

Recap Meet-Up #8 – Thursday 22 November 2018



Meet Up Agenda

1. Welcome and purpose
2. Overview of CAPaD/ACTCOSS Principles and reflections on using them for four recent participatory deliberative processes in ACT
3. Small group conversations
 - How could educating the community be improved?
 - How could the process in each key area be improved?
 - Imagine you are talking to friends and family. How would you tell them about these learning insights? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these processes? What if you were talking to a Member of the Legislative Assembly?
4. Large group sharing insights
5. Next meeting – February Date TBC
6. Checkout and close

Welcome

The facilitators, Ms Beth Slatyer and Mr Mark Spain, welcomed the group of around 30 participants.

The facilitators outlined that Meet Up #8 would consider the implementation of processes through the lens of the Principles/Criteria for the Trial of Citizens' Juries in the ACT which are at [Attachment A](#). Jointly prepared by the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD) and the ACT Council of Social Service Inc (ACTCOSS), the learnings looked at major positives, areas for improvement, and some questions and observations they noted.

Overview of CAPaD/ACTCOSS Principles and reflections on using them for four recent participatory deliberative processes in ACT

The meeting heard from CAPaD representatives Ms Beth Slatyer and Mr Mark Spain about the reflections on the four processes. A summary of the learnings is below.

Positives:

- Participants of all four processes were overwhelmingly positive about their participation in the processes – even if they were critical of aspects of the process, they appreciated the opportunity to be involved.
- These processes are likely to increase trust in government.

Areas for improvement:

- Design phase – connection between the deliberation process and policy development was often unclear, creating the risk of 'cherry picking' from responses.
- Deliberation phase – a process can come to an outcome without being deliberative, depending on the nature of the question, quality of the evidence, etc.
- Education of the public about these processes
- Time available for deliberation – was there really enough?

Questions raised for CAPaD when looking at these processes:

- Was the process deliberative?
- Was there enough time?
- Was the facilitation high-quality?
- Was the question well-defined?

The full learnings from CAPaD's review of the four deliberative processes can be found at [Attachment B](#).

Group breakout discussions

The room broke up into three groups and participants discussed:

- How could educating the community be improved?
- How could the process in each key area be improved?
- Imagine you are talking to friends and family. How would you tell them about these learning insights? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these processes? What if you were talking to a Member of the Legislative Assembly?

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

Education

- Educating the community seems like a simple activity on the surface, but there are many factors that make it complex. It's considerably more difficult than it looks.
- Why educate? What is the purpose? Why would non-participants listen?
- We educate because sometimes, you have to see it to believe it.
- We educate to both inform about the process and/or topic, and to give an opportunity to engage in the process.
- To improve education processes, we need to ask community why they have perceptions that the government doesn't listen or share enough information.
- What is the language/definitions we use to refer to our processes, and how does this impact education? We need to be clear on these, yet be flexible enough to allow them to change over time.

Processes

Time

- If time allocated is not enough to consider the question, then the process won't be deliberative – participants will pick something at the end.
- How can we allow enough time, and what can we do if a jury or panel requests more time?
- One of the major constraints is the resource allocation from government.
- How do we manage a process if a complex idea is raised late in the process? When is allowing more time possible, for both government (resourcing) and the participants?
- How do we keep participants from becoming exhausted?
- If participants drop out (for either time or other reasons), how do we keep the integrity of the process?

Selection

- Community organisations that aren't included as a part of a random selection process may feel pushed out of the process, especially if they have previously worked with government on the topic.

Legitimacy

- Including high-level officials in the process from the start and giving participants the opportunity to speak directly with them gives weight to the process.

Further reading

You can explore more these deliberative processes by visiting:

Carers' Strategy (<http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/home/act-carers-strategy-2018-2028/act-carers-strategy>)

Better Suburbs (<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/BetterSuburbs>)

Citizens' Jury on Compulsory Third Party Insurance (<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/ctp>)

Housing Choices (<https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/housing-choices>)

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>

Simon Niemeyer mentioned that a couple of deliberative engagement specialists will be visiting Canberra in the first few months of next year, so will try to get some sessions for DeliberateACT organised. More details to come.

Members were encouraged to complete a feedback survey about DeliberateACT activities this year. If you weren't in attendance or didn't complete the survey, you can complete it online here by 10 December 2018: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DeliberateACT2018>

Big thank you to MoAD for hosting the meetings throughout the year, and to CAPaD for doing the work to look at all four processes.

Next Meeting – February 2018, date TBC. This will be the first meeting of the year and will consider design elements of deliberative processes.

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?
- How to engage young people in political processes
- 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

- We can report on our deliberation in schools next year (Wendy)
- 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>