

Awakening Democracy

CAPaD – the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2024

G'day members, supporters and friends

Welcome to what will be a busy, transformative, 2024

In this *Awakening Democracy*: 2024 ACT election livening up, Living Democracy into being conversations, ensuring human thrival, help asks, ... and much, much more to read and watch, including some new podcast suggestions.

2024 Activity Plans

1. Running a series of conversations at community and kitchen table level to look at how we can tell if our MPs are doing a good job. This will lead into:
 - a. Developing a way to feed back to the community how well the current MP is working for us, and
 - b. How to tell in an election which candidates are more likely to work well for their community,
2. Publicising the Canberra Forum and working with DemocracyCo to develop and promote a kit for community groups and MPs to use to hold similar deliberative events in other electorates,
3. Working up the Education for Civics project.

COMING UP

2024 ACT Election, 19th October and 2025 (maybe 2024) Federal Election

Already election activity is underway with two small L Liberals declaring intent to run as candidates ([Canberra Times, 4/1/24 \(\\$\)](#)). And Michael Moore supports the move to shake up government in the ACT with a bigger cross bench ([Canberra Times, 5/1/24 \(\\$\)](#)). [Independents for Canberra](#) is launching at the RUC Club in Turner with a town hall on February 11th.

What an ideal if we could actually have a Government of Territory Unity where all MLAs contributed to the good governing of the ACT, bringing their own set of knowledge and skills, and working closely with us the people?

In the lead into both elections, [Voices of Bean](#) have set up to improve participation in candidate selection.

Every which way, it looks like being a hotly contested election. So choosing who to vote for becomes really important.

2024 Election Related Education Activity - How to tell a good MP? How to tell who would be a good candidate?

Announcing the plan to hold and support kitchen table conversations in all ACT electorates to answer the question:

How do we know our MLA is doing a good job for the community?

The answers will be widely circulated. We will then work with people on building a way to report this back to the community.

We then plan a further round to conversations to answer these questions:

How can we know which candidate will be the best representative?

How important is the Party or individual policy platform?

How important is the person's demonstrated commitment to integrity and community participation in decisions affecting them?

This will be followed up set of town hall meetings to interview the candidates based on our, the people's, answers to these questions.

The questions may evolve. Watch this space and your inboxes for more information as plans mature.

HAPPENINGS

Living Democracy into Being

Conversation to continue later in the year.

A group of us are meeting informally to discuss and plan how we might move forward with this in real time, face to face, at a social event.



Meanwhile we are working with the Council for the Human Future on a process to build transformational change in society and politics.

If you would like to join any of these conversations, [please contact me](#).

Transformative change is in the zeitgeist for 2024. Much more will be happening. Stay tuned.

HELP NEEDED

1. **Teachers to share ideas for Education for Civics.** To advance our **Education for Civics** project, I'm keen to open conversation with **teachers** who have a better understanding of how this might work. **Does anyone know any teachers who may want to discuss?**
2. **Fundraisers** – CAPaD is entirely dependent on the resources we can raise to operate. We receive no government and at this stage no philanthropic income. Is someone able to lend us a hand in raising some resources?

Great thank you to the person who reached out to help with the Google Analytics set up.

ACTIVE PROJECTS



The CAPaD Committee has used our [Genuine Engagement Tool \(GET\)](#) to reflect on the **Canberra Forum**. We sought feedback from Alicia and DemocracyCo, and [the completed reflection is available here](#).

Meanwhile the [Report is up on Alicia's website](#) and a 3 minute [video reporting participants experience is also available](#).

Active Democracy ACT (ADACT) & Australia (ADAus)

Active Democracy Bean

Active Democracy Bean Facebook Page

Additionally Active Democracy Bean [has a Facebook page](#) on which they will promote what is on and latest information regarding their activity. More about ADB on their [webpage](#). If you are interested in joining, please [email Cath](#).

The Active Democracy ACT [site is here](#).

THINGS TO READ AND LISTEN TO

Our standing reminders about:

- [Democracy Sausage podcast](#) from the ANU Public Policy Institute. Lots of very topical topics, and
- [The Remakers podcast](#). Australia ReMADE's podcast has a fascinating series of discussions and interviews and is well worth a listen. Both **available** from your favourite podcast service.
- **Juice Media** for an [irreverent and spicy look at current politics](#) in Australia and beyond.
- **Crazy Town** From [the Post Carbon Institute \(go to podcasts\)](#). 2025 season in prep but lots of back episodes to listen to.

Failing trust

Many factors influence the public's trust in governments and the political system. Trust is essential for the legitimacy of government and the cohesion of a society. This month, two articles offering different ideas on trust in government.

Western democracy: failure of system, [John Queripel](#)

Western nations are always ready to proclaim their system of governance as superior, particularly in regard to China, dismissed as being authoritarian. Increasingly however, 'western liberal democracy' finds itself under scrutiny with trust in government falling. <https://johnmenadue.com/western-democracy-failure-of-system/>

Does inequality erode political trust? Simon Bienstman ([Frontiers of Political Science, 5 July 2023](#))

Maybe, particularly in lower income countries. In theory a rise in wealth inequality which signals a reduction in ensuring a fair distribution of the 'national pie' and so reduced access to resources and care by some, such as we are currently witnessing, reduces trust in the political system to deliver for everyone, so helps delegitimises government in the eyes of the people. However, this is not clearly the case so there is some indication that this factor is at work. The data sets are inadequate, the causal pathways are complex and results of modelling only indicative. As usual, more work required!

Now some good news

Analysis of how the community independents movement is changing Australian democracy ([Hendriks and Reid, 2023, Political Studies](#)). Take-homes: "Ambitious and Disruptive Citizen-Led Democratic Innovation", "citizens do not need a mass mobilisation in order to realise impactful democratic reform. Instead the decentralised nature of CIM demonstrates the strength of locally led interventions that are sensitive to local resources and political dynamics."

Democratising finance

Last year Kevin Cox presented his ideas for democratising the energy system ([here](#)).

He has continued to work on these ideas and apply them to housing affordability. His proposal for a way of making house ownership less expensive [is explained here](#).

Progressive voting trends reflected in Australia despite Voice Referendum result.

As reported in [the RiotACT](#), despite the referendum result (and I might add seeming shift to the right in voting overseas), Justin Lazic (Data on Demand) on analysis of multiple polling trends concludes that "the larger urban areas of Australia are reflecting the high priority the public places on the delivery of public services, social justice, economic redistribution and climate change." This is driving voters to the 'left' ie ALP on two party preferred and to Greens, Community Independents and other alternatives.

Of note (from other sources), this is an inner city/urban trend, less visible in rural/remote, the 'western' suburbs and those who have not shared equitably in the benefits of the neoliberal experiment. It seems to reflect a split in society that 'right' wing conservatives exploit. Trump provides a major example. There is also a generational turnover factor at play here as boomer shuffle off this mortal coil and more under 35s start voting.

New brief Podcast series for young people on democracy

While making no assumptions about the age and knowledge of our readership, I've come across this [Let's Get Political podcast](#) (this on Podbean but your favourite app should have it) aimed at younger people. It was designed by Skye Riggs and Stacey June. Skye had a website, Y Vote (now defunct). The podcast ran in the

weeks before the May 2019 election with the intent of educating people on Australian politics. It is still relevant now. Perhaps worth sharing with your younger family members and associates.

The Australia Institute [report on progress of its The 47th Parliament and the Democracy Agenda](#). The government is acting, albeit slowly and not on everything.

DEMOCRACY AS FUN

To start the year, from David Pope / @CanberraTimes, 20/12/2023.



From your committee

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