

## Our Democracy group 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?

Our 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.