

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Yorta Yorta country;

Shepparton, 7 April 2021, 12.00pm, Session 1 & 2

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 two sessions were attended by 8 participants who were welcomed to Yorta Yorta country by Uncle Ruben Baksh. In addition to the main session, there was also an informal discussion in the evening with two of the participants of the earlier session. Key points discussed in both are summarised below.

### *Overarching*

- A concern was raised about low attendance at the meeting, with some participants expressing a view this could be due to late notice or the choice of the venue. Others felt this may be indicative of many people feeling disconnected and perhaps sceptical about the consultation process, pointing to the importance of showing how the proposed voice would have impact at each level.
  - Co-design members noted a number of other ways community could provide their input, including submissions, surveys and sessions in Melbourne in the week beginning 12 April, including a virtual session opened to all Victorians.

### *Local and Regional Voice*

- A number of participants noted their desire for Shepparton to have a voice. They felt the co-design process was a good opportunity but noted it was hard to bring everyone in the community together.
- A key focus of discussion was the link between the voice proposals and practical changes on the ground, with a view expressed that for the voice to be sufficiently effective it needed to be strong and provide for Aboriginal people to be part of the decision making. Examples of issues included housing, school mergers, the age of criminal responsibility and racial discrimination. Participants felt that getting the community on board with the proposals required a clear demonstration that the Indigenous Voice would result in concrete changes.



- Co-design members noted that there could not be a guarantee that communities would always get what they wanted, but emphasised that under the Local and Regional Voice proposal change would come through bringing people together to find solutions and being involved in shared decision making with governments. They provided specific examples of how this could work, including:
  - Reflecting on the Local Decision Making model in NSW, which allows communities to drive the agenda, rather than only being responsive to changes in policy made by governments.
  - Highlighting the ability for voice structures to create accountability from governments to the community.
  - Pointing to the power of the collective voice which would limit government ability to shop around for advice.
- A view was expressed that the National Voice would be able to address the causes of challenges faced by the communities, with Local & Regional Voices more focused on the symptoms.
- It was noted that the voice proposals were about communities like Shepparton coming together. Reflecting on the Aboriginal community in Shepparton participants observed that disagreements between different parts of the community have sometimes arisen, but also provided examples of when the community came together, such as in response to the Black Summer bushfires.
- Participants discussed the proposals in the context of the Victorian treaty process. Some participants felt that the Assembly did not represent everyone, and were concerned about the low turnout in the elections for the Assembly. Co-design members noted that the voice proposals were not intended to duplicate or replace treaty processes, but they would complement each other.
- Participants compared the proposals to existing ways that the state government consults with the community. Some felt that they provide advice through these channels but cannot necessarily see changes as a result. It was noted that state government focus is driven by subject matter (e.g. health, education, criminal justice), whereas the voice functions would be more comprehensive.
- Some participants also felt that different governments and government departments used different geographical boundaries, and voice process may provide an opportunity to have one consistent set of boundaries.

*National Voice*

- Some participants suggested it might be challenging for only two members to represent Victoria on the National Voice. They cited the diversity of Victoria, such as the difference between metro and country Victoria. However, other participants observed that there are challenges with having lots of people around the table.
- Participants stated that National Voice members should work towards the broader good and represent all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rather than only the state or territory from which they are selected.
- Youth was raised as a theme, with discussion noting the youth advisory group as an important element of the design.