



Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

Consultation session details

Giabal and Jarowair country,

Toowoomba, 11 March 2021, 9.30am, Session 1

Number of participants: 25

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 25 participants and Jamie Lowe gave an Acknowledgement of Country. Key issues discussed are summarised below.

Sufficient resourcing

- Participants agreed the Indigenous Voice would be a highly challenging enterprise to set up and maintain, that would require a considerable amount of funding in order for it to be able to deliver as needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Without enough resources, more issues could be caused than solved. In particular, having an Indigenous Voice without enough funding would make it very difficult for grassroots voices to find an avenue through to the Australian Parliament.

Local and Regional Voices

- There was strong agreement that the Indigenous Voice needs to be able to let all voices be heard. A strong driving element to enable this would be the Local and Regional Voices.
- Participants discussed what Local and Regional Voices could look like on a practical level. It was thought there would need to be a physical presence, e.g. an office, in each region, for the relevant Local and Regional Voice for people being represented by that Local and Regional Voice to be able to go and speak directly with someone. These offices would need to be well-resourced with people who could go out to communities and facilitate conversations and capture the voices of the people represented by the relevant Local and Regional Voice.
- There was a general concern expressed by several participants that as Queensland is such a diverse state, as well as a huge one geographically, that there needs to be a way to amplify remote and regional voices loudly so that Local and Regional Voices are not just taken up by urban messages.
- There was agreement that the structure had to involve a two-way arrangement, of Local and Regional Voices reflecting the views of their communities, and then reporting to the communities on outcomes and messages back.
- There was general criticism of the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), as an entity that was effective only for people involved in the higher levels of its governance. One participant



stressed the importance of accountability in the proposed structure, in particular to people living out of city centres, and that the system set up for Local and Regional Voices should not enable people to be voted in, and then not seen again until the next selection process.

- Several participants reflected on the selection process for Local and Regional Voices, and queried how it would be possible for any one particular person to speak for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the community. Participants were advised that under the principles for Local and Regional Voices, it would be up to individual communities to collectively work this out, and that it was not intended that governments should do this for communities.
- Another participant expressed concern that having Local and Regional Voices might mean the voices of Traditional Owner groups might be overridden on their own country.
- Conversely to this, participants considered how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not live on country could be appropriately represented – whether they would be represented by the Local and Regional Voice covering the place in which they reside, or whether they would be represented by the Local and Regional Voice covering their country. It was observed that in Toowoomba there were many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the community who are not living on their country.
- Another participant raised a concern that voices from South-West Queensland have not often been at the table, and need to be accounted for in these discussions, especially because there are several remote communities in this region.
- One participant stressed that Local and Regional Voice boundaries should not be aligned with electoral zones.
- Another participant suggested that a fair way of getting grassroots voices and the voices of non-Traditional Owners heard could be to contact Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) to get people back on country. This would require adequate funding to enable people to travel back on country.
- Participants were broadly of the view that the potential of 5-7 Regional Voices for Queensland might not be enough, but it's hard to consider this without considering what the boundaries would be.

Cultural authority

- There was some discussion about the importance of cultural authority, and a concern that in the current system cultural authority, particularly for smaller nations, was being diminished.
- Participants strongly agreed the drivers for the Indigenous Voice needed to stem from the grassroots, including ensuring respect for the voices of people on country. This would include ensuring the people chosen for the Indigenous Voice have cultural authority within the region they are representing.
- Participants thought the model(s) themselves were not as important as ensuring the Indigenous Voice has a cultural mandate. This would require nations to come together and go about business the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples traditionally do this.

Service delivery

- One Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participant stated that they work in a service delivery organisation providing advice on effectiveness of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their community. This has been challenging, and people are able to ignore the views of individual communities. This is why a collective voice to provide advice on systemic issues could make a difference.

National Voice

- There was strong interest in the Disability Advisory Group and Youth Advisory Group concepts.
- One participant raised a concern they thought should be relevant to the Disability Advisory Group – the issue of funding for disability housing in remote and regional areas. The participant expressed a desire to live on country, but stated they were being prevented from doing so because the current system was preventing them from being able to access the available housing stock that is disability accessible within their country.
- It was agreed, many people have left their communities and gone to metropolitan areas because funding and programs are not going to the communities, to allow people to remain on country.