

2016 CAPAD Annual Report to members

Introduction

Well, this has been the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy's first year. The Committee has worked hard to practise the guiding principles and style of operation set out in the constitution. As part of this, we have:

- made our minutes and meeting summaries available to all members by email and on the website;
- developed our website and Facebook page to help disseminate interesting and relevant information to members;
- held regular General Meetings of members, where we talked about what we were doing and asked for suggestions;
- conducted a session where members put forward their ideas for what they would like CAPAD to achieve in its first 12 months and by 2030 (our Cloud session); and
- developed a draft strategic plan, to be considered by members.

What you said you wanted

Some of our directions came from the survey before the inaugural Annual General Meeting last year, and some came from the 'cloud' session at the first General Meeting in November 2015. These ideas included:

- Make CAPAD more visible in the community;
- Engage more people and organisations from different demographics;
- Hold a Festival of Participatory Democracy;
- Engage with MPs about participatory democracy;
- Run training and community education about participatory democracy;
- Ideas for action to engage with local members in relation to concerns; and
- Run Kitchen table conversations to engage people with their neighbours and community.

What we have done

We have:

- Held an inaugural DemFest (Festival of Democracy) over two days 18-19 June 2016 at the University of Canberra;
- Held General Meetings for members on Tuesday 24 November 2015, Tuesday 16 February 2016, Wednesday 13 April 2016 and Sunday 14 August 2016
- At the first General Meeting, Cathy McGowan MP talked about participatory democracy in her electorate of Indi, including kitchen table conversations and a Citizens Summit;
- Engaged with both radio and newspaper about participatory democracy and CAPAD's activities;
- Recruited a young person, Tom Swann, to the committee and learned from him some of the different ways younger people engage in change;
- Trialled a Candidate Statement and Charter of Democratic Commitment in the Federal Election in July, which provided some information for voters in the Federal Election;
- Held discussions with the 3 major parties about the Trial, made some modifications and have sent out the Candidate Statement form and Charter for Democratic Commitment to all candidates in the ACT election – results are now available on the CAPAD website;

- Participated in the Open Government Partnership consultations.
- Held a number of strategic planning meetings, the results of which will be workshopped at the members' General Meeting on the same day as the Annual General Meeting
- Hosted discussions on an innovative model for electoral accountability to be trialled by the New Democracy Foundation

Projects underway

At DemFest 2016, a number of projects were initiated by members and these are on-going and at various stages. The progress on these was discussed at the August General Meeting, with some great suggestions being put forward by folk who attended. These projects are:

- To pilot a Citizens Jury process in the ACT, sponsored by the ACT Government in 2017;
- To collect information on all ACT and Federal election candidates who sign the CAPAD Charter of Democratic Commitment and prepare a Candidate Statement, and make it publicly available by electorate so that citizens can know more about the candidates that are standing and make a more informed choice about who they vote for;
- To provide opportunities for Canberrans to work on issues of corporate responsibility, linking with the Canberra base Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility;
- To consider the possible utility and feasibility of a Public Interest and Sustainability Council to hold ACT and Federal governments accountable on the public interest and sustainability;
- To trial learning about participative democracy in a relaxed and comfortable setting, using Paulo Friere's model of adults learning together, rather than from an expert;
- To develop the capacity for non-adversarial dialogue in the ACT, so people can discuss issues of public interest in a restorative and relationship-building context;
- To work with a community group involved with Family and Friends of Drug Law Reform, to see what tools of participative democracy they can use to further their work.

Where to next?

The reasons we all came together 12 months ago are still motivating our efforts. The values espoused by CAPAD are even more important and guide everything we do. A priority for us over the next year will be working with our organisational and individual members to build a sustainable group that aims to:

- Seek broader participation across Canberra;
- Strengthen existing community, faith, environmental and civil society groups;
- Build on volunteerism and publicly acknowledged donations; and
- Employ a learning by doing model.

We are confident the foundations have been laid and look forward to your active involvement in our activities in the year to come. CAPAD is partly about empowering ourselves to create the kind of democracy that we want. Walking our talk through being engaged in democratic reform is an exciting journey for us all