of representation – in particular, how people identifying as LGBTQ+ and people with disability could be involved in the Indigenous Voice. It was confirmed that the Indigenous Voice proposals are designed to be inclusive, and in particular at the National Voice level it was noted that there is a proposal for a permanent Disability Advisory committee.
- It was also confirmed there is a Senior Officials Group, where the Commonwealth Government is working with officials in each state and territory and the Australian Local Government Association, noting the importance of all levels of government working together with communities for Local and Regional Voices to be effective.
- There was general consensus amongst participants that the work on the Indigenous Voice needs to involve governments listening to communities and being guided by community views.
  - One participant commented that while data-driven decision making is highly desirable, there is critical data that can only be obtained at the community level, which is currently missing from government decision making processes.
  - Some participants observed that it is important not to assume all families and people on the ground have their voices heard through Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The design of the Indigenous Voice needs to ensure the voices of individuals and families are able to be heard through a ground-up approach.
- One participant observed that constitutional enshrinement of an Indigenous Voice was not within scope of the current consultation, but that at the end of the process there needs to be consideration of enshrinement.
- There was some discussion around the independence of the Indigenous Voice, and ensuring it is self-sustainable. It was recommended by one participant that further work should be done around financial independence.



- One participant noted that communities and families need to be properly resourced to be able to come together and talk about what is needed in communities. The participant noted community-controlled organisations with established voices in communities are already struggling within existing resources just to do the important work they have to do every day.
- Another participant suggested the Voice could have a structure similar to that of a union, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people pay membership, and each jurisdiction has a person to look after the “members” in their jurisdiction, and to come together collectively to discuss issues and go back to “members” to pass on information.
- Participants reflected that the staff needed to support members of the Indigenous Voice should be independent of governments.
- Participants felt there needs to be continuing education around the Indigenous Voice, what it is and why it is needed, so as to widely inform the public and dispel myths, including in schools.
- There was general agreement that there needs to be a transfer of skills, to enable young people to be involved in the Indigenous Voice.
- One participant emphasised the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, and that economic development may need to be a priority of the Indigenous Voice.

#### *Local & Regional Voice*

- One participant commented they support a flexible process of setting up Local and Regional Voices, where it is being led by communities, as opposed to being government-led, and that this would assist with setting up sustainable structures.
- The participant further added there has been work done in Queensland to map community engagement across the state, which could be useful to inform the determination of Local and Regional Voice boundaries. This existing work had involved consultation with communities on what their issues were, and how they wanted to be represented.
- In terms of forming a Local and Regional Voice, one participant suggested these may not require rigid borders, because there is movement of families across regions, and a myriad of relationships and community connections to take into account in the formation of boundaries.
- Another participant commented that smaller Local and Regional Voices (and therefore more Local and Regional Voices) would be better, because once you start stretching out the boundaries of Local and Regional Voices, it would become more challenging to ensure all voices are heard.
- There was some discussion around what a Central Queensland Voice could look like, which communities it might possibly.
  - One participant commented that any sort of representation for a potential Central Queensland Voice would be resource-intensive. The participant further added that there needs to first of all be place-based considerations in setting up such a Local and Regional Voice, with consideration also for all the smaller regions (local level) around the larger collective region.

#### *National Voice*

- One participant commented that the National Voice needs to be more than a purely advisory body, and that it should be a voice to the Australian Parliament.
- There was agreement amongst participants that there needs to be a two-way link between Local and Regional Voices and the National Voice, with accountability going both ways to ensure the issues on the ground are being properly represented, and issues are addressed holistically.
- One participant voiced concern over ensuring sufficient representation for Torres Strait Islander people, noting that Queensland has a large population of Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland. The participant commented that normally a lot of Torres Strait Islander voices are not heard because of the strength of Aboriginal voices on the mainland.



- It was noted that the Torres Strait Islands could have 1-2 National Voice members, who would speak for all Torres Strait Islander people on issues concerning them, including Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland.
- It was acknowledged that Torres Strait Islander representation is an important consideration, and more thought is needed on how the voices of Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland are appropriately represented.
- Participants had not yet established views on the appropriate number of National Voice members for Queensland, or whether members should be directly elected or chosen by Local and Regional Voices.
- Participants agreed that staggering member terms would be important to ensure continuity so as to minimise the loss of knowledge and expertise each time new members were to come on board.
- One participant raised the issue of support for National Voice members, including but not limited to secretariat, resilience training, and travel.