



Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD)  
[www.canberra-alliance.org.au](http://www.canberra-alliance.org.au)

## Invitation

Monday 24 October from 12 midday to 1.30 pm to discuss

# How can diverse organisations in Canberra work together to improve the way our democracy is working ?

**ACTCOSS Meeting Room**

**Weston Community Hub 1/6 Gritten Street Weston ACT 2611 (Easy Parking available)**

### Purpose of meeting:

To seek input from existing and potential organisational members of CAPaD on what CAPaD has done in the past twelve months and the potential role that groups could play together in the coming 12 months.

### Agenda:

1. What is CAPad and why was it formed? 5 minutes ( See extracts from website )
2. What has been accomplished in the first twelve months? 10 minutes (see attached brief annual report)
3. What could be its agenda for the next 12 months? 10 minutes ( See attached draft strategic plan)
4. How can it benefit organisational groups and vice versa? 45 minutes open discussion

### Invitees :

- 1 Committee members of CAPaD
2. Representatives of current organisational member groups of CAPaD
3. Invited representatives of other groups.

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## Extracts from Website

### What is CAPaD for?

The Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy (CAPaD) seeks to improve the democratic process by

- developing and supporting citizen, community and civil society *engagement* in public decision-making
- *empowering* Canberrans to engage in owning and planning for our common future and the common good
- facilitating opportunities for *citizen input* to government deliberations
- developing citizens' capacity to hold governments and policy makers *more directly accountable*.

To do this CAPaD will bring together individuals and civil society groups from across the Canberra region. Similar bodies have been developed, or are forming around the world and in Australia, such as the [Sydney Alliance](#).

### Our Objectives

- To empower Canberrans to engage in owning and planning for our common future and the common good.
- To develop and support citizen, community and civil society engagement in public decision-making.
- To facilitate opportunities for citizen input to government deliberations.
- To develop citizens' capacity to hold governments and policy makers more directly accountable.

### Style of Operation

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

### Values

- Committed to sustainability, equity, inclusive prosperity and justice
- Community focused
- Democratic
- Respectful
- Valuing diversity
- Non-partisan
- Trustworthy
- Credible
- Transparent

Accountable widely

### Where the Alliance came from

The drive to set up the Alliance (CAPaD) arose from a series of "Kitchen Table Conversations" held in Canberra which identified many issues of concern to participants who believed they were being inadequately addressed by governments. Issues included the high-speed rail link, food production, housing availability, fairer taxation, refugees, environmental regulation, overseas aid, public transport and climate change.

The Alliance as a whole and its member organisations expect to promote regular Kitchen Table Conversations to *listen* to what Canberra people think about various issues. The elected committee will



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consider the results of these conversations and develop **strategies** to make the views of members available to decision-makers, and bring to bear the power of the people through various deliberative democracy methods.

## Brief 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 CAPACD 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;



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- 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



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## Awakening Democracy - Draft Strategic Plan 2016 - 2017

### Our vision

A democratic Canberra – where citizens trust their elected representatives, hold them accountable, engage in decision making, and defend what sustains the public interest

### The changes we seek

- everyone knows more about the risks to a strong and effective democracy
- workable models to support democracy are tested and implemented, with widespread public commitment
- democratic systems and processes support the public interest
- people vote for representatives who commit to improving democracy

### What we will do next

- build widespread interest and support for a strong and effective democracy within the community
- create ways for people to listen to and share what matters to them with each other and elected representatives
- inform/educate, demonstrate and learn what works to strengthen democracy
- advocate and defend democratic systems and processes, including legislation
- monitor and hold our representatives accountable to the community

### How will we know if we are on the right track?

- Canberrans will be enthusiastic about what we are doing (ie most know about it and support in principle, many know the details and are engaged in some way)
- Elected representatives will respect our work
- Civil society, business, and elected representatives will want to work with us to demonstrate and learn what is possible, workable and effective for strengthening democracy

### Strategic Priorities 2016-2017

*Educate, Demonstrate, Legislate participatory democracy (PD) practices in ACT governance*

Priority activity to meet objective	Time frame	Success indicator
<b>1. To empower people in Canberra to own and plan for our common future by developing and supporting citizen, community and civil society engagement in public decision making.</b>		
1.1 Educate Canberrans and local organisations about PD processes and models for accountable representation eg Learning Circles, Methods manual etc		
1.2 Advocate for PD with ACT politicians and civil society		
1.3 Conduct or arrange training to support social change		



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1.4 Engage with ACT civil society groups and Assembly members who want to demonstrate PD in action		
<b>2. To facilitate opportunities for citizen input to government deliberation.</b>		
2.1 Deliver a public citizen's jury process sponsored by the ACT Government		
2.2 Demonstrate another PD practice eg Respectful Dialogue		
2.3 Use a Kitchen table conversation based model to provide citizen feedback to Government on a specific policy issue		
2.4 Develop and demonstrate what genuine consultation and input to decision making looks like		
<b>3. To develop and assist citizen capacity to hold governments more directly accountable.</b>		
3.1 Pass a Deliberative Practices Act in the ACT Legislative Assembly		
3.2 Advocate for stronger accountability and transparency including strengthening existing mechanisms and roles.		
3.3 Conduct a participatory process to design a mechanism for transparency and accountability for representatives		
3.4 Investigate whether a Public Interest Council for the ACT or another method would provide a formal way of evaluating the performance of elected reps against their commitments to the electorate		