

# ***Awakening Democracy***

CAPaD – the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy

MARCH 2021

G'day members and friends

In this ***Awakening Democracy***: Invitation to Our Democracy Canberra / Voices 4 Canberra; Demfest 21; Can we mend democracy, and lots to read on making change.

## **COMING UP**

### **Our Democracy in Canberra or Voices 4 Canberra**

You are invited to a Zoom event to plan how we, in the federal electorate of Canberra, could set up an Electorate Group. More about electorate groups below.

Canberra MP, Alicia Payne, is interested in working with an electorate group in Canberra. People in Fenner or Bean may want to approach Andrew Leigh or David Smith in Bean to set up a group there. This zoom event is to find out and share ideas about how we can go about this.

When: **Mar 28, 2021 02:00 PM Canberra**, Melbourne, Sydney / Eastern Australia Daylight Saving time.

Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlvd-qsqToiH9zs7sMIEXAqvCiqhj0-KJ\\_N](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlvd-qsqToiH9zs7sMIEXAqvCiqhj0-KJ_N)

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Further background below.

### **Why an Our Democracy group(s) for Canberra?**

Voters frustrated at the lack of their MP's responsiveness to their concerns and views on issues like climate change and political integrity are setting up 'Voices 4' groups in electorates all through Australia. Indi and Warringah are star examples. But what about in electorates where the MP is doing a reasonable job, such as here in the Federal electorate of Canberra?

How can we build a way to work with these good MPs?

Canberra electorate MP, Alicia Payne, is interested in working with an electorate group in Canberra.

There are many reasons why electorate groups should be started in as many seats as possible, to enhance Australian democracy. Here are some of them. An electorate group can:

- Give community members who want to change how their community is or to make politics work better a way to join in taking that action.
- Help community members to get to know and articulate a collective understanding of what they need for their communities and what government action might provide for those needs, then bring these to the attention of their MP.
- Help MPs systematically seek out and hear the needs and collective views of constituents and take these to Party forums and policy committees, Party caucuses, parliamentary debates and inquiries.
- Give MPs a structured method to report back to constituents the outcomes of this process: where Parties or governments have adopted policies in line with constituents' views, and, in cases where they haven't, the reasons for this.
- Help MPs navigate the complexity of a large diverse electorate.
- Help hold MPs more accountable to their community for the policies they espoused as candidates, and their job performance as an MP.

- Possibly help select a range of candidates more attuned to the needs of the electorate, either by participating in selecting Party candidates or selecting their own independents.
- Provide a structured way for community members to better hear and understand the views of candidates in the lead up to an election.

The ways to do the things listed here are known. The electorate group will need to work out for itself how it will work with the MP in our electorate.

Such an approach would help make government be more responsive to community needs, accountable to voters, participatory for the community and transparent to all.

## Our Democracy Australia

CAPaD has been working with Rob Salter in Melbourne and Marcus Crowley in Sydney to build a national website for electorate groups across Australia. This emerges from the presentation Rob gave [last year at a CAPaD Zoom event](#). We are keen to help pilot such a group in the ACT, which is the basis for the Zoom Event mentioned above.

## Demfest 21

With the Our Democracy initiative and the growing Voices 4 movement taking off this year, we think that holding a national online event to bring together all the diverse players in this space to 'show and tell' what they are doing and what they are learning about working with MPs (or what they are doing if that fails) would be timely.

As always, if you'd like to help with this, [please contact the Secretary](#).

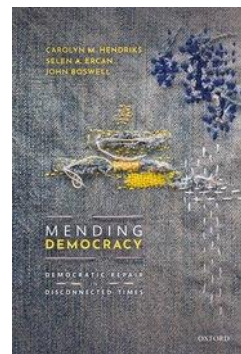
## New stuff to read and look at

### Mending democracy [- just what we do]

A new book, *Mending Democracy: Democratic Repair in Disconnected Times*, Carolyn M. Hendriks, Selen A. Ercan, and John Boswell:

- Presents colourful case studies that reveal the creative power of everyday people to strengthen democratic connections within existing political institutions and practices
- Advances the novel concept of 'democratic mending' to capture the incremental small-scale work of everyday actors aimed at repairing connections across democratic systems
- Provides detailed and pragmatic guidance for how to enable democratic repair in disconnected times

[Available in hardcover and ebook.](#)



### Making change

One of our hopes is that people will be inspired to start up their own initiatives to awaken democracy. To support this, we have a [set of new resources on our website](#). They include:

**Networked Change**, an in depth look at [what makes for a successful political campaign](#) in the 21st century with a focus on the most successful, directed-network campaigning.

**Pathways for change**, [A discussion of 10 theories of change to help decide the hows of making change](#).

*From your committee*

**Contact us:** [secretary@canberra-alliance.org.au](mailto:secretary@canberra-alliance.org.au)

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