

Bandarran **Marra'Gu** Gathering Strength



Respectful Disagreement

It's okay if we don't agree with each other. It's okay if we have a different perspective. And it's okay if others don't share our perspective/s.

We each bring **our own unique 'lens'** to our interactions and conversations. Our lens has been forming (and expanding and changing) since we were born, and it will continue to shift and change as we have more experiences in life and grow older. It is based on a combination of many things, such as our cultural identity, our beliefs, the relationships we have, our responsibilities and roles, our values, our professional identity, our health and wellbeing, our experiences with disadvantage and marginalisation AND/OR power and privilege... ALL of the experiences in our life.

The Summit – and our future – will benefit from a broad range of views, ideas, and contributions from a variety of people across different Mobs, communities, sectors, and groups.

Some practical suggestions for disagreeing in respectful ways:

- use a conversational tone of voice (not with aggression or anger directed towards someone)
- if you feel some emotions rising and you are concerned about how your thoughts / words might 'come out', take some slow, long, deep breaths before you speak. Take your time.
- consider checking your understanding of their comment / view first, before you respond. For example, "am I understanding you correctly that..."
- to offer a different view or to disagree, you might say something like:
 - "I would like to add another perspective / a different idea to what has already been said..."
 - "I understand your point about ..., and I see it differently because..."
 - "Can I offer a different view? ..."



- "I'm hoping we can explore another possibility here..."
- "What you said makes a lot of sense, and I also wonder if we can consider..."
- "It was useful to hear your perspective. I hadn't thought about it that way before. I'm also thinking about..."
- "Thank you for sharing your perspective. I can see how you arrived at that conclusion. My understanding is different...."
- "My experience has led me to a very different understanding..."
- "While that might be your experience, I've learned something different..."
- "I appreciate you raising that point. From my perspective..."
- "I think the next generation is asking for something different. What about...?"
- "You made a few points there, and I support exploring some of them further... However, I disagree with your suggestion to ... because ...".

- comment on the person's idea, view or behaviour, not on the person themselves.

Example: Saying to someone "you're a racist!" will immediately put someone in a position of wanting to defend themselves against that single, reductionistic, identity label of "racist". Being in that defensive 'mode' will not allow them to be in an open, learning, or compassionate mode. That means a mindset change is unlikely.

Instead, you might say something like: "What you have just said is racist, derogatory, and unacceptable, and I have to ask you to stop there!" or "The comments you made are culturally ignorant and discriminatory. I do not accept that view!" or "If I've understood you correctly, your perspective reflects limited experiences of race and cultures other than your own".

If you *choose* to (while it's not your responsibility to educate, a conversation *can be* very powerful), you might even then offer: "can I tell you why I think that..." or "are you open to having a conversation about this? I'd like to share a different perspective with you". This kind of approach might open a conversation that could lead to a different understanding, which could then lead to different future thoughts, comments and interactions for that person.

- try to avoid using words or phrases that might invalidate another person's experience, such as:
 - "You are wrong!" Instead try... "I'm wondering what has led you to thinking that?" or "I'd like to better understand how you came to believe that".
 - "What would *you* know?" When it comes to addressing the Human Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, EVERY Queenslanders has a right AND a responsibility to participate. Whether TOs, Mob from another Country, people from other States living in Queensland, or allies, we all need to work together to co-create a different future.
- try to resist the temptation to take it personally if someone disagrees with what we are saying. It's not a personal attack on us. It might even be broadening our perspectives, expanding our possibilities, and contributing to our 'multiple strategies' approach.
- it's okay to feel anger, and to express it. It's not okay to express it in ways that are: aggressive, physical, threatening, or intimidating.