

# Indigenous Voice Community Consultation

## Consultation session details

Wulgurukaba country,

Townsville, 19 April 2021, 5.30pm – 8.00pm, Session 2

Number of participants: 37

## 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 37 participants who were welcomed to country by Brenton Creed. Key points discussed are summarised below.

### *Overarching points*

- Participants affirmed the importance of building the Indigenous Voice to be sustainable. One participant noted that part of ensuring sustainability is having accountability mechanisms built into the structure, and to ensure the work of the Indigenous Voice is transparent and able to be scrutinised.
- Participants expressed the view that it was critical for the Indigenous Voice to be able to allow people at the grassroots to have a say. This includes ensuring there is appropriate consultation and engagement directly with relevant communities during the implementation phase, if the Indigenous Voice is legislated.
- Some participants suggested there needs to be a state-level body, in addition to local and regional bodies and the national body, in order to directly talk to the state government about funding matters.
- Participants agreed the community needs to get together to map out what it wants collectively, for the Townsville area.
- There was some discussion about constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- One participant requested further consultations on the Indigenous Voice. It was confirmed that if the Indigenous Voice is legislated, there would be an implementation phase during which communities would be able to come together to work out how the Indigenous Voice could work in their area.

### *Local & Regional Voice*

- Participants commented that the principles-based framework was good. One participant stated that the framework should be legislated, so that communities could move on to working out the implementation of Local and Regional Voices.
  - The participant also commented that members for Local and Regional Voices should be elected.
- Participants agreed service providers, governments and government agencies need to be accountable to communities in line with the principles.
- Several participants debated the principle of “data and evidence-based decision making”.
  - One participant noted it is important for data to be fed up from the grassroots to inform policy development.



- Another participant noted that data also needs to be fed downwards, from government agencies in possession of critical data specific to communities, to enable decision making on the ground.
- A third participant commented that the data should be staying at the grassroots, with data also being provided from the top down, since it is data that should belong to the community.
- One participant commented that a principle which they believe ought to be included is “negotiation”.
- Participants thought Local and Regional Voices could be able to take up priority community concerns, such as the mainstreaming of community services.

#### *National Voice*

- Participants reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In particular, there was agreement amongst participants that the regional councils were a strength of the ATSIC model.
- There was discussion about how Torres Strait Islander people could be represented – whether it was appropriate to have members representing both Torres Strait Islander people residing on the islands, as well as on the mainland. Participants felt this would not be appropriate, owing to the different issues of importance to Torres Strait Islander people on the islands as opposed to Torres Strait Islander people living on the mainland.
  - One participant commented that a lot of Torres Strait Islander people live in and around Cairns and Townsville, and it would be appropriate for Torres Strait Islander people living in these areas to be represented there, both at the Local and Regional Voice level, and at the National Voice level. Participants reflected on the consistency of this proposal with the principle of “inclusive participation”.
  - Other participants identifying as Torres Strait Islander people agreed with the principle of community-based representation.
- Another participant commented that the issue of representation for Torres Strait Islander people was also one that could be faced by Aboriginal people who have migrated throughout Australia and therefore do not live on country. Participants felt that it is critical to have representation based on a person’s place of residence.
- One participant commented that it could be difficult to assess a person’s eligibility to be a member of the proposed Disability Advisory Group, given the diversity of disabilities people may experience, and complexities in diagnosing some disabilities.