

Recap Meet-Up #9 – Thursday 14 February 2019



Meet Up Agenda

1. **Welcome, ice-breaker, introductions, introduction to topic and speakers**
2. **Guest speaker 1: Dr Kei Nishiyama**
 - What is the Deliberation in Schools pilot?
What did we learn?
3. **Guest speakers 2: Liam Jones**
 - What is the role and work of the Youth Advisory Council? What are the opportunities and challenges?
4. **World Café exercise and report back**
 - What opportunities and competencies do young people need to engage in our democracy?
 - What are some of the challenges, obstacles and concerns of our young people?
5. **Next meeting – 5.30pm 11 April 2019**
6. **Checkout and close**

Topic

Youth Engagement with Democracy- opportunities, competencies, challenges

Welcome

The facilitator, Dr Wendy Russell welcomed the group of around 25 participants.

The facilitator outlined that Meet Up #9 would consider the opportunities and competencies young people need to engage in our democracy and the challenges, obstacles and concerns they may face.

Guest speaker Dr Kei Nishiyama

The meeting heard from Dr Kei Nishiyama, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, about the Deliberation in Schools Pilot Program. A summary of the presentation and discussion is below.

Overview of program:

- The aim of the program was to build the capacity of school children to listen, reason, think communicate and collaborate, so they have the resources to engage productively as citizens in our democracy, both now and the future.
- The program ran in two schools in the ACT, Ainslie Primary School and Hawker College. The findings from the program will result in the creation of professional development resources aimed at teachers and engagement practitioners.

Key outcomes:

- Students from Ainslie Primary initially came up with their own ideas of what good communication involves, which were presented back to them as guidelines for their practice throughout the program. Students were particularly focused on basic guidelines such as listening, not interrupting, being clear and keeping eye contact- also recognising the importance of engaging and respecting each other.
- The diversity of the group resulted in different strengths and experiences being brought to the discussions, resulting in difference being seen as an opportunity, rather than a challenge.

- At the end of the program students ultimately agreed that they would like to see their school become more democratic.

Questions to Kei from DeliberateACT members on Deliberation in Schools Program:

- Reflection is an important part of deliberation. What ideas and strategies do you have to help people reflect?
People are familiar with expressing their opinion but less familiar with reflecting and changing their opinion. Persuasive writing is a focus in primary schools, which may discourage reflection.
- People tend not to stop and think about what they might deliberate on unless they have to make a decision. In the Deliberation in Schools program, were the students asked to make any decisions?
Students were asked to make recommendations to the principal, so decisions had to be made. There was an emphasis on finding agreement and recognising differences among participants.
- When students are criticised for activism in schools, how do you encourage civic participation? We need structures to empower them.

Notes about the pilot are available at [Attachment A](#).

Guest speaker Liam Jones

The meeting heard from second guest speaker Mr Liam Jones from the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to present on the work of the YAC and its opportunities and challenges.

Overview of presentation:

- Liam discussed the key role of the YAC as the body that informs the ACT Government on issues important to youth in the ACT. Members form a diverse group of people aged between 12 and 25, who are strongly committed to taking a lead role in representing and engaging in issues affecting young people.
- Liam outlined the civic participation recommendations that came out of the recent ACT Youth Assembly:
 - Recommendation 1: Implement a range of consultation methods: a mixture of in-person and online consultation to engage young people on pertinent issues, and to overcome digital literacy/access barriers to better collect authentic feedback from young people.
 - Recommendation 2: Commit to an ongoing and collaborative approach to consultation for young people that clarifies the purpose of collating feedback and includes reporting back mechanisms on how the feedback has been incorporated into decision-making.
 - Recommendation 3: Provide genuine opportunities to engage with and involve young people in consultation and government decision-making.
 - Recommendation 4: Implement a comprehensive Civic Education unit to provide greater in-depth understanding of government and policy-making processes, education on current affairs (particularly on issues pertinent to young people), as well as providing students with optional time off every week to engage in civic activities (such as volunteering for community organisations.)
- The YAC hears that young people do not know enough about the platforms available to engage with the government- such as YourSay.
- Other challenges include the perception that young people aren't taken seriously because they are often under the voting age. Not enough is done to target youth in engagement processes that are directly related to them.

Questions from DeliberateACT members on the Youth Advisory Council presentation:

- How are YAC members chosen?
There is an application process. Young people apply and then go through an interview process that ensures a diversity of ages, cultural backgrounds and interests make up the group. More information can be found here:
<https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/youth/youth-interact/youth-advisory-council>
- Do YAC members focus on ACT issues or can they also respond to Federal issues?
We focus on ACT issues, but we can make submissions on Federal Government issues. The YAC was recently involved in engagements around decreasing the voting age.
- People get invested in consultations but then get no feedback. How do we get the Government to explain why they make decisions?
This needs to improve across all ages. They should use the internet. When someone makes a submission, they should get a response.
- What are the barriers to participation?
Young people need to know the consultation is on, have the time to participate, and believe that they have the capacity to shape decisions.

The ACT Youth Assembly Report is now available at <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/youth/youth-interact/consultation>. The names of the Council members and a photo are contained in the report.

World Café exercise

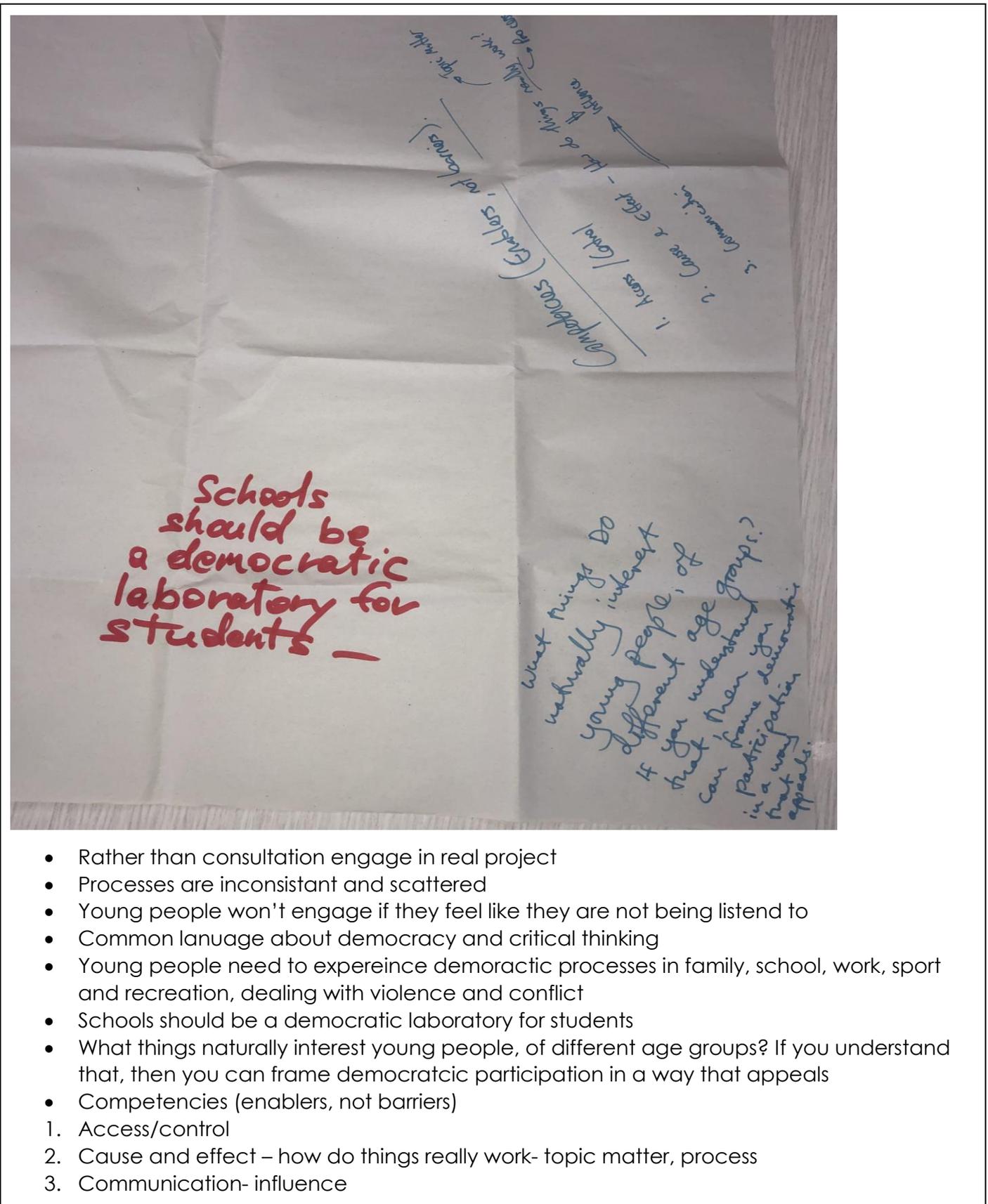
The room broke up into four groups and participants discussed and captured on butcher's paper:

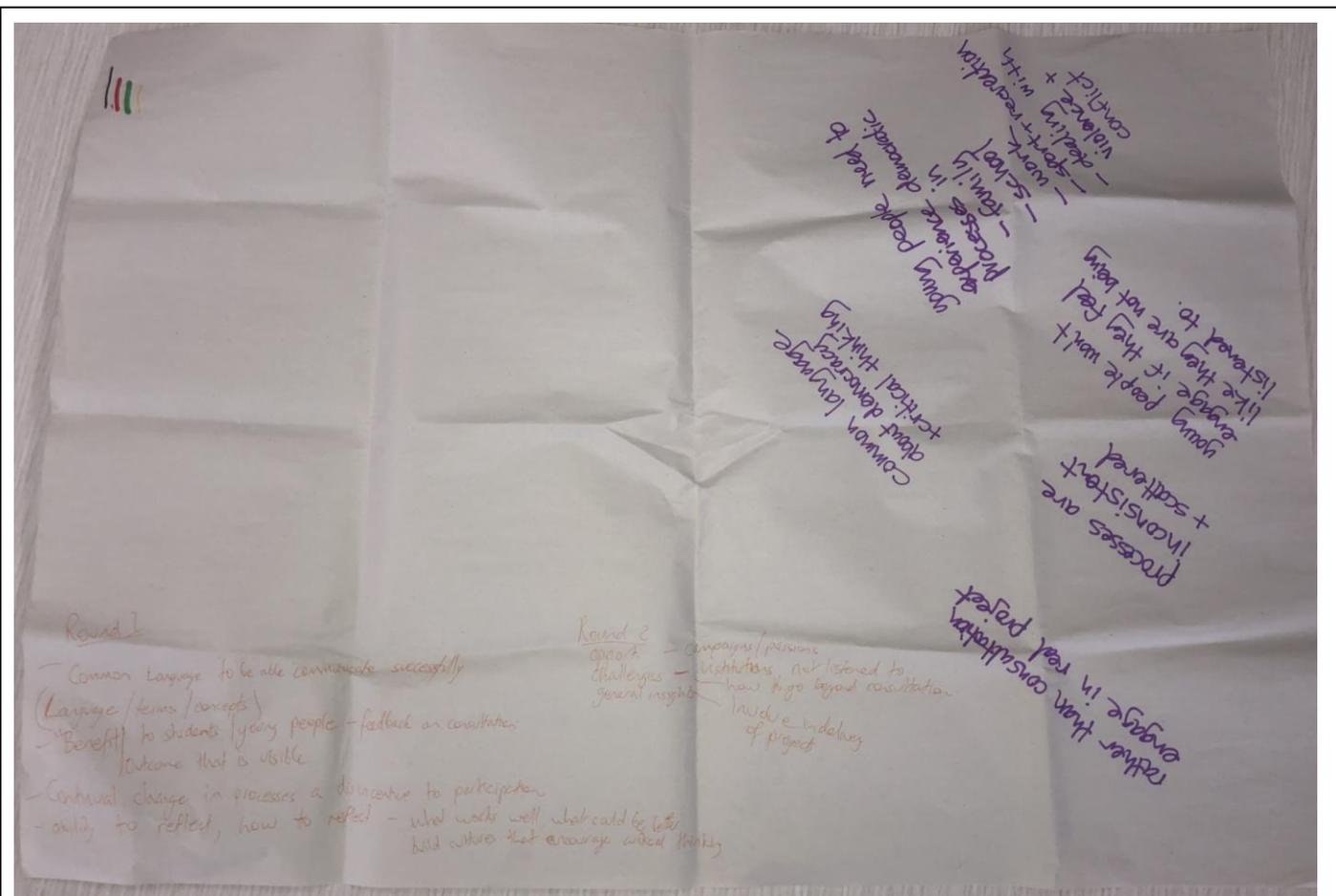
- **What opportunities and competencies do young people need to engage in our democracy?**
- **What are some of the challenges, obstacles and concerns of our young people?**

Some of the themes and questions that came out of the discussions included:

- Young people need to understand how things work – some knowledge of the topic and an understanding of the process of influencing decisions. There should be more communication in that space.
- Government needs to understand what impresses young people and try to frame issues in a way that appeals to them.
- Governments need to be nimble to respond to issues that emerge in the spaces youth engage (e.g. when something goes viral on social media). That is where youth are talking about the issues that matter to them.
- Encourage young people to engage and show them how it can make a difference. Communicate outcomes effectively.
- Try different models – for example, youth and bureaucrats jointly engage in consultation and jointly making the decision.
- Go beyond engagement to decision-making. Involve young people in delivery.
- Understand that young people are more likely now to gather around a cause or a campaign, rather than an institution (like a youth centre).

Group discussion notes are captured below and group top three points. Comments have been typed where difficult to read in images.



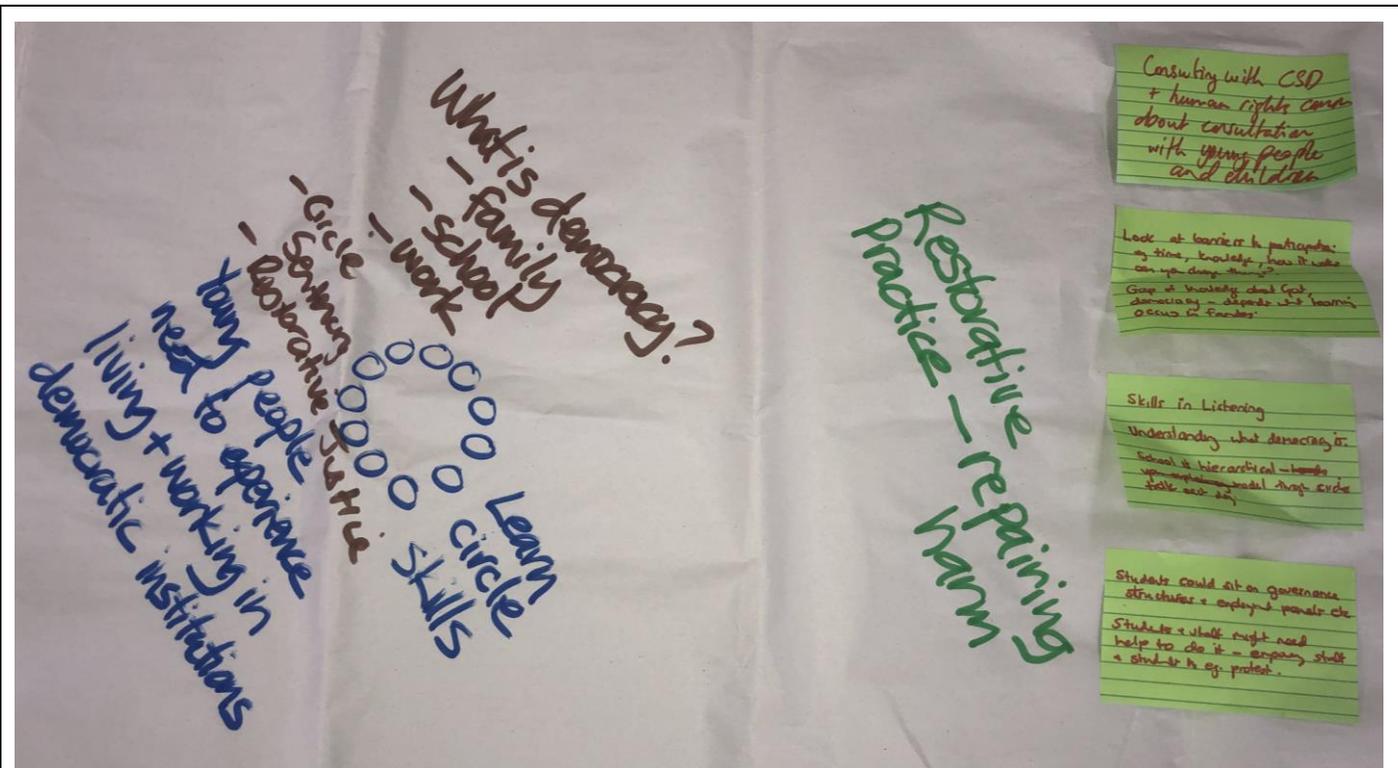


Round 1 discussion:

- Common language to be able to communicate successfully (language, terms, concepts)
- Benefit to students, young people- feedback on consultation, outcome that is visible
- Continual change in processes a disincentive to participation
- Ability to reflect, how to reflect- what works well, what could be better, build cultures that encourage critical thinkers

Round 2 discussion:

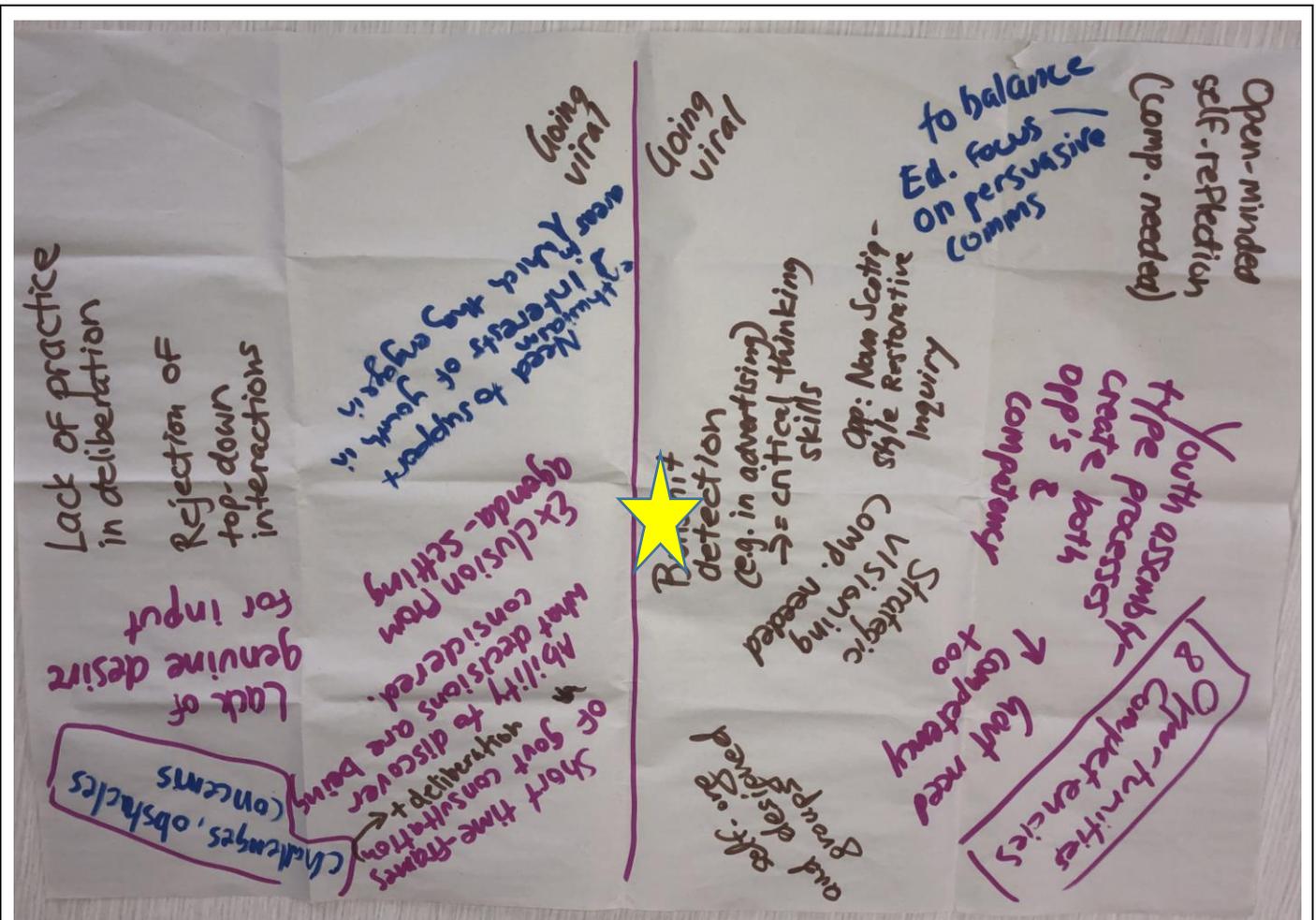
- Opportunities- campaigns/passions
- Challenges- institutions, not listened to, how to go beyond consultation
- General insights- involve indelivery of projects



- Restorative practice- repairing harm
- What is democracy? Family, school, work, circle sentencing, restorative justice
- Young people need to experience living and working in democratic institutions
- Learn circle skills

Post-its

- Consulting with CSD and Human Rights Commission about consultation with young people and children
- Look at barriers to participate- eg time, knowledge, how it works, can you change things?
Gap of knowledge Govt democracy depends what learning occurs in families
- Skills in listening- understanding what democracy is.
School is hierarchical, talk each day
- Students could sit on governance structures and panels etc
Students might need help to do it- empower staff and students to protest



Challenges, obstacles, concerns

- Lack of practice in deliberation
- Rejection of top-down interactions
- Lack of genuine desire for input
- Short timeframes of govt consultation
- Ability to discover what decisions are being considered
- Exclusion from agenda setting
- Need to support interests of youth in areas which they engage in

Opportunities and competencies

- Self organised and designed groups
- **** Detection (eg in advertising) critical thinking skills
- Strategic visioning competencies needed
- Nova Scotia style restorative inquiry
- Youth assembly process type proceses create both opportunities and competency
- To balance education focus on persuasive comms
- Open-minded self-reflection
- Govt need competency too

Wrap-up

Members were encouraged to sign up for YourSay updates to find out about engagement processes being run by the ACT Government. Anyone can sign up at <https://yoursay.act.gov.au/about>

Next Meeting – 5.30pm 11 April 2019

Deliberating Well – Have you got what it takes? The session will look at what skills and attributes you need to get the most out of deliberation, in an interactive and practical way.

Future topics

These topics were brought up at a previous meeting. They have been kept here as a reference.

Deliberation & methods

- Have an experience of “Deep Democracy” (the Lewis method) <https://deep-democracy.net/category/deep-democracy-basics/>
- Would like an experience of methods
- How to design deliberative mini-publics
- I'm interested to explore the Arnstein/gap model - <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>
- Can the topic be too broad for a citizens' jury?
- (After a mini-public) How do we know if there has been actual “deliberation”?
- Ethical values and the common good
- Deliberative processes require slower decision-making. Time to think and learn. Time to listen. Time to deliberate. How do we make time?
- What methods will reach the people?

Community capacity building

- Is/can deliberation achieve bipartisan support
- Talking about vs. talking to create futures
- The role of media in promotion and acceptance of participative processes
- How are the topics for a citizens' jury decided? Does the topic need to match the type of process?
- When and how will the government partner with civil society to choose a topic for a participatory process?
- How can we encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders into deliberations? We need more relationship focus
- How do we get the politics to buy in?
- Explore funding opportunities for collaboration between researchers and practitioners of deliberative democracy
- How to increase citizens' trust in other types of participatory innovations? (without the specific function of participatory budgeting)
- What does a good relationship look like?

Case studies

- Invite researchers from Centre of Deliberative Democracy to present findings in deliberative democracy
- Deliberative processes in extremely polarised societies
- Showcase successful cases of deliberation in Australia and the world
- Lessons from citizen-government engagement failures
- What could ACT do to learn and improve on its current activities?
- How to really get citizens involved in an authoritarian state?

Further Reading

<https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/>; Participedia - <https://participedia.net/>

Further listening

Real Democracy Now podcast - <http://realdemocracynow.com.au/>

Centre for Public Impact - <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/podcast>