

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Darumbal country,

Rockhampton, 8 April 2021, 5.30pm-8pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 6

## 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 6 participants who were welcomed to country by Dr Melinda Mann. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- There was strong agreement amongst participants that a Voice is necessary, and that the Voice needs to be influential, and have proper authority to speak for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Some participants expressed the view that Traditional Owners should be involved in Local and Regional Voices. One participant suggested Traditional Owners in a region could determine around 6 people to lead the region.
- One participant commented there may be complexities in settling borders for Local and Regional Voices, particularly for communities straddling state and territory borders that engage in cross-border business, including the tri-state border region across NT/WA/SA.
  - The participant also noted existing models of governance and decision making (such as NSW Local Decision Making, Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and Queensland's Aboriginal Shire Councils), and treaty work that could impact on how Local and Regional Voices could operate. There was general agreement amongst participants that there would be value in having a structure in place that provide cohesion with states and territories.
- The flexibility of how Local and Regional Voice structures are formed was discussed. One participant suggested Local and Regional Voices might be comprised of up to 18 people, with some being Traditional Owners selected by their communities, and some being people living off country and elected.
- Another participant stressed the importance of making sure that Local and Regional Voices are not set up to just be the voices of service providers, but that it also includes the voices of people affected and using those services – that is, it can't just be service providers' interpretation of peoples' voices.
- There was agreement the Local and Regional Voices structures need to be inclusive, particularly of young people as the future leaders of their communities. One participant suggested that some thought needs to be



put into how to make youth engagement effective, as young people in different communities experience a diverse set of circumstances, and it would be very difficult for a small number of young people to be able to properly speak for this diversity. The participant noted, conversely, that having too many young people involved in Local and Regional Voices could be impractical. It was further noted that the voice of young people could be accounted for through the proposed Youth Advisory Group at the National Voice level.

- One participant commented there needs to be transparency in how Local and Regional Voices talk to existing structures, and how governments talk to all the structures, so it is clear on what basis government decisions are being made.

#### *National Voice*

- One of the participants reflected on the merits and drawbacks of the ATSIC model, and expressed the view that under ATSIC ground-level work was very successful for the regions, but that there was a lack of accountability up and down the structure, which could have made ATSIC even better.
- The participant expressed the opinion that a maximum of 20 National Voice members for the entire country was not enough, as it would be extremely difficult for 20 members to be able to get to hear views on the ground.
  - Another participant agreed, commenting that there needs to be a direct line of sight from the grassroots up to where decisions are being made, and accountability from the top down and from the bottom up. The participant disagreed however at the number being too few, arguing that 19-20 members could make the National Voice deliberations more manageable.
- There was general support for gender balance on the National Voice. In line with this, one participant commented that there should be two members of different genders for the Torres Strait Islands.
- Some participants were of the view that there should not be an Ethics Council, as the structure should be built with requirements around accountability and transparency as it is, using existing structures to help ensure accountability and transparency.
- One participant commented that the policy remit of the National Voice should not be limited, as everything is relevant to people in a location. The participant also argued that the National Voice should be able to influence international indigenous policy.