

The purpose of this document is to help us be clear what we are doing and why. We will use this document to inform communications including the website and to craft a briefer invitation (draft below).

It's time for our voices to be heard: Our Democracy is changing how our federal MPs work with and for us.

What Our Democracy ACT wants

Our Democracy ACT is part of a growing movement to build effective working relationships with our five federal parliamentarians. In the ACT since 2017 we have 3 Lower House seats (Canberra, Fenner and Bean) These seats are tightly held by the Labor Party. The two Senate seats allocated to ACT always end up 1 Liberal and 1 Labor, which is a very predictable outcome.

Our primary focus is building a movement that can inform and influence the decisions of our safely elected MPs. Relatively few people want to be in a political party, but there is a growing movement across federal electorates in Australia for people to have a voice and engage. Across the ACT, there is enormous capacity for the community to engage and we already have the highest rate of "volunteering" in Australia (ABS 2016 Census).

Our Democracy ACT wants to be a part of the growing movement across federal electorates in Australia, to join others to:

- host conversations between electors in our electorates separate to those held by political parties and powerful interest groups
- design criteria for a suitable person to represent us with integrity and to hold them to account for what they do
- identify the issues that are most important to our electorate, as a local community and as a part of the broader nation
- collaborate with our fellow electors to help design the policies we want our elected representative to advocate for in the Parliament

Why is this so important?

The role of citizens in democracy goes beyond voting for a representative and then passing judgement on their performance a few years later at the ballot box. Democracy is weakened unless we take an active role and work with our elected representatives to ensure that the voices of the people are heard throughout the term of government. In recent times in Australia we have seen what can happen in a democracy when elected representatives lose touch with us. It is time for citizens to take their rightful place in democracy.

The disenchantment and lack of trust in government that permeates Australian society could be overcome by countering the current dynamic that is characterised by powerful political parties, vested interests and deliberately confusing public information which result in community disengagement from politics.

There is power in ordinary people working with our members of parliament to achieve responsive, accountable and transparent public policy and implementation. When community members and their parliamentary representatives actively collaborate to prioritise issues and shape the policy agenda and assess outcomes, decisions that enhance our common good are more likely.

Community members can work together in electorate action groups with their local MPs to contribute to governance.

Our values

Our Democracy ACT wants to be inclusive and welcoming, respectful, open and transparent, considered and informed, accountable to each other, accepting views from across the political spectrum with a focus on the wellbeing and good of all.

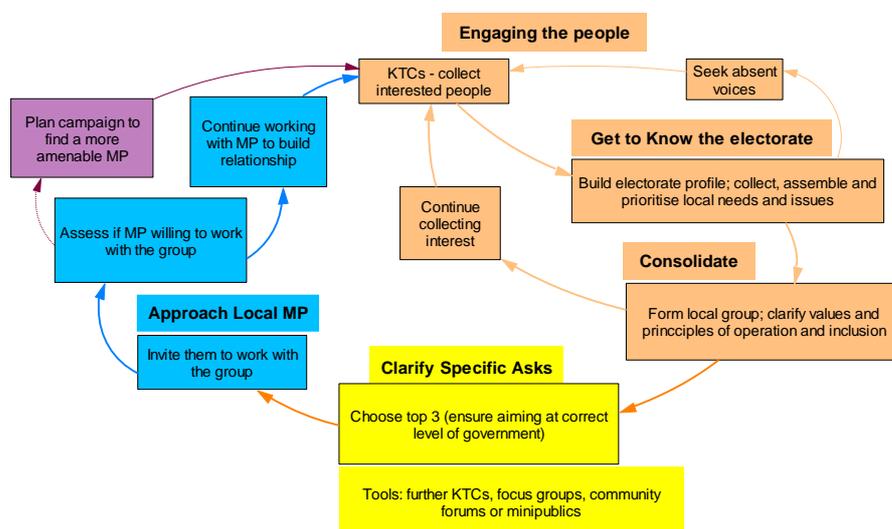
Working together to improve and strengthen Democracy for all should be safe and enjoyable. Our work together should show how it meets the needs of everyone in our community.

How to join in?

- go to the Our Democracy website and learn about your electorate (and other electorates in Australia)
- Join or host a Kitchen Table Conversation (KTC) with other local voters (see note below) to share insights and hear to what is important to others
- join or set up an Electorate Action Group in your electorate (see website)

What's the Pathway?

This diagram suggests one pathway that Electorate groups might follow to establish the working relationship with their MP.



Kitchen Table Conversations are a great way to connect with your neighbours and friends

Kitchen table conversations give friends and neighbours a place to come to understand better what everyone thinks and feels about our situation, and to plan what can be done to change what needs to change to meet the needs of the community. How to host a KTC is explained in the KTC kit available at the Our Democracy website.

The purpose of the KTCs will be to collect the community's views on what is important for them and how they want to relate to their MP. These views and opinions can be refined in periodic community summits to inform and enable action the electorate action groups undertake in working with their MP.

The questions to use in these conversations are being developed separately. These may be explored across a series of KTCs.

Knowledge harvested in KTCs can be placed and stored on the Our Democracy Australia website and be fed into communications for the public, into community summits and conversations with the MPs.

This knowledge can then be used in meeting with current MPs, and in interviewing candidates in the campaign phase of elections.

Electorate Action Groups will implement actions including:

- Connect people who want to change the way the political system operates, so it works better for us all
- Help those people come together to plan what to do to make that change happen
- Work out a job description and key qualities you want in your representative
- Periodically host some Community Summits in each electorate to agree the agenda and priorities for your representative
- Welcome all candidates who want to represent your electorate and interview them against the qualities you think they need to work for the public good and to be open, transparent and accountable back to your community

What next?

Once you get going, report back what you are doing on the Our Democracy website, and see there what other groups across Australia are doing.

The more people participating together, the stronger we can be.

Draft Invitation

Australia's political system is relatively good by international standards. However, many people are unhappy about how our governments and political parties have been functioning over the past decade. Our Democracy ACT thinks that we, the people, can make things even better by working with our MPs in deciding what the government and the political parties are going to do for us. This will complement governments' existing public consultations.

Our Democracy ACT is a group of citizens, inspired to work together to make this happen. We welcome others who want to join us to grow this group and help design our new politics.

We would love you to join us and to talk with other people in the ACT who are trying to make our political system work better for us all. Even if you can't join us now, and you want us to be successful, you can help by letting others know about us.

To get started, please go to the website <insert link> where there is information about what you can do, and how you can get involved to make this happen. The more people participating together, the stronger we can be.