

## What is CAPaD and what will it do?

### Information for prospective individual and group members



The new Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD) was launched on 13 September 2015 at a public meeting at Radford College, attended by about 90 Canberra citizens. The steering group is preparing for the Inaugural General Meeting of Members and the election of its organising committee on 25 October at 3 pm in Manning Clarke Lecture Theatre No 3 at the ANU. Applications for membership of the new Alliance from both individuals and organisations are now flowing into us at [canberraalliance@gmail.com](mailto:canberraalliance@gmail.com).

This outline is intended to assist individuals and groups who are considering becoming Foundation Members.

#### Backdrop to the development of the Alliance

A malaise has settled on the Australian electorate in the past decade. People in the community are feeling disengaged and alienated. There has been a huge decline in involvement in both of the mainstream political parties in Australia and an equally large increase in corporate power and influence. The public interest has often been overridden by the interests of the corporate sector. Australian democracy has become dysfunctional and often ignores the real needs of its citizens. Other western democracies are having a similar experience.

All of this has happened at a time of unparalleled threats to the long-term wellbeing and even survival of our species. These threats are not being seriously discussed, let alone addressed by our political leaders. We need a reinvigoration of civil society and newly focussed pressure from an electorate that recognises that we need urgently to articulate for our leaders, the kind of society we seek in the coming decades.

The Australian Academy of Science has developed four scenarios for 2050:

1. Growth
2. Restraint
3. Catastrophe
4. Transformation.

Many believe that unless we adopt the **Transformation** scenario our children and theirs are heading for serious trouble. The discipline of deliberative democracy which has been established in a number of universities, is developing new tools for groups like the Canberra Alliance to consider

#### Methods, Principles and Objectives

How can the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy make a difference? It is developed upon the principles of "community organising" that are a central feature of similar Alliances around the world. Alliances are now contributing to new thinking in Sydney, Queensland and New Zealand, the UK and Canada — as well as the USA where they began in the 1930s and have had a new lease of life in recent years.

*Basic Principle:* Enduring social change needs ordinary people to come together to share what is needed, to learn from each other, to understand power and how people power can be exercised in the modern world.

*How We Share:* Key elements of community organising are the use of

- **relational conversations** between individuals, and

- **kitchen table conversations** among small groups.

Both are about *engaging with* and *listening to* what others are thinking and feeling about their lives and the ways our public policies impact on them.

*Actions We Take:* After a campaign listening carefully to what people are feeling and wanting for their future, the CAPaD Committee plans a series of **actions**, aimed at better understanding the problems about which people would like change or at holding decision makers accountable for actions which impact on the public good. Actions can include:

- the holding of **citizen assemblies**
- **citizen juries** or other deliberative panels

Both aim to develop a better understanding of the *consequences* of different ways forward.

### **Who can join?**

Both *individuals* and *civil society groups* for modest joining fees.

The individual or the group representative agrees to be bound by the rules of the association. As a member of the association, they affirm everyone's entitlement to be heard respectfully and that they will abide by and do what they can to support and promote the Objectives, Principles and Style of operation of the Association.

### **Objectives of CAPaD**

- 1 To empower Canberrans to engage in *owning* and *planning* for our common future & the common good.
- 2 To develop and support citizen, community and civil society *engagement in public decision-making*.
- 3 To facilitate opportunities for *citizen input to government* deliberations.
- 4 To develop citizens' capacity to hold *governments and policy makers more directly accountable*.

### **Values of CAPaD**

- Commitment to sustainability
- Equity
- Inclusive prosperity and justice
  - Community focused
  - Democratic
  - Respectful
  - Valuing diversity
  - Non-partisan
  - Trustworthy
  - Credible
  - Transparent
  - Widely Accountable.

### **Methods of CAPaD**

The Alliance will seek broad-based participation across Canberra to:

- strengthen existing community, faith, environmental and civil society groups
- build on volunteerism and publicly acknowledged donations
- employ a learning-by-doing method.

### **CAPaD Draft Constitution**

The draft constitution to be considered at the meeting of members on 25 October can be downloaded from the Alliance website. The Alliance will be incorporated as an Association under ACT legislation.

<http://canberra-alliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Version-5-Draft-Constitution-CAPaD-for-website-exposure.docx>

The committee of the association will include *six office bearers* and up to *six ordinary members* to be elected at the inaugural general meeting.

### **Why join the Alliance as an individual member?**

We expect CAPaD to become an exciting forum to discuss the place of Canberra and Australia in the world. We expect it to re-invigorate local communities and enrich the culture of Canberra.

You will be kept up-to-date by a regular newsletter; you will have a vote at all general meetings of the Alliance and may nominate for the committee. You can undertake community organising and participate in training activities in community organising that the Alliance will offer.

### **Why encourage civil society groups to become organisational members?**

The Canberra Alliance's ability to Influence decision makers and events in Canberra depends upon how broadly it represents Canberra civil society and the extent to which issues have been widely discussed.

Member groups will be free and encouraged to use CAPaD's methods to engage their own members in kitchen table conversations and in collective actions developed by the Alliance. An organisation is entirely free to say that it is not interested in any topic or does not support the actions of the Alliance.

Each group member will have a vote at all Alliance general meetings and in the election of its officers, and may nominate its representative as a member of the committee. Member organisations can include:

- faith groups or congregations
- youth groups
- social service and health group
- unions
- universities and academic group
- schools and Parent and Citizen groups
- advocacy and environmental support groups
- Rotary and other service groups.

The experience in other Alliances is that Alliance activities, including relational and kitchen table discussion can enrich the life of participating groups, and provide a focus for considering actions to promote the common good. When an Alliance speaks with the full force of a wide membership, politicians and other policy makers sit up and take notice.

### **What kinds of action could the Alliance take?**

**CAPaD is** a *forum* for members of the community and civil society to come together and explore the common good and the public interest and to use their power to *articulate* this wherever this is needed. It will do this by using relational conversations between civil society leaders and by kitchen table conversations between groups of individuals to better understand how this can happen.

**CAPaD is not** a political party and it is non-partisan in its ideology. Where the Alliance can confidently speak for the concerns of large numbers of citizens it will do this through a variety of mechanisms, including a large assembly of those citizens or by lobbying decision makers. Where it recognises the need for better understanding in the community, or better deliberation around complex issues it may choose to propose a Citizens' Jury or other kinds of deliberative panels.

### **What is the cost of inaugural membership? (Form can be downloaded from the Alliance website )**

Individual Member: **\$25**

Concession card holders, seniors, full time students and pensioners: **\$10**

Student organisations with less than 100 members **\$50**

Student organisations with more than 100 members **\$100**

Organisational members with less than 100 members: **\$100**

Organisational members with 100 members or more: **\$200**

All financial members, whether individual or organizational, are entitled to one vote at Alliance meetings.

### **Nominations for the Inaugural Committee.**

Any financial member may nominate for the committee. The nomination form can be downloaded from the website [www.canberra-alliance.org.au](http://www.canberra-alliance.org.au) on the Events tab. Nomination forms should be lodged with the acting chair of the Alliance Rev Chris Lockley by 3:15 PM on Sunday 25 October.

Enquiries about these matters can be made to: Em Prof Bob Douglas Tel 02 62533138 or Rev Chris Lockley Tel 0427181210.