



A FUNDAMENTAL
CHANGE TO HOW
WE DO DEMOCRACY

newDEMOCRACY

Considering your vision
and information you have:

- What needs to be created/innovated?
- What needs to be kept?
- What might need to be changed/modified?





SOMETHING BETTER FOR OUR DEMOCRACY

We can help government respond to a clear public demand for trust. We must encourage leaders to share decision-making around complex or difficult issues, not to simply tell citizens a solution.

Trust in politicians and the political system is at an all time low across western democracies. We are seeing people search for new parties and candidates, even voting for celebrity style politicians, as traditional parties lose support.

But democracy was not conceived this way. Democracy, and the processes, institutions and practices that embody it, should be about social cohesion; about building consensus around the informed, general will of the people, where public judgement can prevail over shallow public opinion.

At newDemocracy, we see a central role for randomly selected, everyday people as the way to develop and promote representative and deliberative decision-making. The most underused asset in politics today is the common sense of everyday people, not when they vote, but when they deliberate, when they have no incentive to win the debate but are there to be an active part of their community, their society, their country.

We can help government respond to a clear public demand for trust. We must encourage leaders to share decision-making around complex or difficult issues, not to simply tell citizens a solution.

Be part of something that matters and help us make this change.

WHO WE ARE

The newDemocracy Foundation (nDF) is an independent, non-partisan research and development organisation. We are a not-for-profit organisation, not a consultancy.

We aim to discover, develop and demonstrate alternatives which strengthen and restore trust in public decision-making. We conduct real world trials using random selection and deliberation as a central process.

nDF is not a think tank and holds no policy views. We also commission independent third-party research to explore and capture the potential for improvements to existing democratic processes.



WHAT IS DELIBERATION?

Deliberation involves both dialogue and debate and requires access to a wide array of information as well as an equal share of voices. It is built on a foundation of critical thinking. Genuine deliberation is the most effective means through which to involve everyday people in the process of government decision-making.

nDF has worked extensively but not exclusively with the mechanism of a citizens' jury to achieve deliberation and we have found this to be a successful way to foster learning, discussion and deep consideration.

Citizens' juries are the complete opposite to an opinion poll. Instead of a four-minute telephone call, participants are involved in an in-depth, in-person process where a group of randomly selected members of a community are convened to consider a given topic, and provide recommendations to a governing body. In Australia and around the world, these juries have become recognised for their capacity to deliver outcomes that are trusted by the broader community.

Citizens' juries work because they can convey to the wider community that citizens like them are being given complete access to information, are studying detailed evidence and hearing from subject-matter experts of their own choosing. In a murder trial, public trust is placed in a jury's verdict, without every citizen looking at each piece of evidence, because a trusted group of citizens was given sufficient time and access to information – and was free from outside influences (or even the perception of such influences).

There is ample research evidence that supports that this same model can be applied to public decisions in general. In fact, hundreds of case studies globally have shown that, by giving a representative panel time and information upon which to deliberate, stronger public engagement is achieved – as well as higher quality decisions.

"The Citizens' Jury concept was a smart way to promote inclusiveness and democracy in the aftermath of the Geelong council sacking. By taking the issues back to the people – in this case a committee of diverse civic-minded locals. It empowered ordinary residents with input on fixing a system that had been broken in the hands of those presumably more experienced or qualified. That the Government chose then to adopt the Jury's recommendations also strengthened the legitimacy of the exercise."

Geelong Advertiser editorial, 20 March 2017

A CASE IN POINT

nDF has convened deliberative projects in collaboration with many different Australian governments on an array of topics and for a variety of political leaders, agencies and jurisdictions. Highlights have included:

- Geelong Citizens' Jury (for Local Government Victoria, 2016), convened to provide recommendations to the Victorian Government on the question of how local citizens wanted to design their own local system of representation. Twelve of 13 jury recommendations were accepted by the Government, with legislation enacting the central plank passed by Parliament in June 2017.
- Two sequential juries on the issue of Nuclear Fuel Cycle (for South Australia's Department of Premier & Cabinet, 2016), convened to tackle the contentious question of under what circumstances, if any, could South Australia pursue the opportunity to store and dispose of nuclear waste from other countries. After an exhaustive and challenging process, the final jury's recommendation was a significant factor in the State Government's response to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission.

- Simultaneous metropolitan and regional juries (for Infrastructure Victoria, 2016), were convened to advise the agency on Victoria's long-term infrastructure needs. The recommendations those juries produced were instrumental in the development of Victoria's first ever 30-year infrastructure strategy.
- Two community juries (for Noosa Shire Council, 2015), were convened following the Council's de-amalgamation from the Sunshine Coast to reinforce the commitment to put more decision-making in the hands of the local community. The juries made extensive recommendations on two challenging issues for the nascent Council: how to reduce organic waste being sent to landfill and the future management of the Noosa River.
- The City of Melbourne People's Panel (2014), convened to assist the Council in the development of a 10 Year Financial Plan spanning annual expenditure of approximately \$400m annually, with a (contested) forecast \$1bn funding shortfall across the decade. The Panel's recommendations saw approximately \$800m worth of measures adopted by the Council to close that gap.
- A Moorebank Intermodal Citizens' Jury (Moorebank Intermodal Company, 2014) established to advise on the desired expenditure of a \$1m local benefits fund set aside to ensure residents nearby a major new freight terminal at Moorebank would receive more of the benefits from the substantial development.
- The Safe and Vibrant Nightlife Citizens' Jury (Premier of NSW and City of Sydney, 2013), convened to explore whether common ground could be found on reform options which balance community safety and personal freedom to achieve a safe and vibrant nightlife in Sydney.





WHAT I LEARNED ON A CITIZENS' JURY

A juror's perspective:

I was one of 52 South Australians randomly selected to attend a citizens' jury on the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission report. We were tasked with creating a guide to the report that highlights those parts that every South Australian needs to discuss.

I entered this process with an open mind and no preconceived notions of the nuclear fuel cycle other than from old news and pop culture. However, I quickly became aware of the significance of this topic when we bypassed a protest to enter the venue, then walked into a room full of cameras, microphones and reporters.

The jury was made up of people from all aspects of the population and we were in no way in complete agreement on anything. Despite this, I have learned that the conversation surrounding such an emotive topic can be respectful and that agreeing to disagree can be valuable so long as we are given the space to voice all opinions.

I have learned more about the nuclear fuel cycle than I ever thought I needed to know but what is more, I have learned the value of the fundamental question we were asked — what do all South Australians need to discuss?

It is overwhelmingly clear that any decisions surrounding a topic like this cannot be made without public engagement, nor should they be. I have walked out of these deliberations confident that my voice was heard. I have great respect for the contributions of my fellow jurors and I am humbled by their passion and dedication to this process.

This is a discussion that could be continuing for decades and its impacts might affect many future generations. This is democracy in action and I have a voice. Can I live with that? Yes. And I am proud to say that I can.

Emily Callander (extract from piece as appeared in a special feature in the Adelaide Advertiser entitled SA's nuclear debate: How the citizens' jury will work 28 July, 2016)



FIVE PRINCIPLES APPLIED IN ALL OUR WORK

While each project we operate is unique, there are central tenets to the approach we take.

Random Selection

Governments inevitably hear from the noisiest voices who insist on being heard. This is not a representative group of the community. In contrast, society trusts randomly-selected people on a criminal jury to assess evidence, discuss their views and reach a consensus recommendation because random selection generates “people like us”.

Time

Most policy problems which warrant the investment in a jury will be complex topics, so we need to allow people the time to educate and immerse themselves in the topic. We generally take around six months to design and oversee the process from beginning to end. As a guide, citizens need at least 40 hours face to face, meeting five to six times to meaningfully deliberate and find common ground without feeling pushed toward a pre-ordained outcome.



“The primary difference in questions that were asked by this panel and, say, what I get asked at barbeques when people find out what I do, is that the level of understanding of the industry was so much greater because the people on this panel had taken time to read about it.”

Head of economics and sustainability at AGL, Tim Nelson, quoted in the Australian Financial Review, 16 July 2012 in reference to the Citizens’ Jury on Energy Generation convened as part of the Inquiry into the Economics of Energy Generation for the NSW Parliament.

Information

A diverse source of information is a core principle. All writers have their own bias and perspective and participants need to critically analyse this. To counter the view that “you can find an expert to say anything” we focus on asking “what do you need to know... and who would you trust to inform you” – and use this as a way of selecting the speakers and input for the deliberative process that follows.

Clear remit

A plain English question, phrased neutrally is essential. Everyday people (not impassioned activists) need to instantly understand the problem to care enough to get involved.

Upfront authority

To encourage everyday people to make a considerable time commitment to participate, they need to know that the recommendations will be given serious consideration by bureaucracy and decision makers.





THE PATH TO REFORM

Reform of our democratic structures must take place to restore citizens' trust. We believe that a fundamental change is needed and that this must be built on a complementary role for everyday people.

However, while this destination is clear, the path to reach this reform must be achieved through varied means. Citizens' juries are one of many possible options.

There are significant structural changes which could offer entirely different ways to make public decisions, but which can be complementary and added to our electoral democracy.

There are also small changes to our current system which could also be considered, mainly focussed on making elections and representation work better. A range of these is explored in detail on nDF's website. nDF advocates that a logical starting point for reform is to convene a deliberative forum on a major issue which has proven too hard for politics-as-usual at a national scale; or even more substantially, with a review of the fundamental question of how we do democracy better in Australia.

"Ultimately, the two citizen juries have helped deliver a strategy consisting of 137 recommendations, totaling \$100 billion and reaching across 70% of the state. The Victorian government has 12 months to respond, and provide a five year plan of infrastructure priorities."

Victoria Draudins, writing about the Citizens' juries convened by nDF for Infrastructure Victoria, The Mandarin, 17 March 2017

HOW CAN I DO MORE?

With your support, we can apply the principles of deliberation to create a fundamental change in how we do democracy. nDF will continue to operate projects and activities that embed these approaches as the norm; and generate and support a deeper institutional awareness and support for public deliberation. To achieve a fundamental change like this needs a strong platform from which to build, and closely connected supporters to extend our call for something better.

You can support nDF by:

Join our online network

We connect with a network of people who share our commitment to a better democracy through our Facebook group, The Demos (www.facebook.com/groups/TheDemos). Anyone can join the group and be active in supporting our outreach activities. We regularly share inside news, updates and requests and encourage discussions and posts from participants. We host quarterly webinars to connect personally and to ask for input and assistance on new or emerging priorities.

Power of the pen

A simple and effective way to get our message across to a broad audience is to write a letter to the editor or chime in with

a comment online. Whether it is your local newspaper, a major metropolitan outlet or a more specialist journal, outlet or website, sharing your perspective on current affairs through the lens of democratic reform can be a powerful piece of advocacy. You might respond to the news of the day, or start a new conversation; either way, we can help you with tips and information to help get your words published. Make sure you let us know when your letter appears!

Raise your voice

Contribute your voice in outlets and forums where participation and shared input is possible. Suggest a discussion at a local community group. Join in an event happening in your area. Get your book club to read something relevant to the cause! Anything that can engage others

in consideration of how we can restore trust in public decision-making. We can support you in these efforts with materials, case studies and academic literature that helps convey the points you wish to make.

Demand trust and to be trusted

Seek to influence those in positions of authority including local councillors and your state and federal members of parliament. Remind them of the common sense of everyday people when they are trusted and given opportunity to deliberate. Tell them about the work being done by nDF in exploring and expanding this realm. Show them how this approach has already been applied to improve trusted public decision-making. Let us know who you connect with so we can follow up.



Host an event

Host an event to share your knowledge of the work we do among your own network of family, friends or colleagues. This could be as simple as a conversation over a coffee or a meal; or a more formal meeting or function. This provides a mix of people with the opportunity to understand what we advocate in detail and to hear the questions and concerns of others. We can help you to introduce the concepts and ideas and suggest some ways to explore the issues at hand. Bring others into our community by sharing our page, reporting back on your success, and encouraging your family, friends or colleagues to join us.

Share your talent

Is there another way you can contribute to the work we are doing? Do you have a talent that can support us? We welcome fresh ideas of ways to contribute

to our efforts, so please contact us to suggest an action, activity or new form of advocacy.

Other ways to support nDF include:

Stay up to date with our research and development

Visit our website to learn about our current (and past) projects and register to receive updates from us. Subscribe to our e-newsletters.

Connect with us through social media

We have strength in numbers and will keep you informed. You can follow us on Twitter, YouTube or on Facebook.



@newDemocracyAus



@newDemocracy



#newDemocracyAus

Get in touch

Email

beinvolved@newdemocracy.com.au

Post

newDemocracy Foundation,
P.O. Box R418, Royal Exchange,
NSW 1225, Australia.

