Guidebook for Deliberative Engagement

Key Features and Practical Insights

Selen A. Ercan, Jordan McSwiney, Lucy Parry, Nicole Curato, Hans Asenbaum, Adele Webb, Emanuela Savini and Justin McCaul

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA | CENTRE FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

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Executive summary

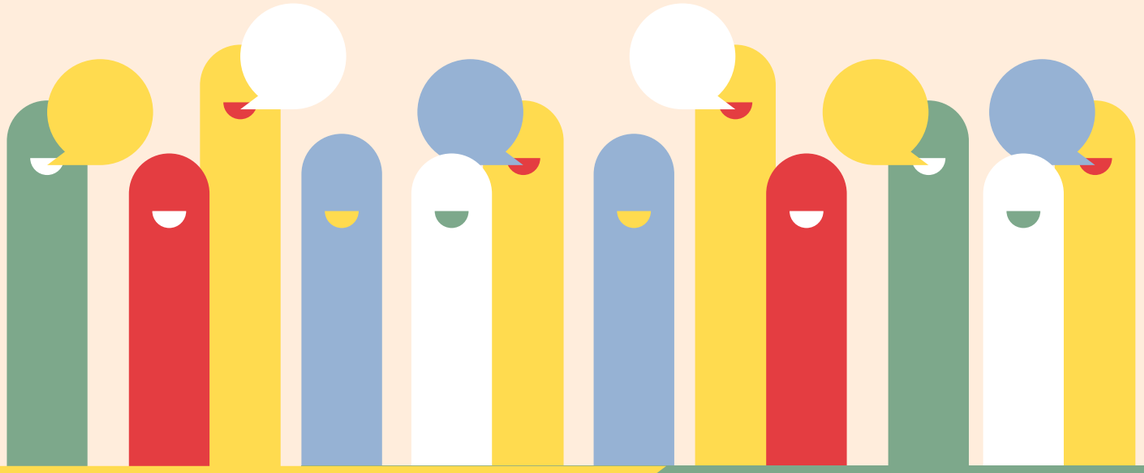
This Guidebook is a comprehensive resource for designing, implementing, and evaluating deliberative engagement. It is developed to assist government agencies across Australia in selecting the most appropriate methods for deliberative engagement and effectively put them into practice.

The Guidebook is informed by decades of research and practical experience in the field of deliberative democracy. The advice presented in the Guidebook has been grounded in practice by a series of conversations led by the Centre for Deliberative Democracy with stakeholders from across NSW Government agencies in 2024.

What is deliberative engagement?

Deliberative engagement refers to a range of methods designed to foster inclusive, informed and reflective conversation with and among citizens and/or stakeholders aimed at finding common ground.

Deliberative engagement enables participants to exchange reasons and arguments, listen to one another, weigh trade-offs, and collectively develop responses to issues that affect their lives and the future of their communities.



Why use deliberative engagement?

Research shows that everyday people are both willing and able to deliberate on complex and controversial issues. There is ample evidence that well-designed deliberative processes can effectively improve policy outcomes and enhance government and citizens relations.

There are several, well-documented reasons for governments and government agencies to support deliberative engagement processes. Deliberative engagement has been shown to produce:

- **Better policy outcomes**
- **Better public services**
- **Improved public opinion**
- **Increased public trust and legitimacy**
- **Better representation**
- **Enhanced inclusion and social cohesion**
- **Improved long-term decision-making**
- **Enhanced civic competence**

When to use deliberative engagement?

Deliberative engagement can be used for various purposes, from informing public opinion to collective decision-making. It can be introduced at any stage of the policy cycle from agenda setting through to policy implementation and evaluation, making it a versatile approach for government agencies looking to enhance their interaction with the public.

A problem or issue is well suited to deliberative engagement when it is of broad public concern, requires a collective decision, and/or involves disagreement about what is at stake, its causes, or its significance—especially when no clear or definitive solution exists.

Deliberative engagement in practice

Deliberative engagement practices can range from structured forums like Citizens' Assemblies or Citizens' Juries to more informal community initiatives like Kitchen Table Conversations.

Public authorities across the world are increasingly using deliberative engagement tools to give communities a more direct role in agenda setting and decision-making processes. National citizens' assemblies have been held recently in Ireland, France, and the United Kingdom to address the issue of climate change. In 2019, a citizens' assembly was convened in New Zealand to explore future sources of water for Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Various forms of deliberative engagement have become institutionalised around the world. Belgium has established a permanent Citizens' Council, supported by a Permanent Secretary, to organise and monitor Citizens' Assemblies.

In Australia, deliberative engagement occurs mainly at the local level, addressing issues such as urban planning, energy, waste management, and health. Since the late 1990s, Australia has implemented various forms of deliberative engagement with over 100 documented cases on Participedia, a crowdsourced database of democratic innovations from Australia and world-wide.

The regional dialogues that shaped Australia's 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart present an example of deliberative engagement in action. Consisting of 12 regional dialogues and culminating in a National Constitutional Convention, the deliberative process was designed by and for Indigenous participants, to inform the proposal for constitutional recognition of First Nations people in Australia.

In 2020, the Victorian government introduced legislation requiring local councils to undertake deliberative engagement practices when engaging communities on community vision and council plans. This is the first instance in Australia of deliberative engagement being embedded into legislation.

Six key features of effective deliberative engagement

A central message of the Guidebook is that different contexts require different methods of deliberative engagement. Instead of adhering to a fixed formula, organisers should focus on the *key features of effective deliberation* and design deliberative processes that are appropriate for each project's context.

This Guidebook presents six key features of effective deliberative engagement **(Table 1)** drawing on the latest research and practice. It also provides practical guidance on how organisers can incorporate these features into the design and implementation of deliberative engagements. Each key feature of effective deliberative engagement comes with a checklist for implementation.

Table 1: Six key features of effective deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement with diverse groups

Inclusivity is at the heart of effective deliberative engagement. This entails empowering marginalised communities, and considering the needs and interests of diverse demographics, as well as future generations and the natural environment.

Inclusivity is not just about choosing the right recruitment methods to ensure representation of marginalised groups. Even if individuals are formally included in a deliberative process, various factors such as the stigma associated with marginalised identity, differences in language proficiency and education levels can create barriers to participation.

In the Australian context, facilitating the inclusion of Indigenous communities is of particular importance. This necessitates a respectful and culturally sensitive approach that does not impose terms of engagement but invites Indigenous communities to co-design the process. Included in this Guidebook is a **Special Feature** by Dr Justin McCaul on Deliberative Engagement with Indigenous People, which presents a conceptual framework to assist agencies in designing deliberative processes that engage with Indigenous Australians.

Case in Focus boxes

To support the development and implementation of deliberative engagement in Australia, the Guidebook includes 16 *Case in Focus* boxes. These boxes showcase a variety of real-world deliberative processes to demonstrate how the key features of effective deliberative engagement are implemented in practice. They range from future design workshops in Japan and climate assemblies in the United Kingdom, through to deliberative engagements at the state/territory and local council level in Australia.

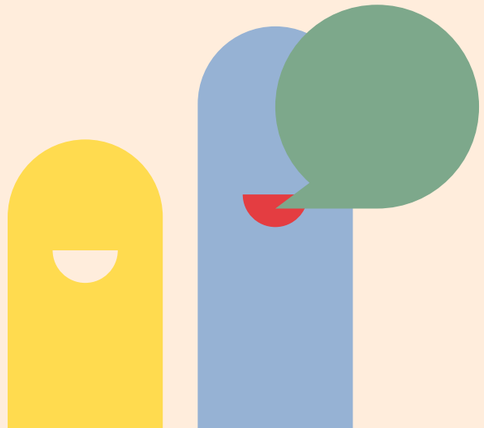
Library of deliberative engagement methods

The Guidebook can be used to improve existing practices of community engagement, as well as implement new ways of engaging diverse communities and stakeholders. To this end, the Guidebook includes a library of 10 varied deliberative engagement methods, including Citizens' Assemblies, Deliberative Opinion Polls, and Deliberative Workshops. The Guidebook includes practical advice on when, why, and how to use each method, as well as advice on anticipated duration and resource intensiveness to support planning and implementation.

Building deliberative capacity

It is important for government agencies to develop capacity within their organisations to implement effective deliberative engagements. To support capacity building, the Guidebook provides a list of 10 ways that government agencies can build their deliberative capacity. The list includes allocating sufficient resources for a given deliberative process; harnessing existing community and civil society partnerships to support design and implementation; introducing deliberative elements into existing engagement work; and using smaller-scale pilot projects to enable 'learning by doing' across the sector.

In addition, the Guidebook provides a list of further resources to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of deliberative engagement processes within government agencies. These resources include best practice advice and guidelines for organising different methods of deliberative engagement, support for facilitators, and advice for remit setting and question framing. Also included are suggestions for further reading and learning to enhance capacity building, and opportunities for further training.



Chapter 1

Welcome to the Guidebook

This Guidebook is a one-stop resource for the design, implementation, and evaluation of deliberative engagement practices. We use the term ‘deliberative engagement’ to refer to a range of citizen and/or stakeholder engagement methods that are initiated by the state or civil society with the aim of fostering inclusive, informed and reflective discussion and decision-making.

The Guidebook has been created to assist Australian public servants in making informed decisions on appropriate methods for deliberative engagement. Crafted via targeted interviews with NSW Government public servants, this Guidebook is relevant to all Australian and state and territory governments. It outlines the key features of effective deliberative engagement and demonstrates how these principles can work in practice. Additionally, it gives practical insights for public officials to consider throughout this process.

What sets this Guidebook apart?

This Guidebook offers a distinctive approach to designing and implementing deliberative engagement processes. The Guidebook is:

informed by research and expertise

The Guidebook puts forward measured claims on what deliberative engagement can and cannot deliver, drawing on extensive research conducted by staff and associates of the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at the University of Canberra.

tailored to the Australian context

The advice provided in the Guidebook is informed by stakeholders from across NSW Government agencies including Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Customer Service, and Multicultural NSW. It was created specifically for public managers across Australia who design and implement deliberative engagement practices.

designed to strengthen Indigenous voices

This Guidebook supports Indigenous peoples for meaningful deliberative engagement in the context of enduring structural inequalities. By outlining best practices and all too common mistakes, the Guidebook presents practical insights on how government agencies can be attentive to these inequalities and seek to address rather than reinforce them. This effort is led by co-author Dr Justin McCaul, a legal scholar and descendent of the Mbarbarum Traditional Owners of Far North Queensland.

practice-oriented

The Guidebook presents examples of deliberative practices from Australia and worldwide. It covers the key design choices organisers face along with practical insights to assist with implementation and evaluation.

Who is it for?

This Guidebook is designed to support Australian public servants in government agencies in designing, implementing, and evaluating deliberative engagement processes.

The Guidebook defines deliberative engagement as a 'craft', not a 'technocratic fix'.[1] As such, it does not prescribe a single mode of deliberative engagement. Instead, it supports its users in identifying suitable approaches by considering contextual factors and priorities. A key point emphasised throughout the Guidebook is that **deliberative engagement takes different forms and can serve multiple purposes**.

This Guidebook is tailored for those who seek to:

- **improve existing community engagement practices by making them more inclusive and deliberative**
- **implement new ways of engaging with diverse publics or stakeholders**
- **find inspiration from a wide array of real-life examples of deliberative engagement in Australia and globally.**

The Guidebook can be used at any stage in the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating deliberative engagement. However, to get the most out of the Guidebook, we recommend consulting its contents throughout the entire engagement process: from the initial planning stages through to evaluation.

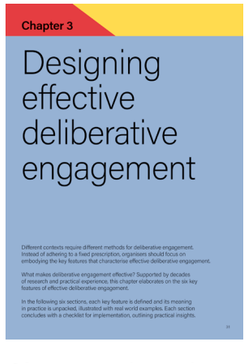
Although we focus our attention on the Australian state of New South Wales, this Guidebook is for anyone who would like to learn more about the principles and practices of deliberative engagement.

[1] Oliver Escobar and James Henderson, *Citizen Engagement in Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: A Guide to Mini-Publics* (World Health Organization, 2024).

How to use it

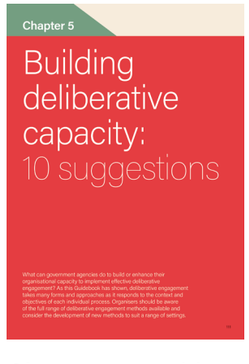
The Guidebook contains five chapters and one **Special Feature** section. Each chapter includes exemplary cases and practical insights for those who are seeking to design, implement, and/or evaluate deliberative engagement.

Chapter 2 introduces deliberative engagement and outlines why and when to adopt it.

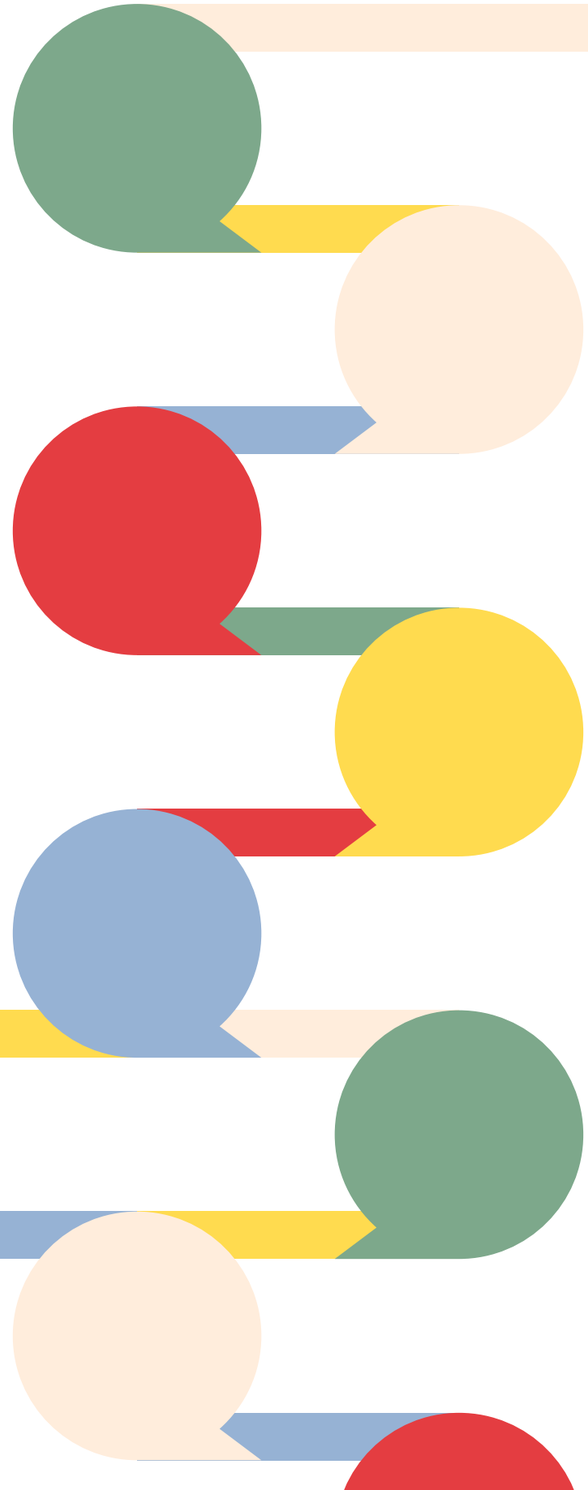


Chapter 3 introduces the six key features of effective deliberative engagement and explains how each feature can be implemented in practice. This chapter offers guidance and inspiration rather than prescriptive solutions, helping organisers design, implement and evaluate meaningful and effective deliberative engagement processes.

Chapter 4 presents an overview of methods for deliberative engagement and a library of 10 types. For each type, the specific design features are provided along with guidance as to when to use it and when not to use it.



Chapter 5 provides 10 practical considerations and suggestions for building organisational capacity for deliberative engagement within government.



A commissioned paper by Dr Justin McCaul, *Deliberative Engagement with Indigenous People*, is presented as the **Special Feature** of the Guidebook. The paper examines, in more detail than is possible in the Guidebook, the history of Indigenous exclusion from public policy in Australia and Indigenous self-determination as a deliberative ideal. The paper presents a broader range of examples of deliberation in practice in NSW and Australia more generally.

Chapter 2

Introducing deliberative engagement

What is deliberative engagement?

Deliberative democracy is a vision of democracy that prioritises informed, inclusive and thoughtful discussion and debate as a means of making collective decisions. While representative democracy primarily relies on voting in periodic elections and the aggregation of votes to determine citizens' political preferences (a 'vote-centric' approach), deliberative democracy emphasises the creation of spaces where diverse groups of citizens can engage in reasoned dialogue, consider different perspectives, and find common ground (a 'talk-centric' approach).[2]

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[2] Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, no.1 (2002): 307–326.

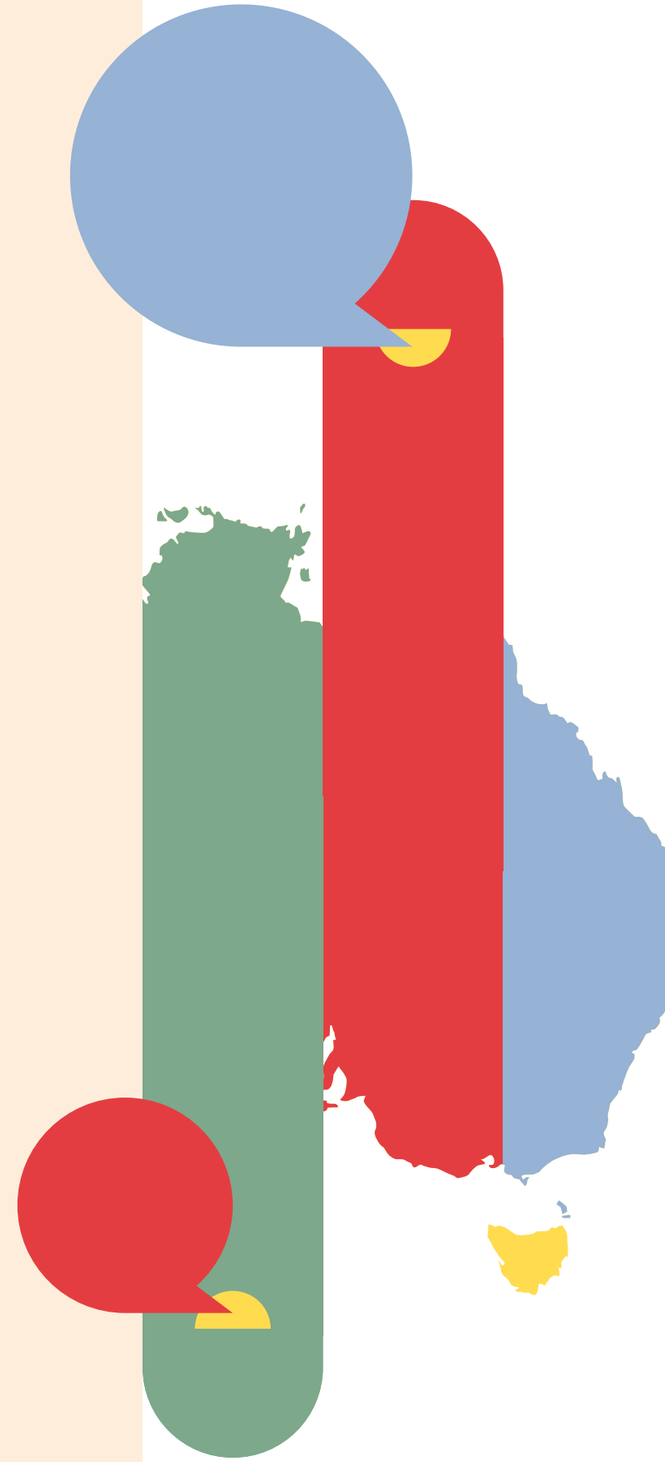
Rather than seeking to replace representative politics, deliberative democracy promises to supplement and strengthen the existing system of representative democracy. This happens by integrating deliberative engagement into the existing democratic framework and policy making processes.

Deliberative engagement refers to a range of methods that put the goals of deliberative democracy into practice. Deliberative engagement processes are designed to foster inclusive, informed and reflective conversations aimed at developing common ground. Unlike debate, where the goal is to persuade others and win, deliberative engagement focuses on harnessing the collective wisdom of participants.

Deliberative engagement can take many forms, from structured forums such as 'deliberative mini-publics', to more informal, citizen-led initiatives such as Kitchen Table Conversations.[3] It can be implemented in a wide range of areas from day-to-day policy making to the management of natural disasters, at local, national, and global levels.[4]

Across the globe, there have been numerous examples of deliberative engagement, ranging from citizens' assemblies to online deliberative town halls, showing the potential of this approach to generate innovative solutions to contemporary policy problems, to improve policy outcomes and to build greater trust between government and citizens. Various forms of deliberative engagement, such as Citizens' Assemblies, and Citizens' Initiative Reviews, have become institutionalised around the world. For example, Belgium has established a permanent Citizens' Council, composed of 24 randomly selected citizens, constituting the third fundamental democratic institution together with the parliament and the executive.[5] In Ireland, deliberative engagement processes are linked to constitutional change and referendums. Other countries, like the United States, are experimenting with deliberative town halls, composed of randomly selected citizens and individual members of the legislature, seeking to enhance the connection between the public and decision-makers.[6]

In Australia, processes of deliberative engagement are not new but to date have largely been implemented on an ad hoc basis.



[3]Carolyn M. Hendriks, Selen A. Ercan and John Boswell, *Mending Democracy: Democratic Repair in Disconnected Times.* (Oxford University Press, 2020). [4]Nicole Curato, *Democracy in a Time of Misery: From Spectacular Tragedies to Deliberative Action.* (Oxford University Press, 2019); Nicole Curato et al. "Deliberative Democracy in the Age of Serial Crisis," *International Political Science Review* 43, no. 1 (2022): 55-66. [5]Christoph Niessen and Min Reuchamps, "Institutionalising Citizen Deliberation in Parliament: The Permanent Citizens' Dialogue in the German-speaking Community of Belgium," *Parliamentary Affairs* 75, no. 1 (2022): 135–153. [6]Michael Neblo et al. *Politics with the People: Building a Directly Representative Democracy.* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

In Australia, processes of deliberative engagement are not new but to date have largely been implemented on an ad hoc basis. Since the late 1990s, Australia has hosted various forms of deliberative engagement[7], with over 100 documented cases included in Participedia, a crowdsourced database of democratic innovations worldwide. These cases span a diverse range of topics, including planning, energy, waste, insurance, health, and water quality.

While deliberative processes have not been formally integrated into existing democratic institutions in Australia,[8] there have been incremental steps toward their incorporation at the local level.[9]

A significant advancement in the institutionalisation of deliberative engagement is Victoria's 2020 review of the *Local Government Act*. The Act requires local councils to employ 'deliberative engagement practices' when developing their Community Vision and addressing other key planning issues.

At the federal level, government-sponsored deliberative processes remain limited due to lack of political will. However, a recent government report, ***Strengthening Australian Democracy. A Practical Agenda for Democratic Resilience*** highlights deliberative engagement as a promising avenue for enhancing Australia's democratic processes.[10] The report features examples of deliberative practices from both Australia and abroad, encouraging the public and policymakers to embrace democratic experimentation and innovation.

While limited, existing examples of deliberative practices at the national level provide valuable starting points and inspiration for those seeking to make democracy more deliberative. ***Australia's First Citizens' Parliament*** of 2009 brought together 150 randomly selected participants in Old Parliament House, Canberra, to discuss ways to strengthen the political system.

More recently, the ***Uluru Statement from the Heart*** was the outcome of a deliberative engagement process led by Indigenous Australians in 2017. Consisting of 12 regional dialogues and culminating in a National Constitutional Convention, the deliberative process was designed by and for Indigenous people, to inform the proposal for constitutional recognition.

There have been some instances of deliberative engagements in NSW,[11] however most of these processes have been organised at the local government level. Examples include preparation for the City of Sydney's 2018 ***Planning for 2050*** initiative which utilised a citizens' jury, along with the Byron Shire Council's 2019 ***Byron Model of Democracy*** which employed citizens' panels as a key engagement mechanism. Academic institutions, such as the Sydney Policy Lab at The University of Sydney, have also organised deliberative processes like the ***People's Assemblies on Care***, which engaged citizens in Sydney and western NSW to explore community-led policy development in healthcare.

Non-government organisations such as the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) have similarly undertaken engagement processes with deliberative qualities. For example, in 2022 NSW CAPO held public meetings in 28 locations across the state for the ***NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2022-2024***.

NSW is home to the **newDemocracy Foundation**, an internationally recognised nonprofit advocacy organisation that supports political decision-makers across Australia in engaging citizens in informed public deliberation on collective issues. *newDemocracy* is among several well-established organisations in Australia dedicated to advancing deliberative engagement. Others include ***MosaicLab*** in Victoria and ***DemocracyCo*** in South Australia.

These organisations not only design and implement deliberative processes, but they also produce practical guidance on how to run deliberative engagements.[12] Collectively, their efforts generate a wealth of knowledge, offering a valuable foundation for advancing deliberative engagement in Australia.

[7]Lucy Parry, Jane Alver, and Nivek Thompson "Democratic Innovation in Australasia," in Handbook of Democratic Innovation and Governance, ed. Stephen Elstub and Oscar Escobar. (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 435-448. [8]Parry et al., "Democratic Innovation in Australasia," (2019). [9]Emanuela Savini and Bligh Grant, "Legislating Deliberative Engagement: Is Local Government in Victoria Willing and Able?," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 79, no. 4 (2020): 514–530. [10]Strengthening Democracy Taskforce, "Strengthening Australian Democracy. A Practical Agenda for Democratic Resilience" (Department of Home Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, 2024).

[11]See for example Citizens' Juries in Prisons to Determine Health Priorities for Incarcerated Populations in Australia, and Paul L. Simpson et al., "Identifying Research Priorities to Improve the Health of Incarcerated Populations: Results of Citizens' Juries in Australian Prisons," *Health Policy* 6, no. 10 (2021). [12]Kimbra White, Nicole Hunter, and Keith Greaves, Facilitating Deliberation: A Practical Guide, MosaicLab (2022).

Why do it?

Research on deliberative engagement demonstrates that everyday citizens are willing and able to deliberate on complex and controversial issues.[13]

There has been extensive research into the benefits of deliberative engagement for achieving better and more democratic outcomes. There are strong, well-documented reasons for governments to support deliberative processes, as they have been shown to lead to:

better policy outcomes

Deliberation brings together the lived experiences of everyday people and weighs ideas and options until the best solutions emerge, instead of relying exclusively on expert advice. Deliberation grounds policy outcomes in real-life perspectives and makes them relevant and effective.[14]

better public services

Deliberations have an important problem-solving function, generating mutually agreeable ideas that support policy and service innovation. Cities that institutionalised deliberative engagement processes, such as participatory budgeting, have a track record of improving local governance, delivery of public services, and community wellbeing and positive environmental outcomes.[15]

improved public opinion

Deliberative engagement fosters considered judgement, as opposed to raw public opinion or kneejerk reaction. Considered judgement is achieved when participants are given a framework to fully understand the problem and consider all possible options and points of view.[16]

increased public trust and legitimacy

Deliberative forms of engagement increase perceptions of legitimacy and fair decision-making, which in turn strengthens trust in government.[17]

better representation

Deliberative engagement enhances the connection between elected officials and their constituents. For example, deliberative town halls have been shown to foster active listening and strengthen citizens' sense of representation.[18]

enhanced inclusion and social cohesion

Deliberation furthers inclusion by bringing diverse societal groups together and empowering marginalised communities. Mutual listening and learning about different life perspectives can help to reduce polarisation and contribute to societal cohesion.[19]

improved long-term decision-making

Deliberation counteracts the short-term thinking typical of electoral democracies, encouraging the public to adopt a more intentional and far-sighted approach to decision-making that may benefit future generations and the environment.[20]

enhanced civic competence

Deliberative engagement enhances the critical thinking skills of both the public and policy makers. This includes developing analytical capacities such as information processing skills, reflective and logical thinking, and communication skills like articulating one's view and framing arguments around a common good.[21]

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[13]John S. Dryzek et al., "The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation," (2019). [14]Hélène Landemore, *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-first Century*, (Princeton University Press, 2020). [15] Brian Wampler, Stephanie McNulty, and Michael Touchton, *Participatory Budgeting in Global Perspective*, (Oxford University Press, 2021). [16]John S. Dryzek et al., "The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation," (2019).

[17]Micha Germann, Sofie Marien, and Lala Muradova, "Scaling Up? Unpacking the Effect of Deliberative Mini-publics on Legitimacy Perceptions," *Political Studies* 72, no. 2 (2024): 677-700; Hannah Werner and Sofie Marien, "Process vs. Outcome? How to Evaluate the Effects of Participatory Processes on Legitimacy Perceptions," *British Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 1 (2022): 429–436. [18]Alnemr Nardine, Selen A. Ercan, Nick Vlahos, John S. Dryzek, Andrew Leigh, and Michael Neblo, "Advancing Deliberative Reform in a Parliamentary System: Prospects for Recursive Representation", *European Political Science Review*, 16 (2024): 242–59. [19]Lala Muradova, "Seeing the Other Side? Perspective-taking and Reflective Political Judgements in Interpersonal Deliberation," *Political Studies* 69, no. 3 (2021): 644–664; Jane Suiter et al., "Scaling Up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens," S*wiss Political Science Review 2*, no. 3 (2020): 253–272. [20]Michael MacKenzie, *Future Publics: Democracy, Deliberation, and Future-regarding Collective Action*, (Oxford University Press, 2021); Katrilna Kulha et al., "For the sake of the future: Can Democratic Deliberation Help Thinking and Caring About Future Generations?," *Sustainability* 13, no. 10 (2021): 5487. [21]Suiter et al., "Scaling Up Deliberation," (2020).

When to use it?

Deliberative engagement can be used for various purposes and at various stages of the policy cycle, all the way through from the agenda-setting to policy evaluation. Deliberative engagement has been successfully used in:

agenda-setting	**policy formulation**	**decision-making**	**policy implementation**	**policy evaluation**
Deliberative engagement can be used prior to policy development, to generate ideas, prioritise issues and set the agenda. This can be useful for building a sense of legitimacy around the deliberative process, especially for more contentious issues, however it requires longer timeframes and flexibility from the organisers. For example, ***G1000 in Belgium*** included a large scale, online public consultation that set the agenda for a later deliberative forum. Similarly, South Australia undertook an extensive engagement process on nuclear fuel storage and consulted the public on the remit.	Deliberative engagement can be used during policy formulation or development to identify trade-offs and develop necessary measures for the proposed policy. For example, ***People's Policy on Child Wellbeing*** in South Australia was organised independently of government by *DemocracyCo* and aimed to develop citizen-led, non-partisan public policy.	Deliberative engagement can assist in collective decision-making. For example, ***Citizens' Jury on Dog and Cat Management*** in South Australia gave decision-makers the confidence to move forward with a proposal for mandatory desexing.	Deliberative engagement can be used to guide the implementation of policies. For example, in Western Australia, affected young people and key stakeholders worked to co-design ***context-specific action plans on ending homelessness***.	Deliberative engagement can be used to evaluate policy action or to address emerging challenges. For example, ***The Youth Council for Open Government*** in Honduras monitors progress on Open Government commitments.

Deliberative engagement may be introduced at any stage of the policy cycle. Since 2020, Bogota has been conducting the **Itinerant Citizen Assembly**, meaning that one citizens' assembly commissioned by the legislature sets the agenda, the next deliberates on and decides the policy, and a third evaluates the results of the policy. This is known as the 'spiral' method of deliberative engagement, in which each deliberative engagement builds on the previous one and citizens learn from each other throughout the process.

[22]Lucy Parry and Selen A. Ercan, "In the Eyes of Beholders: Rethinking the Impact of Deliberative Mini-publics," in *The Impacts of Democratic Innovations*, ed. Vincent Jacquet, Matt Ryan, and Ramon van der Does (ECPR Press, 2024), 117-138.

Chapter 3

Designing effective deliberative engagement

Different contexts require different methods for deliberative engagement. Instead of adhering to a fixed prescription, organisers should focus on embodying the key features that characterise effective deliberative engagement.

What makes deliberative engagement effective? Supported by decades of research and practical experience, this chapter elaborates on the six key features of effective deliberative engagement.

In the following six sections, each key feature is defined and its meaning in practice is unpacked, illustrated with real world examples. Each section concludes with a checklist for implementation, outlining practical insights.

Six key features of effective deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement should be:

1

Intentional

Effective deliberative engagement has a clear scope, purpose and mechanism for governance.

2

Inclusive

Effective deliberative engagement ensures that all those affected by the matter under discussion are afforded the right and opportunity to participate. This may include empowering marginalised and underserved groups, such as Indigenous communities, rural and regional communities, and young people, while also considering the needs of future generations.

3

Reflective

Effective deliberative engagement provides opportunities for collective reflection. It seeks to improve public opinion through balanced information, facilitated discussion and engagement with different perspectives. It seeks to harness the 'collective wisdom' of participants rather than pitting them against each other.

4

Connected

Effective deliberative engagement is embedded in local cultures, as well as connected to the wider institutional and political context and the democratic system.

5

Consequential

Effective deliberative engagement is consequential. It is linked to pathways for impact ranging from informing policy decisions to contributing to wider public debate on issues at hand.

6

Ethical

Effective deliberative engagement upholds the rights, dignity and well-being of participants, organisers, and stakeholders.

Deliberative engagement should maintain flexibility, allowing practices to be adapted to the unique needs and context of each project. Within this flexible approach, organisers should ensure the processes designed and implemented reflect the key features of effective deliberative engagement.

Key feature 1

Intentional

Effective deliberative engagement is intentional. This means that it has a clear scope and purpose, and a well-established governance structure.

This section covers

Determining the purpose

It is important to be aware of the purpose of the proposed deliberative engagement, and what can be achieved through it. Deliberative engagement serves a variety of purposes. Examples include:

to bring about collective decision-making

One key purpose of deliberative engagement is collective decision-making. While the traditional ideal of deliberation emphasises consensus, in practice consensus is difficult to bring about in a plurality of public viewpoints. A more viable purpose of deliberation includes arriving at a compromise or other commonly beneficial agreement after the mutual justification of perspectives.

Sometimes, deliberative engagement yields 'meta-consensus'.[23] This means reaching agreement on the validity and credibility of values and perspectives, even when there remains disagreement about the priority of these values.[24] Meta-consensus is a valuable outcome of deliberative engagement, especially in contexts characterised by deep value conflicts, such as in environmental controversies. Research shows that meta-consensus is crucial to sustaining dialogue and interaction in such cases.[25]

to inform public opinion

Deliberative engagement can be used to foster informed public opinion, or considered judgement. Informed public opinion may emerge when the public is given the opportunity to learn about and collectively reflect on an issue. Informed public opinion is different from the raw public opinion that may be gathered through surveys or opinion polls but involves no deliberation.[26]

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[23] John S. Dryzek, *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Governance* (Oxford University Press, 2011) p.15. [24] Nicole Curato et al., "Twelve Key Findings in Deliberative Democracy Research," *Daedalus* 146, no. 3 (2017): 28–38. [25] Jacki Schirmer, Melanie Dare, and Selen A. Ercan, "Deliberative Democracy and the Tasmanian Forest Peace Process," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 2 (2016): 288–307. [26] James Fishkin, *Democracy When the People are Thinking: Revitalizing our Politics through Public Deliberation*, (Oxford University Press, 2018).

to facilitate feedback and evaluation

Some processes are specifically designed to facilitate and formulate a collective reflection on an issue without necessarily needing a decision. For example, Citizens' Initiative Review is conducted before referendums to evaluate ballot measures and ensure they provide voters with clear and unbiased information. These processes produce a written statement for the broader public in advance of the referendum.[27]

to map perspectives and options

Deliberative engagement can be used to identify, evaluate and compare perspectives on a particular issue or options to address a problem. This involves participants collaboratively exploring and mapping different courses of action after having considered the trade-offs. Deliberative workshops are often used for mapping activities.[28]

to enable social learning

Deliberative engagement can be used to bring members of community together, enabling them to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. In contexts characterised by identity divisions, social learning serves as a critical first step and primary purpose of deliberation, laying the groundwork for mutual understanding before moving towards collective decision-making.[29]

to support collective imagining

Collective imagining involves envisioning and creating new possibilities or futures through inclusive, reflective and creative processes. This process is particularly suitable for intractable problems requiring forward-thinking solutions, or for anticipating how society will need to address future challenges. For example, future design workshops combine deliberation with scenario workshops and to collectively imagine viable options for living in the future.[30]

to resolve conflicts

There is a long tradition of using deliberative engagement in conflict resolution by creating a structured environment where conflicting parties come together, listen to each other and work to resolve the conflict at hand.[31]

[27]Selen A. Ercan, Carolyn M. Hendriks, and John S. Dryzek, "Public Deliberation in an Era of Communicative Plenty," *Policy & Politics* 47, no. 1 (2019): 19-35. [28]Rob Bellamy, Jason Chilvers, and Naomi E. Vaughan, "Deliberative Mapping of Options for Tackling Climate Change: Citizens and Specialists 'Open Up' Appraisal of Geoengineering," *Public Understanding of Science* 25, no. 3 (2016): 269-286. [29]Bora Kanra, "Binary Deliberation: The Role of Social Learning in Divided Societies," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 8, no. 1 (2012). [30]Tatsuyoshi Saijo, "Future Design: Bequeathing Sustainable Natural Environments and Sustainable Societies to Future Generations," *Sustainability* 12, no. 16 (2020): 6467. [31]Françoise Montambeault, Magdalena Dembinska, and Martin Papillon, "Finding Deliberative Niches: A Systemic Approach to Deliberation for Conflict Resolution," *Acta Politica* 55, no 4 (2020): 692–710.

Selecting the issue

Issue selection involves framing the question, task, or remit that participants will address.

Some issues lend themselves to deliberation better than others. Issues that are primarily technical, such as understanding and managing the rare side effects of vaccines, or diagnosing and mitigating the causes of recurring flooding, are best addressed by experts rather than through public deliberation. However, problems like housing affordability or healthcare, which affect everybody both collectively and personally, are ideal for deliberative engagement. These issues often involve trade-offs, and they lack clear answers. **Deliberative engagement allows for diverse opinions and people's lived experiences to be heard, and for solutions to be developed collectively.**

A problem is suited to deliberative public engagement when:[32]

- **an issue of broad community concern needs a decision**
- **there is lack of agreement or moral disagreement about what is at stake**
- **there is disagreement or confusion about the cause or significance of a problem**
- **there is no definitive or single solution to an important problem**
- **a proposed solution calls for trade-offs involving things of value**
- **a problem is intractable, ongoing or systemic**
- **a solution involves multiple actors (government, civil society, etc).**

The core message is that engagement processes should be fit for purpose. There are various ways of engaging stakeholders and communities on important issues. Not all issues lend themselves to deliberative engagement.

[32]Brad Rouke, "Developing Materials for Deliberative Forums," (Kettering Foundation, 2014).

Defining the scope

To make the best use of deliberative engagement it is worthwhile considering which aspects of an issue would benefit from diverse viewpoints and experiences, and which kind of impact is envisioned (see **Key Feature 5** on impact pathways).

There are pros and cons in any scoping exercise. A broad scope can lead to a lack of focus, which might, for example, result in an overly large number of or less well-developed recommendations. One way to address this problem is to break the broad scope into separate themes on which participants can deliberate. This can also have drawbacks, however, as the example of Climate Assembly UK shows.

On the other hand, having a narrow scope can leave participants feeling constrained, with less freedom and less room for exploring systemic and structural solutions. It is important to find a scope that is discrete enough to generate constructive outcomes but also allows for a sufficient breadth of options to enable robust deliberation.

Case in Focus 1

Defining the scope of deliberative engagement

Climate Assembly UK

National level assemblies such as **Climate Assembly UK** have addressed cross-cutting, systemic remits, like reaching net zero emissions by a certain date. The broad scope necessitated splitting the participants into thematic groups for deliberation. While facilitating more inclusive discussions, this also meant that participants had less understanding of the work of other groups, and the integration of group work was later challenging.[33]

[33] Stephen Elstub et al., "Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK," (UK Parliament, 2021).

In effective deliberative engagement, the framing of a question is key.[34] Some tips are:

use open-ended questions, not questions that can be answered with either 'yes' or 'no'

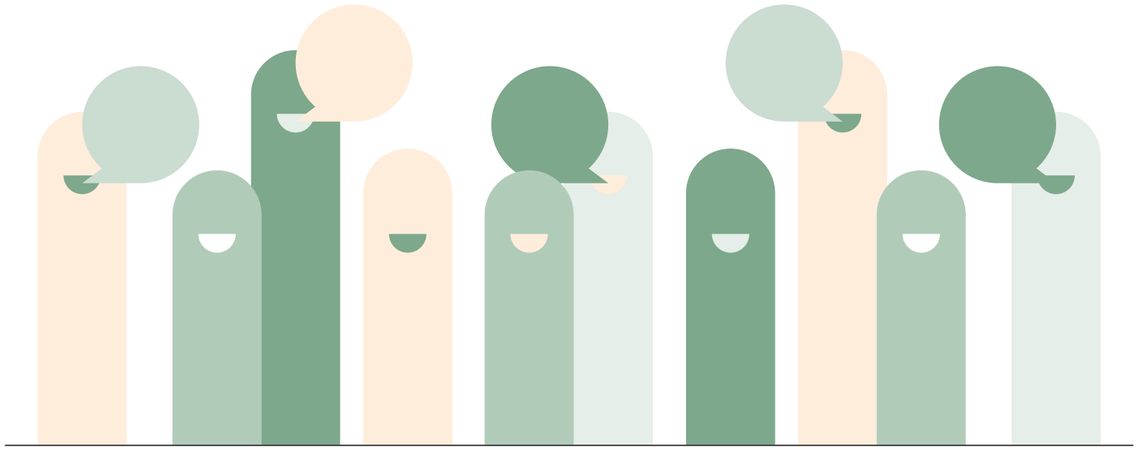
Though there are some situations where deliberations on a yes/no question may be appropriate (for example, when used to inform the vote of an elected representative, which requires a yes/no/abstain response), generally, open-ended questions are better suited as they will help to encourage discussion.

use questions that are open to multiple outcomes, not leading questions

Leading questions can skew the deliberation in a certain direction and damage trust in the process, especially if participants and/or the public perceive that they are being guided in a particular direction. Questions should demonstrate that decision-makers are genuinely open to receiving new and unexpected answers.

use clear language, not ambiguous or overly complicated wording

Frame the topic of deliberation as clearly as possible by avoiding jargon and value-laden statements. Wording should be unambiguous, so it is clear to participants what they are being asked to do.



[34] Lyn Carson, "Framing the Remit," research and development note, (newDemocracy, 2018)

Establishing governance structure

Process integrity is key to the legitimacy of deliberative engagement. Putting a governance structure in place can help ensure the process adheres to open government principles, including the right to information and transparency, and the protection of actors involved in collaborating with the government.

Once they decide to run a deliberative process, organisers should ensure clarity and transparency on the following questions:

- Who is running the process?
- Is the government primarily responsible for designing or running the process or will it be outsourced to practitioner organisations?
- Who makes the final call regarding the process decisions, and is ultimately accountable?
- Is it clear who is responsible for what?
- Is there an oversight or advisory body?
- Is there an independent or at-arm's-length committee that can provide advice or hear and act on grievances related to the process?
- Who is on the advisory body and why?
- How can its actions be subject to public scrutiny as well?
- What kind of information is disclosed to the public?
- Is there a website or a document that the public and stakeholders can scrutinise?
- Is there a feedback mechanism for people who are involved and not involved in the process?

Intentional deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Goals
Has the goal of the engagement been established? Effective deliberative engagements require a clear scope and purpose. Avoid jargon and value laden statements to ensure a clear and accessible topic. Avoid leading or binary questions, to encourage participants to think outside the box.

Suitability
Is it the right process? Deliberative engagements are best for issues of broad concern or where there is a lack of agreement. Technical issues, for example, are not best addressed through deliberative engagements.

Resources available
Is there adequate resourcing? Different methods and scales of deliberative engagement will require different resourcing (time, personnel, and funding). Ensure there are adequate resources to see the engagement through, including follow up activities, secured from the start.

Timelines
Can it be delivered within decision-making timelines? Policy or strategic opportunities and fixed milestones may affect timelines for engagement, and it is important to ensure enough time for loopback to participants post-engagement. If timelines are uncertain, it is important to be upfront with participants.

Power to act
Where does the policy delegation lie, and who will be making decisions regarding the issue(s) at stake? It is essential to clearly outline what actions, if any, can result from deliberative engagements, and identify who will be responsible for implementing them. This information should be communicated to potential participants to manage expectations and establish a clear scope for the engagement.

Contingencies
Are there plans in place to deal with delays or disruptions? Government priorities, budgets, and agency responsibilities can change. Be transparent with participants about changes and develop contingencies to minimise disruption.

Key feature 2

Inclusive

Effective deliberative engagement ensures that all those affected by the matter under discussion are afforded the right and opportunity to participate.

Inclusivity and empowerment are at the heart of effective deliberative engagement. This may include empowering marginalised and underserviced communities, and considering the needs and interests of diverse demographics, as well as future generations and the natural environment.

This section covers

Recruiting participants

Organisers can choose from multiple recruitment strategies and combine them as needed, depending on the objectives of the deliberative engagement. In this section, 4 possible strategies are introduced. This includes: open public invitation (self-selection); random selection; targeted recruitment (overrepresentation of marginalised groups); and recruitment for enclave deliberation.

Strategy 1: Open public invitation (self-selection)

Open invitation is a long established from of participant recruitment. Some argue that this is the most democratic and inclusive form of invitation, as it allows anyone to participate who wishes to do so. Open invitation gives deliberative engagement processes legitimacy. No one is excluded.

Open invitation is practiced in participatory budgets, a highly popular deliberative engagement practice originating in Brazil in the 1990s and tried and tested in various other contexts around the globe. In participatory budgets, a certain part of the governmental budget is made available for civic allocation through a competition between spending proposals for different projects. Whoever shows up at the meetings makes the decisions.

Case in Focus 2
Open public invitation

Fund my Community, South Australia

Fund my Community in South Australia was initiated in 2014 by the South Australian Government. Under this adapted version of participatory budgeting, South Australian citizens could support different project ideas put forward by community organisations through the government's online engagement portal, *YourSAy*. The success of the engagement project led to several similar government-led participatory budgeting initiatives across the state.

In practice, however, open invitation might not always prove most inclusive. Self-selection often results in the participation of people who are already politically engaged, have higher educational attainment, and identify as male. In this regard, random selection provides an attractive alternative.

Strategy 2: Random selection

Some deliberative engagement processes, such as Citizens' Assemblies, employ random selection for recruiting participants (this method is known as civic lottery or sortition). There are different ways of running a random selection process. In general, it involves a random and stratified selection of the population, aiming to broadly reflect the demographics of the population.

The main rationale for using random selection is that it creates a mirror image of the general public, or a mini-public. This enhances its legitimacy. Participants represent a microcosm of society, although it has become increasingly common to oversample populations from marginalised backgrounds that are deeply affected by the topic. In contrast, self-selection often attracts people who have a particular interest or stake in the issue, who are more likely to be higher educated and have a higher socio-economic status.

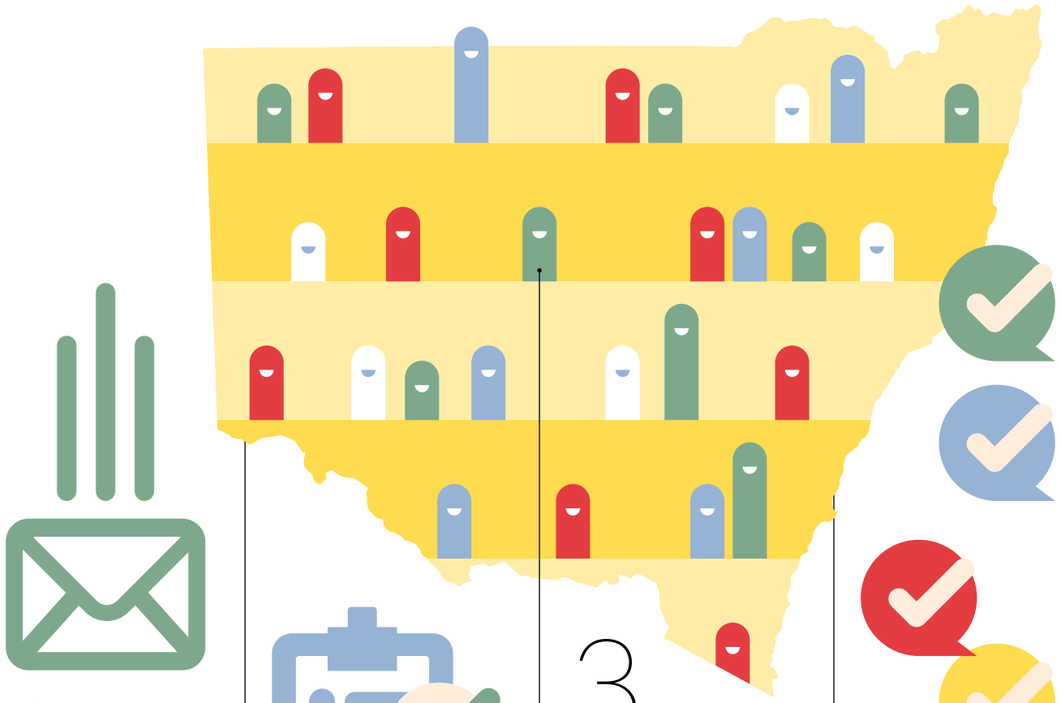
Although random selection rarely results in complete statistical representativeness, it does enable a more diverse and representative cross-section of the population to be included as participants. For instance, the Irish Citizens' Assembly on abortion included a randomly selected group of 99 citizens who were representative of the Irish population in terms of age, gender, class, and region.

Random selection may be staged. The first stage is to send invitations to randomly selected addresses. This list of potential invitees can be developed using Australia Post address data. The number of invitations must be sufficiently large to account for the very low response rate of typically less than 5 per cent. The database used can have limitations (e.g. using the electoral register limits invitations to eligible voters). It is therefore recommended that the largest and most complete database possible is used to avoid skewing the original sample from which participants will ultimately be drawn.[35]

In the second stage a sample could be drawn from these responses to reflect the target population. To stratify the sample, criteria such as gender, age, place of residence, educational attainment, ethnicity, and so on, may be applied to ensure representativeness. Because response rate is usually low using random selection, the number of criteria that can be used may be limited.

[35]Kyle Redman and Lyn Carson, "How to Recruit Participants for Citizens' Assemblies," research and development note (newDemocracy, 2022).

Random stratified selection in New South Wales



1
Initial Random Selection and Invitation

A random sample of approximately 20,000 individuals is drawn from the Australia Post database. These individuals receive invitations to participate in the process.

2
Voluntary Registration

Among those who receive invitations, interested individuals register their intent to participate.

3
Stratified Random Selection

A random sample is drawn from the list of registered participants. The sample can be stratified to meet relevant quotas to help ensure representativeness (e.g. gender or geographic location).

4
Final Participant Notification

The selected group (typically comprising 50 to 200 participants for a Citizens' Assembly) is notified and confirmed as participants.

Strategy 3: Targeted recruitment

Random selection makes sense when the issue under deliberation concerns the entire population (more or less) equally. But what if the topic of deliberative engagement concerns different groups in different extents? In this case, overrepresentation through targeted recruitment is often best.

Targeted recruitment aims to bring marginalised or affected groups to the table of deliberation and decision-making. For example, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, South Australia convened the Deliberative Forum of *CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse)* Community Leaders with the purpose of reaching out to specific communities.

In practice, targeted recruitment connects community organisations and asks for collaboration in recruiting suitable participants. This may entail individual invitations to community representatives or to individuals recommended by community organisations. Community organisations may assist in distributing open invitations through their own networks.

Recruiting participants in partnership with community organisations requires consideration of the benefits provided to these organisations. Instead of offering pre-defined incentives, it can make sense to develop goals collaboratively.

Case in Focus 3

Targeted recruitment (lived experience)

UK Citizens' Jury on Human Embryo Editing

The UK Citizens' Jury on human embryo editing had the explicit aim of understanding patient perspectives on whether the government should change existing laws to allow the intentional editing of human embryos. In this case, participants were drawn from a sample of people who attended genetics clinics, thus ensuring that participants in the deliberative process had lived experience of the issue and were part of the cohort organisers wanted to reach.[36]

Deliberative engagement processes that primarily use random selection as the mechanism for recruitment can also be complemented by targeted recruitment to amplify the voices of minorities. In NSW for example, Indigenous people make up approximately 3.4% of the population. Therefore, even if a random sample of 50 participants was perfectly reflective of the population, Indigenous people would account for only 2 participants. Without targeted recruitment, Indigenous voices risk being underrepresented and marginalised.

Case in Focus 4

Targeted Recruitment (overrepresentation)

Australia Deliberates

Organisers saw the deliberative process, Australia Deliberates, as an opportunity to lay groundwork for reconciliation and decided to oversample Indigenous participants. In addition to the 344 participants recruited through random sampling, the project recruited an additional 46 Indigenous participants. As 12% of the final deliberative cohort, Indigenous participation was well beyond its proportion of the general population, which was 2.5% at the time the process was undertaken. This overrepresentation was considered necessary to achieve the aims of the deliberative engagement.

Finally, random selection can require longer timeframes. In such cases, targeted recruitment may be more appropriate. Faster targeted recruitment may involve drawing on existing networks or stakeholder groups, however a drawback is that this level of targeting is more likely to engage people with well-established, and perhaps immovable, views.

Case in Focus 5

Targeted recruitment (combined methods)

Combined Recruitment in Western Australia

The Western Australian Government experimented with a range of deliberative approaches including hybrid recruitment techniques, combining self-selection, sortition and invitations to stakeholders. This was because organisers wanted to ensure that key stakeholders were included as well as having the representation of the broader community. In most cases combined recruitment worked well, however for controversial issues it caused difficulties as stakeholders with specific interests sought to dominate the deliberations.[37]

[36] Wellcome Connecting Science, "UK Citizens' Jury on Genome Editing," (2023).

[37] Judy Gregory, Janette Hartz-Karp, and Rebecca Watson, "Using Deliberative Techniques to Engage the Community in Policy Development," *Australia and New Zealand Health Policy*, 5, no. 16 (2008).

Strategy 4: Recruitment for enclave deliberation

Enclave deliberation aims to empower socially disadvantaged groups by providing an exclusive forum for participants who share a common identity and who might otherwise be marginalised from the process. While the method of targeted recruitment outlined above may enhance the standing of these groups, marginalised groups still encounter dominant groups in deliberative forums, potentially limiting their expressive freedom and contribution. For example, when victims of gender-based violence deliberate, it may be the best choice to create an exclusive forum for victims.

Enclave deliberation offers a safer space for marginalised communities to deliberate more openly, to collectively shape their agenda and demands in a mutually supportive environment before entering a potentially contentious public debate.

The regional dialogues that led to the development of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart in Australia* in 2017 is an example of enclave deliberation. In this case, Indigenous communities set up a deliberative process to formulate their collective views and proposals before entering the broader public debate (see **Special Feature** for a detailed description of this process).

Enclave deliberation can work as a standalone forum, or it can be one part of a larger process. Organisers should consider which marginalised communities or groups are involved and whether they might benefit from having time and space set aside to deliberate among themselves. Research demonstrates that well-structured enclave deliberation increases the inclusion, participation, and influence of those members of society who have otherwise been excluded from public discourse.[38]

Case in Focus 6

Enclave deliberation

Housing Emergency in the UK

In 2023, Shelter, a national housing and homelessness charity, commissioned a deliberative engagement process to address the housing emergency in the UK. The Citizens' Summit ran for 15 hours across 4 sessions (3 online and one face-to-face). The process brought together 75 participants, all of whom had experiences of housing issues. Participants discussed and developed potential policy solutions to the housing emergency through a series of deliberative workshops designed for them as an enclave.[39]

[38]Carolyne Abdullah, Christoper E. Karpowitz, and Chad Raphael, "Affinity Groups, Enclave Deliberation, and Equity," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 12, no. 2 (2016). [39]National Centre for Social Research, "The Citizens' Summit on the Housing Emergency," (2023).

Enabling internal inclusion

Inclusion is more than finding the right recruiting method; it means actively enabling just, diverse and equal participation. Political theorist Iris Marion Young distinguishes between external and internal inclusion.

External inclusion refers to the inclusion of different participants in the process, ensuring for example, that there is adequate representation of minoritised groups among participants.

Internal inclusion refers to the inclusion of different voices in the process itself, ensuring that all participants are heard and their voice valued. When recruitment strategies only target external inclusion, they seek to bring the 'right' participants into the deliberative process. But this is not enough if there are obstacles hindering their full participation.

Internal inclusion goes beyond tokenistic approaches to diversity and seeks to foster the conditions for equal participation for all. Even if individuals are physically present and formally included various factors such as the stigma associated with marginalised identity, differences in language proficiency and education levels combined with personality types may still disadvantage certain participants in deliberative settings. Enabling internal inclusion requires continually reflecting on the barriers to participation that people face and putting in place strategies to address those barriers.

This means considering such aspects as cultural needs, literacy levels, and the geographical and social disadvantage caused by urban/rural divides.

Internal inclusion is about being mindful of the systemic power imbalances that impact people's engagement in deliberation. Organisers and facilitators should assess whether critical voices are present in sufficient numbers to enable more equitable participation overall. An individual participant may feel isolated and essentialised, and as a result be less likely to express a minority position that contradicts the dominant view in the room. A critical mass of participants from a group is required to account for and communicate the diversity of viewpoints that may exist within the group.

The critical mass may also be necessary to convince others, particularly members of dominant groups, that the perspectives or insights of marginalised groups are widely shared beyond the deliberative forum.[40]

[40]Jane Mansbridge, "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'," *The Journal of Politics* 61, no. 3 (1999): 628-657.

Including Indigenous voices

In the Australian context, enabling the inclusion of Indigenous communities in deliberative engagement is of particular importance.

Empowering Indigenous communities to share decision making roles and responsibilities with government is also a key part of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap[41] and the NSW Government's plan to Closing the Gap.[42]

The paper (see **Special Feature**) by Dr Justin McCaul, *Deliberative Engagement with Indigenous People*, provides a conceptual framework to guide agencies seeking to develop deliberative processes that engage with Indigenous Australians.

Capturing the key ideas from that paper, the following list summarises best practices and all-too-common mistakes.

The best practices to build Indigenous inclusion should incorporate the following elements:

build trust
Invest in relationship building and actively engage Indigenous communities and organisations.

share decision-making power
Indigenous people must be supported to lead discussions on problems and solutions.

co-design
Incorporate Indigenous perspectives through their participation in developing a policy or program.

enhance capacity
Provide much-needed resources for Indigenous organisations and build cultural competency within government agencies.

generate free, prior, and informed consent
Consent requires more than Indigenous peoples saying 'yes' to a proposal. The proposal itself needs to be co-created.

partner with Indigenous organisations
For example, relevant Indigenous language groups in the area.

create opportunities for intersectional diversity
Indigenous communities are internally diverse! Design an engagement strategy that creates opportunities for groups such as women, young people, and LGBTQIA+ people to have their say.

ensure external evaluation
If mistrust or a failure to achieve stated aims is evident, an independent external evaluation may help rebuild trust.

Best practices in Indigenous inclusion avoid such common mistakes as:

postponing Indigenous engagement until the end
Leaving engagement until the end of the process creates frustration because input at this stage is less relevant and effective, and potentially feels tokenistic.

following a one-size-fits-all approach
No single Indigenous community is the same. This means strategies to engage Indigenous people must be place-based.

allocating too little time
For Indigenous people to provide informed consent, their community may need to deliberate among themselves before deciding. This may take time.

expecting time and knowledge to be free
Financially compensating Indigenous people is an important form of appreciation. This is no different than paying any other expert or specialist for their time and expertise.

forgetting accountability
An accountability system in which Indigenous people can discuss what went wrong and where improvements can be made, should form the basis of any deliberative engagement process.

Case in Focus 7
Inclusion of Indigenous voices

Australia Deliberates: Reconciliation – where to from here?

As well as oversampling Indigenous people in its community of participants, Australia Deliberates organisers assigned multiple Indigenous participants to 10 of 25 small groups. This design choice created a critical mass of Indigenous people in almost half of the deliberative groups. Following the deliberative process, whilst all groups became more supportive of reconciliation policies, movement in favour of such policies was significantly larger in groups with Indigenous representation. This was attributed to mini-public participants having heard 'first-hand personal stories of disadvantage from the Indigenous Australians, as well as first-hand views of what Indigenous Australians want to see done about the disadvantage, both symbolically and practically.'[43]

[41]Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Priority Reforms (Closing the Gap, n.d.). [42]NSW Government, Aboriginal Affairs NSW. Closing the Gap: How we are going to achieve it (2025).

[43]Christoper E. Karpowitz, and Chad Raphael, "Ideals of Inclusion in Deliberation," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 12, no. 2 (2016).

Including children and young people

The terms 'children' and 'young people' generally differentiate pre-adolescence from adolescence to the mid-20s. While children are often viewed through a deficit model that emphasises what they "lack" to be full contributing citizens, they bring unique perspectives and capacities that can significantly enrich deliberative processes.

Effective deliberative engagement acknowledges the democratic agency and capabilities of children and young people as active participants in deliberation today, not just as future citizens.[44]

There is growing interest in using deliberative engagement methods to hear the voices of children and young people on important policy issues. This interest stems from Scotland's Climate Assembly, which was the first to incorporate the perspective and ideas of children under 16 into its main document of recommendations.

Deliberative processes targeting the participation of children and young people require targeted recruitment strategies, and additional design adaptations, such as building comfortable and productive spaces.[45] Standard recruitment processes pose a challenge for recruiting children and young people, because they are not yet, or are less likely to be, registered as voters or householders. Best practice for youth deliberation involves partnerships with youth organisations and schools for recruiting participants, and creating opportunities for young people themselves, in designing the process.

Case in Focus 8
Inclusion of children and young people

Ireland's Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss

In October 2022, Ireland hosted its first Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss alongside the national Citizens' Assembly. Co-designed with children and young people, the Assembly gathered 35 randomly selected members aged 7-17 from across the country to explore, discuss, and develop action plans for protecting and restoring biodiversity in Ireland. This Assembly first issued an open call for participants, inviting children and young people across Ireland who are passionate about nature, the environment and biodiversity. From the 510 expressions of interest received, 35 Assembly members were selected by a stratified representative sampling process. Selected participants are involved in the design and oversight of the assembly process, including materials and activities, and even in facilitating the process. Over two weekends, children worked with an adult advisory group of experts in deliberative democracy and children's environmental rights and developed 58 recommendations, which they have presented to Malcolm Noonan T.D., Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform.

As with any robust process of deliberative engagement, it is crucial to allocate sufficient time and resources to ensure that deliberation is designed in a way that is both comfortable and inclusive for children and young people. Building relationships and bringing on additional expertise in engaging with this age group is essential. Extra time and flexibility may be required to involve children and young people in co-designing the process and remit of the deliberative process.[46]

[44]Kei Nishiyama, "Deliberators, not Future Citizens: Children in Democracy," *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 13, no. 1 (2017).
[45]Lyn Carson et al., "Comparing a Citizens' Jury with a 'Youth Jury'," research and development note, (newDemocracy, 2018).

[46]Carson, "Framing the Remit," (2018).

Including future generations and nature

Democratic decisions often seem inattentive to the interests of future generations, even if they are based on inclusive and participatory processes. Future generations do not yet exist and are therefore excluded from democratic processes and recruitment strategies. The same is true for the natural environment and animals, which are usually thought of as unable to participate in deliberative processes.

Deliberative engagement can help to support the inclusion of future generations and nature in policy debates and decision-making processes.

Future generations can be included in deliberative processes through perspective-taking and role-playing exercises that encourage participants to consider their needs and viewpoints.

Case in Focus 9
Inclusion of future generations

Future Design Model

One promising way of enhancing the representation of future generations' interests in deliberative engagement is the '**future design model**' developed in Japan by Keishiro Hara and her colleagues at the Future Design Lab at Osaka University. The purpose is to create an 'imaginary future generation' and bring their perspectives from the future into the present. A series of workshops were designed in a local municipality in Japan, where half of the participants were asked to address the issue from the perspective of people living in future, in the year 2060. The other half of participants engaged in deliberation from their present perspective. The analysis of this process revealed stark contrasts in priorities between the 2 groups, and the subsequent decision-making had reflected the preferences of future-generation groups.[47] The reported benefits of future design experiments include greater consideration of long-term impacts of current decisions, greater creativity in problem solving, and greater empathy across generations.[48] Future design has been successfully implemented in several municipalities across Japan.

Practice and research on the inclusion of nature in deliberative engagement is still emergent. There are several cases around the world where rivers and even nature itself have been granted legal personhood including the right to sue at court and be afforded legal representation. These examples illustrate that both the debate and innovations in practice are moving fast.

Case in Focus 10
Inclusion of nature

New Zealand's Whanganui River as a person

In March 2017, the Whanganui River in New Zealand was given full legal personhood. The **Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017** acknowledges the river as an indivisible living entity, which reflects the Māori understanding of the connectedness with nature. The river is now legally represented by its human guardians, one of which is nominated by the Māori iwi and the other by the government. Guardians can, for example, legally defend the river in case of pollution. The case of Whanganui personhood is just one example of rivers acquiring personhood. There are also cases in Colombia, India and Bangladesh. Bolivia and Ecuador are the first countries to recognise the rights of nature.

[47]Keishiro Hara et al., "Reconciling Intergenerational Conflicts with Imaginary Future Generations: Evidence from a Participatory Deliberation Practice in a Municipality in Japan," *Sustainability Science* 14, (2019) 1605–1619. [48]Suzette Brooks Masters and Karthick Ramakrishnan, "The Promise of Future Design. Using Intergenerational Role Play and Negotiation to Improve Planning and Decision-Making—and become Better Ancestors," School of International Futures, (2024).

Several measures can be used to include future generations and nature in deliberative engagement, for example:

the building of awareness
A deliberative engagement can open with a statement situating the issue in a planetary context, reminding participants of the crucial role of nature and future generations and the potential effects of their decisions on them. Expert witnesses can provide empirical evidence. Participants can be prompted to reflect throughout on the impact of their decisions on specific species and ecosystems.

physical connection to place and space
Deliberative engagement can take place in the natural surroundings they concern. Citizens assemblies on water governance, for example, could be held at riverbanks. Citizens juries on biodiversity could include field trips to the forest. Participatory budgets and planning cells could include the deliberative walk, or 'participatory process in which the participants, by deliberating in small groups and by joining facilitated walks, tackle a complex policy issue that has highly intertwined social and physical dimensions.'[49]

This section has emphasised that inclusion and empowerment are at the heart of effective deliberative engagement. Organisers and commissioning bodies must pay attention to measures that ensure marginalised and underrepresented groups are supported to wholeheartedly participate in deliberative engagement processes.

[49]Harri Raisio and Peter Ehrström, "Taking Deliberation to the Streets: Reflections on Deliberative Walks," *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, 21, no. 4 (2017): 29.

Inclusive deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Selection
Who isn't in the room? Ensure the recruitment strategy is appropriate not just for the chosen method of deliberative engagement, but also for the topic and goals of the deliberation and includes enough participants from affected communities to provide critical mass.

Eligibility
Who can participate? Recruitment processes must clearly communicate criteria for participation, and encourage 'everyday' participants, not only those who have previously engaged in government-led consultations.

Lowering barriers to inclusion
What measures are in place to ease participants' care responsibilities? This includes, for example, provisions for childcare, to ensure those with caring responsibilities are not excluded from participating.

Language
Is there a plan to meet language requirements? Approach community representatives in advance to assess potential language requirements for all communications.

Accessibility
What measures are in place to accommodate accessibility and support requirements? Think about accessibility early and ask participants what, if any support they may require to fully participate in the process (see Meet People's Accessibility Needs).

Compensation
Are participants compensated? Participants give up their time to partake in deliberative engagements. This can be a barrier to participation, especially for those in casual employment. Providing some form of compensation can help alleviate these barriers.

Timing
How will the time and date affect participation? Deliberative engagements during business hours can prevent those in employment and study from participating, while deliberating in the evening or weekends can be more difficult for those with caring responsibilities. Likewise, ensure that dates for engagements do not clash with cultural and religious festivals.

Context/structural inequalities
How do different groups experience the issue? Consider how the topic of deliberation, the participant group, and the evidence presented will be received by diverse members of society. For example, healthcare services produce some profoundly unequal treatments. Review how these structural inequalities within the engagement can be addressed to ensure that the process considers their relevance for the issue and for participants. This could mean, for example, ensuring that there is an expert present to discuss the known inequities of an issue.

Key feature 3

Reflective

Effective deliberative engagement provides opportunities for collective reflection, seeking to generate considered judgements through balanced information, facilitated discussion, and exploration of multiple perspectives. It seeks to harness the collective wisdom of participants rather than pitting them against each other.

Deliberative engagement stands out from other forms of engagement through its emphasis on reflection. Voting in an election or referendum does not necessitate prior deliberation and collective reflection. Similarly, surveys can reveal the aggregate opinions of isolated individuals, but these results are not derived from a process where people come together to discuss and listen to each other, evaluate the evidence and collectively weigh trade-offs.

Research indicates that most people are either unaware of their own preferences or possess preferences that are unformed or subject to change.[50] Reflection helps people to become aware of their own preferences and priorities, both of which can be transformed through deliberation.[51]

This section covers

- facilitation in deliberative engagement **p59**
- provision of diverse and balanced information **p60**
- checklist for implementation **p63**

Facilitating deliberative engagement

Facilitation provides a structured and intentional approach to deliberative engagement, promoting inclusivity and reflection.

In most cases, a trained facilitator supports the deliberative process. Alternatively, one of the participants may facilitate (peer facilitation), or the group can be self-moderating to ensure that everybody's voice is heard, and that the participants are able to reflect on the issue as a group.

Facilitators may be trained professionals, volunteers, or participants themselves. Whatever their experience, they will guide the deliberation through its process towards an outcome.

Facilitating a deliberative process involves encouraging equitable participation throughout, supporting participants to develop and share arguments, to listen to each other, to learn together, to reflect, and to collaborate.

Without careful facilitation, marginalised voices may be silenced or dismissed.

Facilitators are essential in shaping the group dynamics throughout the deliberative process. Establishing positive group dynamics at the outset is more critical than often assumed. Research indicates that strong initial group-building can help impel deliberative norms, such as active listening and motivation to explore new ideas and proposals.[52]

There are various facilitation styles and techniques, along with several influential guidebooks and toolkits designed to enhance facilitation skills, such as the *Facilitating Deliberation – A Practical Guide* from MosaicLab.[53] Research suggests that facilitation, like other aspects of the engagement, ought to be matched to the objectives of the process.

[50] Staffan Himmelroos and Henrik S. Christensen, "The Potential of Deliberative Reasoning: Patterns of Attitude Change and Consistency in Cross-cutting and Like-minded Deliberation," *Acta Politica* 55, no. 2 (2018): 135–155. [51] Jane Mansbridge, "The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2010): 64–100.

[52] Simon Niemeyer et al., "How Deliberation Happens: Enabling Deliberative Reason," *American Political Science Review* 118, no. 1 (2024): 345-362. [53] White et al., "Facilitating Deliberation," (2022). See also: Kari Grain et al., "Facilitation for Community Transformation: A Toolkit for Community-Engaged Researchers," Community-Engaged Initiative (Simon Fraser University, 2024).

Case in Focus 11
Facilitation in deliberative engagement

Dynamic Facilitation in Austria's Wisdom Councils

Dynamic facilitation was developed by Jim Rough in 1980. This is a deliberative moderation technique that assumes everybody is an expert. Citizens are experts of their own lives. The role of the facilitator is to help participants reflect on their own ideas and preferences by asking a series of open questions. Today, dynamic facilitation is the central facilitation mode of 'wisdom councils'.[54] In Vorarlberg, a federal state of Austria, wisdom councils can be called into action by the government or by a mere 1000 signatures of citizens. Wisdom councils constitute a randomly selected mini-public of around 15 participants. What sets this mini-public apart is that it does not invite experts. Instead of listening to expert panels, participants listen to each other. The facilitator moves from participant to participant and holds a series of mini-interviews. Ideas are visually captured on flip charts. The process continues over several ideas and generates advice for governmental policy implementation.[54]

Providing diverse and balanced information

Evidence and perspectives provided within deliberative engagement must be diverse so participants can evaluate the issue from different perspectives.

The information provided determines whose voices and values are heard. As such, the process by which experts and witnesses are selected by organisers should be clear and should take into consideration principles of inclusion and diversity. There should be transparency for participants around how information sources were collated and why.

To enable the inclusion of diverse sources of evidence and information, many processes offer the opportunity for participants to request additional perspectives and evidence. This supports ownership of the process, but it can entail some risks such as enabling confirmation bias, or participants wanting experts to confirm rather than challenge their existing views.[55]

If experts are invited to deliberative engagement, it is important to ensure a diversity of experts with a broad range of views and experiences.

Diverse sources of knowledge

Organisers should reflect on what constitutes knowledge in a deliberative process, and consider what kind of knowledge is privileged. Deliberative processes should be equitable and accessible, and this applies also to the selection of expert witnesses. As such organisers should ensure transparent and inclusive processes for expert involvement.[56] Depending on the context and issue under discussion, it may be important to include the expertise of people with lived experience, or Indigenous systems of knowledge. Presenting lived experience and other ways of knowing as evidence in a deliberation can help validate different forms of knowledge and ease the burden on marginalised participants to represent their experiences. For example, the *Yoorrook Justice Commission* treats truth-telling as evidence giving, with Indigenous people's stories as expert evidence. They are the experts in their own experience (see **Special Feature**).

Diverse ways of learning

Organisers should consider different ways in which participants can learn about the topic at hand. Language in written briefing materials and expert presentations should be accessible and engaging. Organisers should also consider additional and alternative ways of learning, such as site visits and tours, interactive games, videos, and storytelling. Methods of communication should consider local contexts and circumstances such as levels of literacy and formal education, and ways in which the affected communities usually communicate.

[54]Hans Asenbaum, Facilitating Inclusion: Austrian Wisdom Councils as Democratic Innovation between Consensus and Diversity. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 12(2) (2016). [55]Lyn Carson and David Schechter, "Choosing Expert Speakers," research and development note, (newDemocracy, 2017).

[56]Jennifer J. Roberts et al., "Inclusion and Diversity Among Expert Witnesses in Deliberative Mini-publics," research brief, (University of Strathclyde, 2022).

Reflective deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Transparency

How will information and sources be collated, and why? The information provided during a deliberation determines whose voices and values are heard. The processes for selecting experts and witnesses must be clear and transparent to participants and take into consideration principles of inclusion and diversity.

Knowledge

What constitutes knowledge in deliberative engagements? Consider what kinds of knowledge, and whose perspectives, are being privileged. Depending on the context and issue under discussion, it can be important to include the expertise of people with lived experience or Indigenous systems of knowledge. Presenting lived experience and other ways of knowing as evidence in a deliberation can help validate different forms of knowledge and ease the burden on marginalised participants to represent their experiences.

Learning

What is the appropriate format for learning? Language in briefing materials and expert presentations should be accessible and engaging. Additional and alternative ways of learning, such as site visits and tours, interactive games, videos, and storytelling, can also be used. Methods of communication should consider local contexts and circumstances such as levels of literacy and formal education, and how affected and participating communities usually communicate.

Facilitation

What kind of facilitation is required? Think about the kinds of facilitator skills or qualities that the topic, participants, and process will require to ensure equitable participation and the navigation of disagreements is productive.

Group-building

Are there any activities designed for group-building at the outset of a deliberative process? Organisers should consider allocating time for dedicated group-building activities where participants themselves work through what procedural norms should apply during deliberation.

Time

Is there sufficient time for collective reflection? While the time allocated for deliberative processes may differ from one method to another, it is important to make sure there is sufficient time to collectively synthesise the information received during deliberation. The OECD's Good Practice Principles recommend a minimum of 4 days though others are less prescriptive, emphasising that there must be 'sufficient time' for participants to learn about the issue in depth and deliberate meaningfully. Appropriate time depends on the breadth, complexity, and novelty of the topic being deliberated.

Key feature 4

Connected

Deliberative democracy is larger than individual deliberative engagement processes. It is a broad public conversation that occurs in multiple and partly overlapping sites. These include social movements and civic initiatives, neighbourhood organisations and community groups, journalism and social media exchanges, parliamentary debate and backstage politics, as well as everyday conversations between citizens.[57]

Effective deliberative engagement needs to be embedded in these local cultures, as well as connected to the wider institutional and political context and the democratic system.

Making deliberative engagement connected means paying attention to 'integrative design characteristics' that aim to embed these processes within their social, political and administrative contexts.[58] In practice, this requires identifying the range of actors and institutions — political, executive, professional and civil society, public sphere — and ensuring that deliberative processes are meaningfully connected to them.

This section covers

Establishing connections between deliberative engagement processes and the wider society as well as the democratic system is key, because:

- when deliberative engagement processes are connected to decision-makers, they will have a greater impact on political decisions
- when deliberative engagement processes are connected to societal groups and civil society organisations, they will be perceived as more legitimate
- when deliberative engagement processes are connected to the public sphere, they will enable more people to learn about them, which will increase their impact.

Connecting to civil society and citizens

When designing a deliberative engagement process, a good starting point for building in connection is in civil society. Civil society is the sphere of activity between the state and private realm, made up of self-organised civic groups and non-government organisations such as religious organisations, sports clubs, or volunteer associations.

Consider the community organisations and civil society groups that could be affected by and interested in the process being planned. Rather than fearing them as critical audience, involve them as partners. It is a good idea to get in touch with them early on, consult them for advice, and see which kind of collaborations might be useful. This collaboration might range from consultation or external evaluation to full partnership. The deliberative engagement may even be co-designed with community partners. Research suggests that deliberative and participatory forums can thrive when they are surrounded and supported by a vibrant network of civil society associations.[59]

Beyond civil society, connection can also be established with unorganised citizens. Through social media engagement or public surveys, citizens' input into designing deliberative processes can be gathered. Digital technologies generally provide useful ways to expand the reach of deliberative engagement. For example, New York City's participatory budget, first established 2011, has expanded its input by allowing for online participation since 2021.

[57]Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Christiane Grill, "From the Living Room to the Meeting Hall? Citizens' Political Talk in the Deliberative System," *Political Communication*, 37, no. 6 (2020): 832-851. [58]John Boswell, Rikki Dean, and Graham Smith, "Integrating Citizen Deliberation into Climate Governance: Lessons on Robust Design from Six Climate Assemblies," *Public Administration* 101, no. 1 (2023): 182-200.

[59]Gianpaola Baiocchi, "Emergent Public Spheres: Talking Politics in Participatory Governance," *American Sociological Review*, 68 (1): 52-74.

Case in Focus 12
Integrating deliberative and broader public engagement

The Better Suburbs Program

The **Better Suburbs Program** was a multi-stage engagement process in the ACT that used a range of methods to ensure consultation with the broader public was well integrated with a deliberative engagement. The first stage involved gathering feedback on city services through surveys, social media posts, an online discussion board, and pop-up events at local town centres. This feedback was used to develop a guide for kitchen table conversations to take place. Feedback from both phases fed into a five-day deliberative forum, with the last phase of the forum running as a participatory budgeting trial. Following the forum, a small group of participants held further meetings to decide spending allocations. The ACT Government then conducted engagement activities with local schools and communities where the forum recommended spending for new projects.

Connecting to the public sphere

The public sphere is where people come together as free and equal members of the society, exchange opinions on issues of common concern, and form public opinion.[60] The public sphere serves as both a crucial site and a primary focus for deliberative engagement.[61]

Only by connecting to the public sphere can deliberative engagement have an impact beyond its immediate participants.

One way of enabling this connection is by using media to link a deliberative engagement process to the public sphere. While some may hope that the media would naturally be interested in deliberative engagement, real-life experience have shown that media uptake must be carefully designed into the process, and even then, it can be difficult for deliberative engagement to gain traction. Strategic activities around media and communications need to be factored into planning and budgets from the outset, not as an afterthought.

Case in Focus 13
Connecting to the public sphere

Climate Assembly UK's limited impact on public debate

Despite having an explicit aim of influencing the broader public, Climate Assembly UK struggled to gain traction with the broader public and in media coverage. At the time of the assembly, other news events like Brexit and COVID-19 dominated headlines, which affected the salience of the assembly. Whilst these elements cannot be controlled, there were other aspects of the process that could have potentially improved the assembly's public reach. Evaluators found that the budget for communications was insufficient. This was especially disappointing because the evaluators also found that when people were aware of the assembly, their support of the process and its mandate increased over time.[62]

[60] Jordan McSwiney et al., "Building Democratic Resilience: Protecting the Public Sphere from Violent Extremism," *Crime and Delinquency* (2024). [61] McSwiney et al., "Building Democratic Resilience" (2024).

[62] Elstub et al., "Evaluation of Climate Assembly UK," (2021).

Connecting to experts and decision-makers

Experts and decision-makers are typically highly informed about the issue at hand and are valuable sources of information in the context of deliberative engagement. Their involvement can be beneficial as members of an advisory or organising committee, as expert witnesses, in the preparation of briefing materials, or as observers of the deliberation.

The connection to experts and public servants in deliberative engagement can enhance the impact of these processes. They might be responsible for implementing recommendations or ensuring compliance down the line. Their support, or otherwise, can therefore affect the consequentiality of the deliberative engagement process.

To engage with experts and decision-makers effectively, it can be useful to undertake some stakeholder mapping at the beginning of the deliberative engagement process, to identify key actors and existing issues that may impact the deliberative outcomes. The precise role of any of these actors should be made clear early on, to protect the integrity of the process from undue influence.

Case in Focus 14
Connecting to experts and decision-makers

Citizens' Jury in Adelaide

Australia's first state level **citizens' jury** was held in Adelaide in 2013 and addressed the topic of safe nightlife in the city. Its evaluation found that some experts and public servants had felt excluded from the process and how it was set up.[63] Some felt that their expertise hadn't been acknowledged, or that they had been bypassed. As a result, there was some ambivalence towards the final recommendations, where some felt they lacked value by reflecting existing or planned policies. Evaluators recommended the more careful integration and involvement of experts and public servants into future processes.[64]

[63]The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, "Verdicts on the Jury: Views of Jurors, Bureaucrats and Experts on South Australia's First Citizens' Jury," The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, (2013). [64]Lyn Carson and Tyrone Reitman, "Constructively Incorporating Stakeholders in Public Decision-Making," research and development note, (newDemocracy, 2018).

Connected deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Context
Where is the engagement situated? Deliberative engagements should be grounded in their context. This includes connecting them to existing community decision-making processes and developing strategies for broader community engagement, while accounting for matters such as historical and ongoing structures of discrimination and marginalisation.

Engagement
Are civil society groups involved? Consider engaging with relevant civil society and community groups from the start of the process. These groups can provide important local connections and help to ground the process in the community, whether as advisors, collaborators, or official partners.

Government
How is the deliberation related to other government business? Deliberative engagements should not be treated as standalone practices, but as a key part of the governance processes. Consider how the deliberative engagement could interact with other government-led consultation practices and government objectives such as improving public trust, to ensure the deliberation is a part of broader government work (such as the survey-based Have Your Say initiative in NSW, and South Australia's YourSAy online consultation hub).

Publics
How will it reach the broader public? Effective deliberative engagements should be connected to wider public discussions on the topic or issue, such as in the media. This will not happen automatically. Develop a communications plan at the outset to give the process the best chance of a broader impact.

Key feature 5

Consequential

Effective deliberative engagement is consequential. In the design of deliberative engagement, participants should know what the consequences of their discussions will be.

There are multiple ways an engagement can have impact, ranging from influence on policy decisions to contributing to wider public debate.

For deliberative engagement to be consequential, it must have an impact on collective decisions or social outcomes.[65] This includes, but is not limited to, having an impact on the deliberating individuals and groups, as well as on their relationship with organisers.

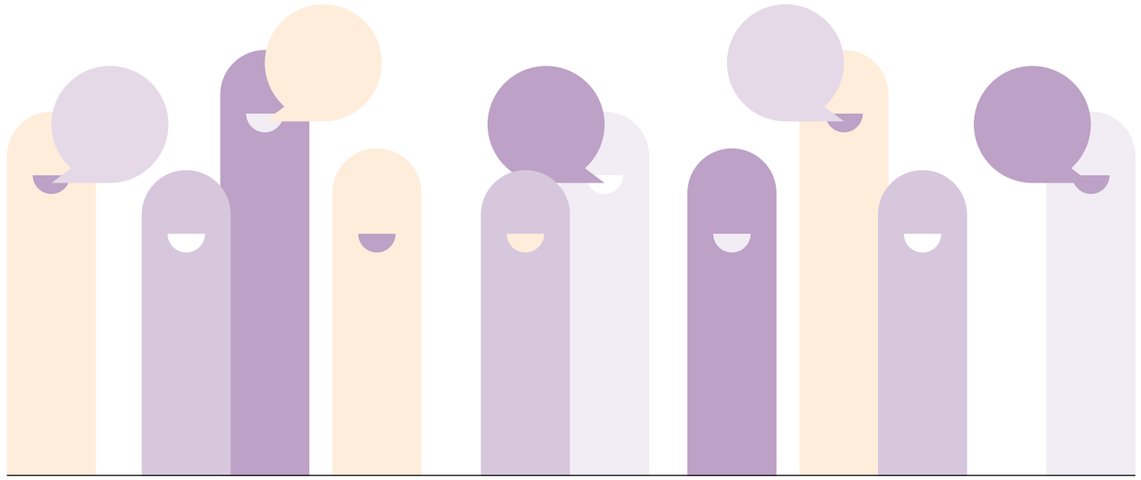
One of the biggest reputational risks for deliberative processes is that they end up having no discernible impact, leaving the public to question the point of them. Impact is a complex concept and often a matter of perspective.[66]

Achieving impact is not necessarily about empowering a deliberative process to make final decisions, or even guaranteeing to implement all recommendations. Impact can be achieved through various other pathways. For example, deliberative engagement can affect the wider public debate on the issue at hand or the context in which the decisions are made.

This section covers

- identifying pathways to impact **p72**
- factors influencing impact **p74**
- checklist for implementation **p75**

Deliberative processes can have both short- and long-term impacts. When designing deliberative engagement, organisers should adopt a broad understanding of impact and consider the various pathways for achieving it.



[65] John S. Dryzek, "Democratization as Deliberative Capacity Building," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 11 (2009): 1379–1402.
[66] Parry and Ercan, "In the Eyes of Beholders," (2024).

Identifying pathways to impact

For deliberative engagement to be consequential, the intended impacts need to be clear. The pathways for achieving impact are many and varied, and are grouped here as follows:

impact on political decision-making

Political decision-making can be impacted directly, such as when decision-makers agree to implement the recommendations of a deliberative process.

Some scholars advise against granting deliberative processes a direct decision-making role, cautioning that overstating their status early may potentially backfire on organisers by putting too much pressure on the process.[67]

It is important that the deliberation can impact decision-making in some way. This does not mean that decision-makers must agree to implement all recommendations, but that decision-makers must be upfront and clear with organisers, participants and the public about what they plan to do with the outcomes of the engagement.[68]

impact on public debate

Deliberative processes can stimulate public debate[69] or act as trusted sources of public information[70], but these desirable outcomes rarely just happen. Impact on public debate must be carefully designed into the process. Even then, it can be difficult for a deliberative engagement to gain this kind of traction. Broader public engagement through media and other forms of communication needs to be factored into planning and budgets from the outset.

impact on participants

Deliberative engagement can have a significant impact on individuals through changes in their beliefs, attitudes and civic behaviour. Studies have shown that taking part in deliberative processes can produce higher levels of citizen efficacy, with measurable effects on political behaviours like voting, volunteering or contacting representatives.[71]

impact on restoring public trust

When designed well, deliberative processes increase the confidence of government agencies, stakeholders and bureaucrats in the public's capacity for deliberation, while also increasing the public's confidence in the government.[72]

[67]John Boswell, Simon Niemeyer, and Carolyn M. Hendriks, "Julia Gillard's Citizens' Assembly Proposal for Australia: A Deliberative Democratic Analysis," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 2 (2013): 164–178. [68]Lucy Parry, Nicole Curato, and John S. Dryzek, "Governance of Deliberative Mini-publics: Emerging Consensus and Divergent Views," *Policy and Politics*, (2024). [69]Simon Niemeyer, "Scaling up Deliberation to Mass Publics: Harnessing Minipublics in a Deliberative System," in *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Involving Citizens in the Democratic*, ed. Kimmo Gronlund, Andre Bachtiger, and Maija Setala, (ECPR Press, 2013), 177-201. [70]Michael Mackenzie and Mark Warren, "Two Trust Based Uses of Minipublics in Democratic Systems," in *Deliberative Systems*, ed. John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 95- 124.

[71]Paolo Spada and Lex Paulson, "Measuring the Effect of Collective Intelligence Processes that Leverage Participation and Deliberation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intelligence for Democracy and Governance*, ed. Stephen Boucher, Carina Antonia Hallin, and Lex Paulson, (Routledge, 2023), 78–107. [72]Parry and Ercan, "In the Eyes of Beholders," (2024).

Factors influencing impact

Many factors can influence the impact of deliberative engagement.[73] These include factors such as the:

- relevance and timeliness of the topic of the deliberative engagement
- prior planning and preparation for how public authorities will deal with any ensuing recommendations
- responsiveness of political leaders to the engagement process and outcomes
- existence of deliberative engagement champions in the public sector
- quality of connections with the broader public (see **Key Feature 4**)
- participation of relevant stakeholders
- level of publicity, including media attention, for the deliberative engagement
- integrity of the deliberative engagement process (see **Key Feature 6**)
- quality of the recommendations that might result from the deliberative engagement
- the clarity and transparency of the lines of accountability for the success of the deliberative engagement process.

[73]Wendy Russell, "The Macro-impacts of Citizen Deliberation Processes," newDemocracy Foundation, (2017).

Case in Focus 15
Factors influencing impact

The Scottish Climate Assembly

The Scottish Government's official response to its Climate Assembly recommendations left participants feeling frustrated. The response focused primarily on existing or planned government policies, prompting one assembly member to comment that 'we didn't want a list of what we were already doing, we wanted a list of what you are now going to do differently because of what we said.'

Organisers then took steps that enhanced the impact of the recommendations in unexpected ways. First, they invited the assembly to reconvene. The assembly spent 2 days reviewing the response and the evidence with the Children's Parliament before drafting a written statement to send back to the government, which included calling for an accountability mechanism to monitor the implementation of the recommendations. Second, a follow-up project was established to support participants in holding the government to account. This was funded by the government's secretariat, who were part of the original group of assembly organisers. The follow-up project aimed to equip motivated participants with the capacity to continue their involvement. One result was the establishment by participants of a relationship with a Scottish Parliamentary committee to continue holding the government to account.

Whilst the assembly did not directly impact policy, as participants might have hoped, the above series of events provided a test case for how decision-makers can be responsive, how practice can be improved, and how deliberation can have an impact beyond immediate political decision-making.

Consequential deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Impact
What are the desired outcomes of deliberative engagement? Develop multiple impact pathways beyond its effect on political decision-making. Consider the political and social context.

Publicity
Is there a media plan to disseminate information about deliberative engagement in the broader public sphere? Effective processes build in a plan for engaging the media from the outset of the deliberations.

Sharing
How will findings and lessons be shared? Participants and affected communities should have access to any materials collected and generated throughout the deliberative engagement. Co-ownership of these materials is important to ensure these processes help inform and empower communities in their own decision-making.

Follow-up
What is taken on, declined, or put to one side? It is important that participants are informed of the outcome, and that next steps are explained to them. Organisers need to explain why a recommendation has been accepted, rejected, or shelved. To support transparency, participants and stakeholders are usually provided a 'closing the loop' report at the conclusion of the deliberative engagement process. There should also be resources in place to provide updates on what is happening with the engagement's outputs over a longer period.

Key feature 6

Ethical

Ethics in deliberative engagement refers to principles and practices that uphold the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of all people involved.

When citizens, policymakers, service providers, and other stakeholders agree to take part in deliberative engagement, they are expected to adhere to shared norms of behaviours that make it a worthwhile experience for all.

This section covers

Developing an ethical framework

An ethical framework for deliberative engagement outlines principles and guidelines that empower everyone involved to take a course of action that is acceptable to all.

An ethical framework outlines:

the roles, responsibilities, and commitments of actors to each other

Deliberative engagement is often a collaboration between public servants, service providers, experts, and everyday citizens. Documenting the roles and responsibilities of each actor or organisation enables efficient collaboration. It protects actors from taking on roles outside their expertise or competencies. It also establishes relationships of accountability. Clarifying roles and responsibilities can help avoid confusion about who is responsible for what and problematic situations.

For example, it could be stated upfront that stakeholders and expert witnesses are welcome to interact with participants at allotted times but that they should not insert themselves into group deliberations, which could, intentionally or not, steer the direction of the conversation. Another example could be stating that participants will write the final report themselves, with organisers ready to support them in a minimal way if requested. Crafting this division of labour clearly at the outset and being able to refer to it throughout, helps avoid the possibility of some actors having greater influence than is desirable on the process and outcome.

the principles and values that inform how people relate to each other

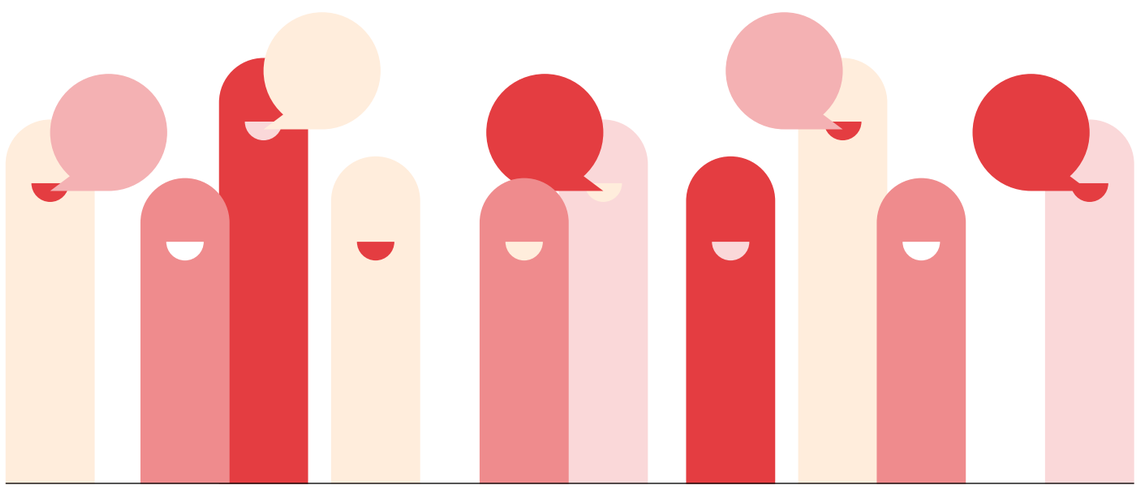
Deliberative engagement involves actors from different professional backgrounds, cultures, and biographical circumstances. Identifying shared values and principles provides a reference point that people can use to guide behaviour. Communication can be culturally or professionally specific, and shared principles must take this into account. Principles and values can be co-designed with participants and other groups involved, such as oversight groups. Some principles and values may be broadly applicable and can provide a foundation for ethical deliberative engagement more generally.

the practical ways for actors to act ethically

A well-developed ethical framework involves crafting a practical guide or terms of reference that provide specific guidance on how actors can spot ethical issues and behave ethically (see **Case in Focus 16: Roles and responsibilities of facilitators**). Having written guidance available supports all parties involved because then they are not left to deal with ethical issues in an ad hoc way by themselves. For example, there should be a protocol in place for what participants and others can do if, for any reason, they feel unsafe during the process. This could be due to another participant, an aggressive stakeholder, the venue or something else. There should be somebody assigned who has the authority and background to deal with any such issues. When working with vulnerable groups, existing guidelines for safeguarding and engagement can be integrated into a deliberative ethical framework.

the required resources and capacity to realise shared principles and values

Having an ethical framework requires resources and the capacity to implement it in practice. For example, transparency as a core principle may mean that the commissioning authority will allocate a staff member who can respond to Freedom of Information requests. All actors (participants, facilitators, experts) will declare conflicts of interest in a disclosure form. Acting ethically might vary according to contexts and topics. In some circumstances, it is desirable for participants to retain complete anonymity, such as when deliberating a highly contentious issue. In this case, their privacy needs to be protected at all costs. In other cases, personal safety is less of a concern, and it could be perfectly ethical to have media coverage of participants.



Case in Focus 16

Roles and responsibilities of facilitators

Facilitating Deliberation: A Practical Guide

MosaicLab Australia has developed a **comprehensive guide** for facilitating deliberation, offering detailed insights into roles, responsibilities, and best practices to ensure ethical and effective deliberative processes. Examples include the following with respect to the role of facilitators in deliberative engagement:

- seek to serve the public good, irrespective of who is paying for a service.
- be prepared to withdraw from a project if the principles of good engagement, facilitation and deliberation are irreparably compromised.
- suppress any personal views or emotional reactions on the topic or content.
- ensure facilitators don't work on projects where they have a personal stake in the issue or outcome.
- make clear distinctions between the facilitating team and the sponsoring organisation's team. This is done by explaining the principle of independent facilitation to the deliberating group and by wearing distinctive clothing and name tags that signify the facilitation team's status as independent contractors.[74]

There are various ways of developing an ethical framework for deliberative engagement. It can be co-designed with participants by allocating a separate session for norm-setting. In this session, participants, service providers, and the commissioning organisation all participate in a facilitated discussion to identify the norms of deliberative engagement and the resources needed to promote these norms. The ethical framework can also be based on existing frameworks in place for Australian governments, which outline principles of honesty, integrity, care, and due diligence.

[74] White et al., "Facilitating Deliberation," (2022).

Considerations for ethical practice

There are established practices in deliberative engagement that promote ethical conduct. The following are some considerations.

ethics-sensitive planning and design

It is important to anticipate potential ethical issues and develop mechanisms to deal with them before they even arise. This includes having codes of conduct, contractual agreements or information sessions for all actors involved early in the planning stages of a process.[75] This could also include anticipating potential power imbalances between different participants and stakeholders and considering how these will be addressed during the process.

duty of care

Organisers have a duty of care towards the participants of deliberative engagement. Participants' safety and comfort must be ensured. This can mean protecting participants from aggressive interest groups and stakeholders by protecting their privacy and equipping them to deal with unwanted pressure. It also means anticipating how participants might experience the process and what kind of support they need. No harm (physical, emotional, or financial) should be caused to participants as a result of their participation.

Deliberative processes can be hugely rewarding but also be draining and disorienting.[76] Getting through the process should not come at the cost of participants' wellbeing.[77] Depending on the topic and the group, it might be necessary to provide dedicated professional support. Emotional and psychological wellbeing of participants must be prioritised, and support must be available when needed.

responsiveness

Even with the best planning, unexpected ethical issues can arise. Organisers must be responsive to challenges as they arise and deal with them quickly and effectively to ensure the safety and comfort of everybody. This requires a level of agility on the part of those implementing the deliberative process since addressing people's needs could require a rethink of parts of the schedule or process design.[78] Having an ethical framework to refer to also supports organisers to respond effectively.

oversight

Some deliberative processes commission an oversight committee composed of experts and laypeople who provide advice on the conduct of the process. Others appoint an ombudsperson who can listen and act on the grievances conveyed by participants as well as organisers. It is important that organisers explain who sits on any oversight committees, why and how they were selected, and their role in the process to provide transparency and lend additional credibility to the process.[79]

evaluation

All stakeholders and participants should be able to reflect on their experiences and convey their assessments to relevant authorities. **Table 2** presents the key features of effective deliberative engagement and matching questions for evaluation.

[75] Lucy Parry, "Holding this Space: Navigating Ethical Issues in Citizen Deliberation," *Acta Politica*, (2024). [76] John Boswell, "Seeing Like a Citizen: How Being a Participant in a Citizens' Assembly Changed Everything I Thought I Knew About Deliberative Minipublics," *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 17, no. 2 (2021). [77] Lucy Parry and Nicole Curato, Deliberative Integrity: Risks and Responses in MiniPublic Governance. ISBN: 978-0-646-70752-5 (2024).

[78] Nicole Curato, Lucy Parry and Lisa van Dijk, UK Citizens' Jury on Human Genome Editing Evaluation Report. Wellcome Connecting Science (2023). [79] Jennifer J. Roberts et al., "Inclusion and Diversity Among Expert Witnesses in Deliberative Mini-publics," (2022).

Ethical deliberative engagement: checklist for implementation

Ethical framework
Is this a publicly accessible ethical framework on deliberative engagement? Have all relevant parties consented to this framework?

Terms of reference
Do all actors know their roles, responsibilities and relationships of accountability? Are participants aware of their rights and available support for their wellbeing?

Ethics-sensitive design
Has the design of the deliberative process considered potential ethical issues and provided mechanisms to address these issues?

Table 2: A framework for evaluating deliberative engagement

Key features	Questions for evaluation
Intentional	• Was the process design intentionally structured to achieve the desired outcomes? • Was the scope and purpose of the engagement clearly defined and communicated? • Was the selected issue appropriate and conducive to meaningful deliberation? • Was a clear and transparent governance structure established to guide the deliberative process?
Inclusive	• Was the selected recruitment strategy fit for purpose? • Were affected groups clearly identified and actively included in the process, including measures to lower barriers to participation? • Were conditions for equal and just participation enabled? • Did any group or individuals disproportionately dominate the conversation? • Were participants from marginalised backgrounds encouraged and supported in expressing their views and being heard? • Were the tools and methods used accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities, varying ages, and diverse cultural backgrounds?
Reflective	• Were facilitators impartial and committed to fostering an inclusive environment? • Was the information provided diverse, balanced, and representative of multiple perspectives? • Was there sufficient time for learning and meaningful collective reflection and deliberation?
Connected	• What efforts were made to connect the process with civil society and other relevant stakeholders? • What efforts were made to inform or involve the wider public of the process, its relevance and impact? • What efforts were made to connect the process with decison-makers?
Consequential	• Were the intended impacts clearly identified at the outset of the process? • How did the commissioning authority respond to the outputs of the deliberative process? • Did the process have an impact on shaping public debate? • Did participants develop new civic capacities or deepen their existing ones through their involvement in the process? • How did deliberative citizen engagement contribute to the long-term improvement of public service delivery? • How did trust in the institutions of representative democracy evolve and improve over time?
Ethical	• Was a clear ethical framework established to guide all participants and organisers involved in the deliberative engagement? • What mechanisms were in place to address participants' grievances, respond to reports of misconduct, and correct any oversights in the design and implementation? • How was the privacy and confidentiality of participants safeguarded throughout the process? • Was the process design—including participant recruitment, expert evidence curation, and final report writing—conducted in a non-partisan and independent manner?

Chapter 4

Choosing a method of deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement takes many forms, recognising that different issues, circumstances and contexts require different approaches. As well as embodying the key features that characterise effective deliberative engagement, organisers should consider the methods most appropriate to their objectives.

This chapter presents an overview of 10 methods for deliberative engagement including Citizens' Assemblies, Deliberative Opinion Polls, and Deliberative Workshops. It includes practical advice on when, why, and how to use each method, as well as advice on anticipated duration and resource intensiveness to support planning and implementation.

There are several factors that organisers need to consider when choosing the design of a deliberative engagement process.

Deliberative mini-publics are the most well-known form of deliberative democracy in practice. Mini-publics are 'carefully designed forums where a representative subset of the wider population come together to engage in open, inclusive, informed and consequential discussions on one or more issues.'[80] Individual processes of deliberative mini-publics have different names although the processes might be similar in practice.

Examples of methods that draw on the idea of deliberative mini-publics and bring together a representative subset of wider population include citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, Citizens' Initiative Reviews, deliberative town halls as well as Deliberative Polls®.

Some deliberative methods, such as Deliberative Polls® and Citizens' Juries, are specific models with set design features that must be adhered to. In the case of Deliberative Polls®, using this method requires the purchase of a licence from its creators.

Deliberative engagement processes can differ in length, with some short-form or community deliberative meetings lasting just a couple of hours. Larger scale deliberative projects, such as citizens' assemblies, can be held over a period of several months and reconvene at regular intervals.

While most deliberative engagement processes are in-person, increasing adaption to online formats can be more cost effective when involving large numbers of participants across different locations. Online platforms, such as *Decide Madrid*, *Decidim* or *Polis*, can be used to engage citizens in online deliberations, citizen assemblies, polls, and participatory budgeting. While digital platforms are not sufficient alone to ensure broad participation, they have proven to be helpful in engaging specific sectors of the population, including those who have not previously taken part in deliberative engagement processes.[81]

Decisions over aspects like the duration of processes, or the number of participants, often come down to the resources and time frame of the organisers. Deliberative mini-publics are a relatively intensive mode of engagement. In situations of limited resources and time, it is worth considering other deliberative practices that can be deployed more rapidly at a lesser cost. Poorly planned and implemented deliberative mini-publics can affect trust in the commissioning authority, practitioners and participants, and diminish the credibility of the process and outcomes.

This chapter provides a library of the 10 key methods of deliberative engagement that might be initiated by government agencies in the Australian context. The library gives comprehensive information on each type.

Table 3 presents the library on one page, making for easy comparison between different methods.

[80] Nicole Curato et al., *Deliberative Mini-Publics: Core Design Features* (2021), 3. [81] Melisa Ross and Azucena Morán, "Healthier Democracies. Lessons from Public Engagement Efforts Around the World," (Public Agenda, 2022).

Table 3: Methods of deliberative engagement – library on a page

Method	Description of method	Purpose	Point of difference
1 Citizens' Jury	A form of mini-public where a small group deliberates on a policy question and provides recommendations	Collective decision-making	Smaller group than Citizens' Assembly and usually focused on specific policy issues
2 Citizens' Assembly	A form of mini-public where a large group deliberates on a policy issue and provides recommendations	Collective decision-making	Larger group than Citizens' Jury and usually focused on a policy issue with a broader scope
3 Participatory Budgeting	A form of participation in which a group decides how to allocate part of a public budget	Collective decision-making	Rather than a policy issue, this method is usually tied to an existing budget and deliberation is focused on its allocation
4 Deliberative Opinion Poll	A form of opinion polling taken before and after deliberation to determine shifts in public opinion following an informed process	Determine informed public opinion	Rather than arriving at a collective decision, this model provides insight into how public opinion can change following deliberation
5 Deliberative Town Hall	Combines aspects of traditional town hall meetings with deliberative mini-public features such as sortition, independent facilitation and non-partisan information	Determine informed public opinion	A deliberative form of town hall meetings which can strengthen dialogue between elected representatives and constituents
6 Citizen Initiative Review	Involves the collective consideration of one or more ballot measures by a representative sample of citizens	Evaluation	Aligned to ballot measures specifically and used to provide non-partisan information to the public prior to voting
7 Kitchen Table Conversations	Small scale, informal meetings that take place in people's homes or any other convenient and comfortable community setting	Evaluation	An informal and community-led method to engage citizens in dialogue, elicit feedback or identify priorities
8 Deliberative Workshop	A form of focus group involving in-depth deliberation on a specific issue and collective exploration of group opinions to identify what is underpinning those perspectives	Option mapping/ collective imagining	Unlike Citizens' Juries, Deliberative Workshops do not have specific remits or require a final recommendation
9 Planning Cell	A form of mini-public where a small group collaborates on developing solutions to a specific issue	Option mapping/ collective imagining	Linked to Citizens' Juries, however focused on arriving at an agreed solution to an issue rather than policy recommendation
10 Deliberative Mapping	An engagement method to consider different courses of action according to a variety of economic, social, ethical and scientific criteria	Collective imagining	Linked to Planning Cell method, however explores different solutions rather than focusing on arriving at one solution

Library of deliberative engagement methods

1 Citizens' Jury
2 Citizens' Assembly
3 Participatory Budgeting
4 Deliberative Opinion Poll
5 Deliberative Town Hall
6 Citizen Initiative Review
7 Kitchen Table Conversations
8 Deliberative Workshop
9 Planning Cell
10 Deliberative Mapping

1 Citizens' Jury

Description	Purpose	Participation	Duration	Process	Expectation of commissioning body
A form of mini-public where a small group deliberates on a specific policy question and provides recommendations	**Collective decision-making** Citizens' Juries usually provide advisory input into policy decisions. This can involve developing substantive policy recommendations, and/or providing a collective verdict on a policy proposal.	Typically, between 12 and 25 participants recruited through a process of random stratified selection. The small group size is considered important for the quality of deliberation as it enables more in-depth exchange of arguments/ communication.	Typically, juries last from 4 to 5 days and can take place either consecutively or spaced out with a couple of weeks in between.	The Citizens' Jury model was originally developed in the 1970s and has been adapted for different contexts and purposes over time. However, its application usually retains some key features. Juries usually begin with an information or learning phase where participants learn about the topic from a range of perspectives including from subject matter experts. It is standard practice for a jury process to involve some kind of oversight group that is responsible for the general governance of the jury. This group can be made of up of different stakeholders and independent experts.	Whilst decision-makers are not usually obliged to take up recommendations, it is best practice to provide a clear commitment upfront regarding the intentions of the Citizens' Jury. Furthermore, there is an expectation that decision-makers provide adequate and timely responses to recommendations.

Considerations for when to use this model

This model is best suited when the policy issue under consideration is sufficiently complex that it involves the evaluation of trade-offs as this allows the jury to explore the issue in depth and from multiple perspectives.

Resource needs

The design and delivery of Citizens' Juries are often contracted to an independent practitioner organisation as this helps ensure the integrity and independence of the process.

Resource needs usually include reducing the barriers to participation by supporting participants with travel and/or accommodation as well as compensation for their time, childcare and other forms of assistance.

Citizens' Juries are usually implemented as part of a broader public engagement process which also requires resourcing.

Practice example

ACT's Citizens' Jury on Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurance

2 Citizens' Assembly

Description

A form of mini-public where a large group deliberates on a policy issue and provides recommendations (they are similar in form to Citizens' Juries but usually broader in scope).

Purpose

Collective decision-making

Like Citizens' Juries, Citizens' Assemblies usually provide advisory input into policy decisions.

Participation

Typically, between 50 and 250 participants are recruited through a process of random stratified selection. It might also be necessary to supplement random selection with other recruitment methods to broaden participation.
Some Citizens' Assemblies stratify on attitudes towards the topic as well as demographics to ensure diversity of views and political allegiances.

Duration

Usually longer duration than Citizens' Juries, ranging from 2 months to over a year.

Process

Like Citizens' Juries, there is no fixed methodology for Citizens' Assemblies. However, they typically begin with a learning phase which is often, but not always, followed by a phase for invited and open-comment discussion. This phase ensures the assembly hears from a broad range of opinions on the issue and can include public hearings, submissions and meetings with stakeholders. This is followed by a deliberation phase that is usually a mix of open plenary and small-group work before the final stage where decisions or recommendations are generally made through voting.

Expectation of commissioning body

Like Citizens' Juries, while decision-makers are not usually obliged to take up recommendations, the intention and commitment of decision-makers needs to be established upfront.

Considerations for when to use this model

Citizens' Assemblies are often convened on matters considered to be of national or international public importance. They are particularly useful when there is a salient, important public issue that will benefit from solutions generated by members of the public rather than partisan or vested interests. However, they can result in a large number or very general recommendations that are difficult to translate into concrete policy.

Resource needs

Citizens' Assemblies are resource intensive. They require considerably more time and resources than a Citizens' Jury due to their higher number of participants and longer duration. Because of the significant topics they usually focus on, they are also more likely to require greater resources for broader public engagement and communications.

Practice example

Irish Citizens' Assembly and Abortion Referendum

3 Participatory Budgeting

Description	Purpose	Participation	Duration	Process	Expectation of commissioning body
Participatory Budgeting is a decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources.	**Collective decision-making** Participatory Budgeting processes are usually implemented to allow citizens a direct role in deciding how and where resources should be spent.	The number of participants ranges considerably depending on the scope of the Participatory Budgeting process - there are examples of processes with groups as small as 15 people to nation-wide processes with over 1000 participants.	As with the number of participants, the duration of a Participatory Budgeting process will depend on the scope of the initiative.	While Participatory Budgeting can take a variety of formats (including in-person and online processes), organisers consistently begin by establishing the parameters of the funding allocation (e.g. what types of projects are eligible/ineligible), how community participation will be facilitated and how decision-making/voting will be conducted. Once these are established, organisers usually solicit proposals from the community and support community members to make submissions. These proposals can sometimes undergo a vetting process to ensure they align to the strategic objectives of the budget allocation. Whether or not this vetting process occurs, the final stage is an open public voting process where members of the community indicate their preferences. It is important that the organiser oversees the voting process to ensure it is robust and is not manipulated by segments of the community or vested interests.	Organisers need to be transparent around the budget allocated, the decision-making parameters and expected process. Although not usually legally binding, the perceived democratic legitimacy of the Participatory Budgeting process means that there is reputational risk if elected representatives veto recommendations.

Considerations for when to use this model

Participatory Budgeting is a way to directly involve the community in decision-making and build trust between government and communities. Organisers need to consider how the process is designed to support participation from a broad range of community members including appropriate capacity-building initiatives.

Resource needs

Participatory Budgeting does not usually require a new budget allocation as it is linked to existing funds and focuses on how they are distributed. However, resources are required to support and mobilise community participation including for training, communication and promotion materials.

Practice examples

Better Suburbs Program for Canberra

The Robin Hood Project: Participatory Budgeting in Melville, Australia

4 Deliberative Opinion Poll

Description

Deliberative Polling® is a unique form of political consultation which combines public opinion research and deliberation to identify how public opinion on an issue might appear if citizens were better informed (sometimes described as 'under good conditions').

Purpose

Determine informed public opinion

Deliberative Polling® is a unique form of political consultation which seeks to understand how public opinion on an issue might appear if citizens were better informed (sometimes described as 'under good conditions').

Participation

Generally, between 100 and 500 participants are selected via stratified random sampling. A larger sample size is considered beneficial because it generates a wider cross-section of views and increases the credibility of the results as representative of informed public opinion.

Duration

While the length of the entire process will vary, deliberations usually occur over one or 2 days.

Process

Initiatives follow this five-step process:

1 A random, representative sample of the public is asked to provide feedback on an initial questionnaire aimed at evaluating their knowledge, perceptions, and preferences on a specific question.

2 Another random representative sample of citizens is asked to participate in a 'deliberative event' to be held over one or 2 days.

3 Before the event, participants receive balanced briefing materials vetted by a panel of experts.

4 On the day of the deliberative event, participants are randomly assigned to small groups with trained moderators. Participants are encouraged to develop questions for experts and policy makers at a plenary session held towards the end of the event.

5 At the conclusion, participants fill out a second questionnaire intended to capture their considered opinions on the topic. The results of the first poll are compared to the final poll, and any changes in opinion are analysed. In most cases, the findings of the final survey are disseminated to the public.

Expectation of commissioning body

Deliberative Polling does not result in recommendations, instead it provides insights around informed public opinion. It can be applied by decision-makers to gauge public support for policy decisions, especially more contentious issues.

Considerations for when to use this model

Outcomes of this model have been found to differ depending on the level and scope of the process. The model may be particularly useful for divisive issues or where there is considerable misinformation as it can foster more considered judgement with participants and the broader public through the dissemination of polling outcomes.

Resource needs

Deliberative Polling® is a trademarked process that requires a fee and organisers to follow specific steps. It also requires resources to support a large number of participants and relies on experts to create materials and analyse polling data.

Practice example

Australian Deliberative Poll on Reconciliation

5 Deliberative Town Hall

Description	Purpose	Participation	Duration	Process	Expectation of commissioning body
Combines aspects of traditional town hall meetings with elected representatives and deliberative mini-public features such as sortition, independent facilitation and non-partisan information.	**Determine informed public opinion** Whilst the underlying aim of Deliberative Town Halls is to strengthen the relationship between elected representatives and constituents, individual objectives and outcomes will vary in practice.	The number of participants will depend on the format chosen. Online formats can host thousands of people. Participants are usually self-selecting, although this can be combined with organisers reaching out to communities particularly affected by an issue or who are usually underrepresented.	Usually, 60 to 90 minutes per Town Hall.	Typically, much like a traditional town hall meeting, Deliberative Town Halls will be focussed on a specific issue. Before attending, participants receive a guide with non-partisan information about the issue that they are asked to consider. At the start of the meeting, participants are briefed on the non-partisan nature of the discussion by independent moderators, who then collate questions submitted by participants and relay them live to elected representatives to respond and discuss. Some Deliberative Town Halls also involve researchers who survey participants to track changes in opinion or political efficacy.[82]	Deliberative Town Halls require elected representatives who are willing to participate in the process and commit to taking participants' views into account when making subsequent decisions.

Considerations for when to use this model

This model requires the direct participation of elected representatives and therefore relies on their willingness and ability to engage in candid and impromptu conversations with constituents. Because the model allows constituents to engage directly with elected representatives, it can be a way of building rapport and trust.

Resource needs

Deliberative Town Halls are relatively short as a deliberative forum, although they may be recurring events. They require resources for contracting independent moderators, supporting participants and distributing information prior to the meeting. They can also be deployed relatively quickly in response to emerging issues.

Practice examples

Connecting to Parliament Town Hall on Mitochondrial Donation

Connecting to Congress Online Town Halls on the COVID-19 emergency

[82] Abigail Kielty, Amy Lee, and Michael Neblo, "Connecting to Congress During COVID-19: Political Representation and Two-Way Crisis Communication," *Digital Government: Research and Practice* 3, no. 2 (2022).

6 Citizens' Initiative Review

Description

Involves the collective consideration of one or more ballot measures by a randomly selected, demographically representative sample of citizens.

Purpose

Collective reflection

To give citizens a way to render a deliberative, reasoned judgement on political issues, and to ensure a non-partisan information source is provided to voters prior to the ballot.

Participation

Like Citizens' Juries, the number of participants is usually limited to a small group of up to 25 randomly selected and demographically representative people to ensure more inclusive and in-depth discussion.

Duration

Processes usually last around 5 days.

Process

Once an election or referendum has been scheduled the Citizens' Initiative Review is designed to deliberate on the ballot measures. The process usually begins with testimony from invited speakers and participants are encouraged to ask questions. An equal number of proponents and opponents to the measures is invited to speak to the group alongside policy experts. Speakers are selected based on their expertise and impartiality on the measure. In between speakers, participants break into smaller groups to reflect on what they have heard. Participants deliberate to identify important facts about the initiative, to decide whether to support or oppose the initiative, and to identify reasons to justify their support or opposition. At the conclusion of the process, participants develop a statement that explains the key findings alongside reasons to vote both for and against the measure. This statement is then distributed as widely as possible to the public to inform voters prior to the election or referendum.

Expectation of commissioning body

Organisers need to make a commitment to distributing the statement that is developed by the Citizens' Initiative Review as widely as possible to the public.

Considerations for when to use this model

This process can be useful for divisive issues or where there is considerable misinformation as it provides the opportunity to reflect on and synthesise information from a range of perspectives.

Resource needs

The process can be resource intensive as it requires resources for both the Citizens' Initiative Review component (including facilitation and mitigating barriers to participation) as well as resources for the wide distribution of the final statement. It requires planning well in advance to allow sufficient time to identify a balanced group of speakers and to ensure advocates, stakeholders, and expert witnesses have ample time to prepare their presentations.

Practice example

Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review

7

Kitchen Table Conversations (KTCs)

Description

Small scale, informal meetings that take place in people's homes or any other convenient and comfortable community setting.

Purpose

Collective reflection

KTCs aim to engage communities in dialogue, elicit feedback and identify community priorities in an informal way.

Participation

KTCs work with small groups and participation is usually open or by invitation of the host.

Duration

Usually, 30 to 90 minutes per conversation.

Process

Typically, community members who have decided to host a KTC organise the meeting at their own discretion. They choose who to invite and they facilitate the conversation, guided by an information or discussion guide that organisers provide. Organisers sometimes offer training sessions for community members interested in hosting to explain the ground rules of deliberation or dialogue. These guides and training should be made available in relevant languages for the communities involved. Once the KTC has occurred, community members hosting the conversation collate and submit the feedback to organisers for consideration.

Expectation of commissioning body

The purpose of gathering information from the KTC needs to be clearly communicated to all community members and there needs to be a clear plan in place for what will happen with the feedback collected through the KTC. As with other processes, the input from KTCs should be used in a meaningful way – e.g. feeding into a deliberative mini-public or collating it into a report presented to decision-makers.

Considerations for when to use this model

KTCs are useful when broad community engagement is sought, especially where local knowledge and experiences are important for the issue at hand. KTCs could be useful in supporting deliberation in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways because communities can organise and deliberate on their own terms, and deliberation takes place in the community. When an issue is highly technical or polarised, KTCs alone may not be the best option because there is no independent facilitation and no opportunity to engage with additional experts or evidence.

Resource needs

KTCs require relatively few resources for organisers as meetings are informal and organised by community members. Resources are mostly needed for the development and distribution of conversation guides and any training that may be offered to community members.

Practice example

Protecting the Snowies - Wild Horse Management in Kosciuszko National Park

8 Deliberative Workshop

Description

A form of focus group involving in-depth deliberation on a specific issue and collective exploration of group opinions to identify what is underpinning those perspectives.

Purpose

Option mapping/ collective imagining

Deliberative Workshops do not have specific remits or conclude with recommendations. The focus is on in-depth informed discussions on complex or controversial issues to gather social intelligence that can inform policy, exchange opinion, or raise awareness around issues.

Participation

Usually, a small group of 8 to 20 participants.

Duration

Can vary from a few hours to several days depending on the topic and the intended outcome.

Process

The process is like a Citizens' Jury however it is not designed to conclude with group consensus and recommendations, but rather collectively explore the issue. The process usually involves experts and a learning phase where participants hear from a range of different perspectives followed by a deliberative phase that explores participants' responses to the information. This can include discussion regarding the conditions needed, or potential issues arising, from different policy decisions or courses of action. The exploration can involve a range of innovative methods including using scenarios, '**stimulus material**' or experiments. The process can conclude with a report that reflects on the considerations and learnings from the Deliberative Workshop.

Expectation of commissioning body

While there is no formal recommendation that results from Deliberative Workshops, they can be used to inform decision-making and enrich understanding or public debate around different policy directions.

Considerations for when to use this model

Deliberative Workshops explore policy issues and can be useful in understanding dominant perceptions or identifying effective courses of action. However, because they are essentially exploratory, they may not deliver clear, collective conclusions. In addition, because they involve a small number of participants, they are limited in accurately measuring public opinion.

Resource needs

The main costs of a Deliberative Workshop are associated with commissioning a bespoke workshop design and the facilitation.

Practice example

People's Inquiry on Nanotechnology and the Environment, UK (2006)

9 Planning Cell

Description

A form of mini-public where a small group collaborates on developing solutions to a specific issue.

Purpose

Option mapping/ collective imagining

Rather than arriving at consensus around a policy recommendation, Planning Cells develop a set of solutions to a problem delegated to the participants by the commissioning body.

Participation

There are generally 25 participants per Planning Cell, however there can be several Planning Cells in any one initiative, so they often involve 100 to 500 participants.

Duration

Can vary from a few hours to several days depending on the topic and the intended outcome.

Process

As with most processes, participants firstly learn about the problem they need to address through varied sources and presentations. During this phase, experts and interest group representatives have a chance to address the Planning Cell so that the participants may gain an understanding of the perspectives of all interested parties. This is followed by a deliberative phase and smaller group discussion. Each small group begins by prioritising values and identifying criteria that will be used to analyse the problem. They then develop several recommendations and choose one to share with the larger group. In the next phase, the recommendation selected by each small group is presented to the entire assembly. After all participants are made aware of the various solutions, the options are evaluated by the entire group. This evaluation can take many forms. Often, members of the cell will grade or assign points to policy options or vote on alternatives. Moderators then record these evaluations to develop a final report. The final report, created by the moderators of the Planning Cell, summarises the results of the cell, provides a description of the procedures followed, and identifies the problem addressed. Once it is reviewed by all members of the cell, and any necessary changes are made, the final report is then presented to the commissioning body.

Expectation of commissioning body

As with other models, whilst decision-makers are not usually obliged to implement the solutions presented by the Planning Cell, it is best practice to provide a clear commitment upfront as to how the commissioning body intends to respond to the outcomes.

Considerations for when to use this model

Planning Cells are a way of designing innovative solutions to problems, working best for complex problems where there aren't clear courses of action to choose from. However, research has found that Planning Cells are not adept at resolving conflict.

Resource needs

The main costs of Planning Cells are associated with commissioning a bespoke workshop design and the facilitation.

Practice example

Planning Cell on a Cable Car for Wuppertal

10 Deliberative Mapping

Description

A methodology which can be applied to a problem to judge how well different courses of action perform according to a variety of economic, social, ethical, and scientific criteria.

Purpose

Option mapping/ collective imagining

Deliberative Mapping combines quantitative and qualitative methods to assess how participants rate different policy options against a set of defined criteria. The emphasis of the process is not on integrating expert and public voices but on understanding the different perspectives each offer to a policy process. Deliberative Mapping is a process of broadening out rather than focusing down on one 'solution'.

Participation

The process requires a group that is made up of both 'specialists' and members of the public. The group will usually consist of around 40 members of the public from varied backgrounds and around 20 experts selected to reflect the full spectrum of specialist knowledge in an area.

Duration

Deliberative Mapping usually takes place over a series of meetings.

Process

The process first involves participants defining criteria for the assessment of policy options. Following this, through a group discussion process, numerous potential options are elicited and debated, showing how a range of possibilities become concrete inputs for both experts and citizens. The criteria established earlier is then used to rate different policy options and the performance of each option is mapped. Through this process, how a proposed course of action is weighed against different economic, social, ethical and scientific criteria is examined. The aim is not consensus, but instead to systematically reveal divergences of opinion, framing, and perspective. The resulting 'map' can illustrate which options are most supported and the conditions under which options are supported or not.

Expectation of commissioning body

While there is no formal recommendation that results from Deliberative Mapping, the model can be used to inform decision-making and broaden understanding around the implications of different policy options.

Considerations for when to use this model

This methodology can be applied to a problem to judge how well different courses of action perform according to a variety of criteria. It can also be an effective way to consider the different kinds of 'expertise' involved in appraising policy options. As with Planning Cells, Deliberative Mapping is most useful when applied to complex issues where there is no obvious way forward. It can be useful when mapping out which options the public would prefer, however it cannot deliver a consensus view or a shared vision.

Resource needs

Resources associated with this model are mainly in commissioning a provider for the design and delivery of the mapping workshop. It is important to recognise that Deliberative Mapping requires highly developed facilitation skills to effectively balance the input from public participants and experts. In addition, the provider needs to be skilled in analysing qualitative material generated from the mapping.

Practice example

Deliberative mapping about the problem of kidney shortages

Chapter 5

Building deliberative capacity: 10 suggestions

What can government agencies do to build or enhance their organisational capacity to implement effective deliberative engagement? As this Guidebook has shown, deliberative engagement takes many forms and approaches as it responds to the context and objectives of each individual process. Organisers should be aware of the full range of deliberative engagement methods available and consider the development of new methods to suit a range of settings.

Decisions regarding methods used, process duration, and numbers of participants all inform the resourcing and organisational capacity required. Conversely, available resources can sometimes determine the types of approaches selected. While it is not possible to provide definitive information around the resources needed, we provide 10 key issues for consideration by those who are seeking to build organisational capacity for implementing deliberative engagement within government:

1

allocate sufficient resources

Resources should be commensurate to the scale and ambition of the process. Resources involve budget, time and workload allocation for staff members involved in the process.

2

seek institutional support and collaboration

The impacts of deliberative engagements are tied to their perceived legitimacy. Organisers need to build understanding and appreciation of the value of deliberative processes among decision-makers, ensuring that decision-makers see these processes as complementary to, rather than conflicting with, their own authority. Consider collaborations across agencies, and the ways in which existing community engagement process (such as state based online engagement services), could be used to support deliberation.

3

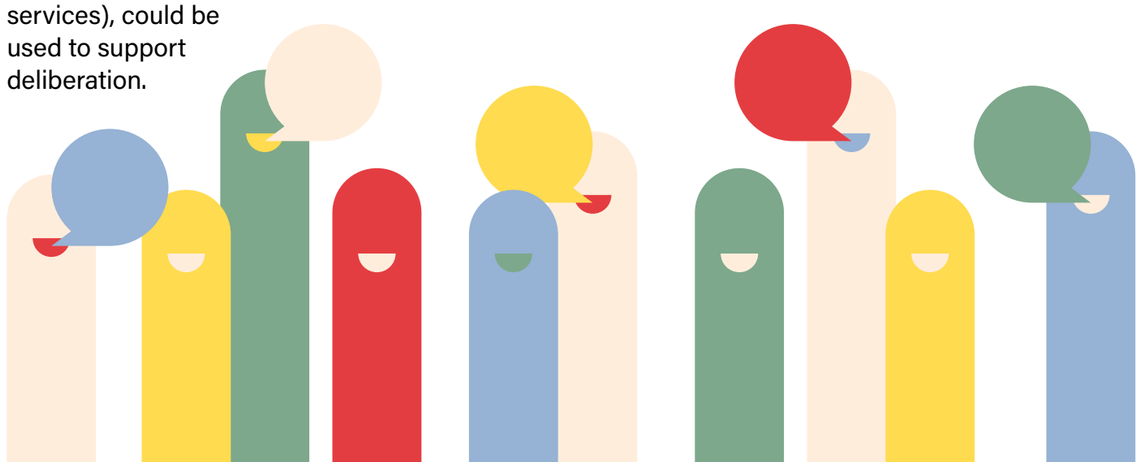
harness existing partnerships with community and civil society

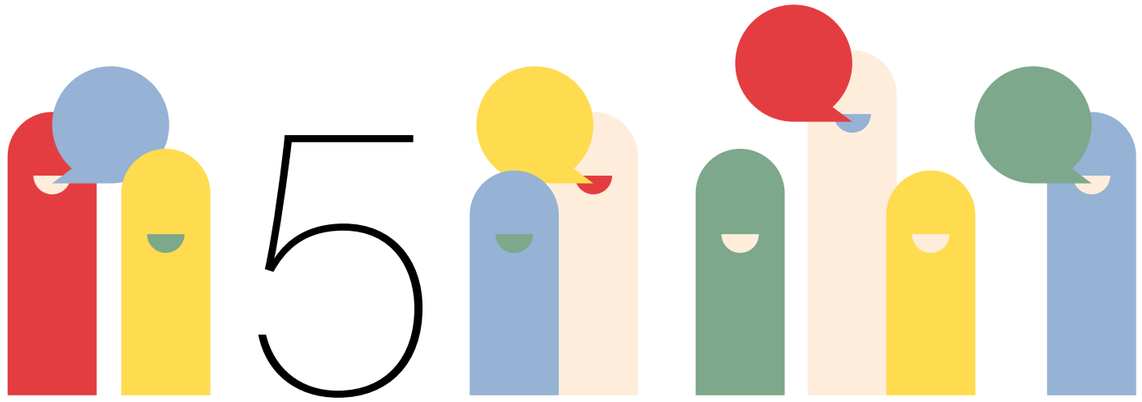
Community and other civil society organisations can be great partners for designing and implementing deliberative engagements. These organisations can provide important connections with the community, helping ground deliberative engagements in their local context, and may enhance the perceived legitimacy of the process.

enhance possibilities for co-design, especially with Indigenous communities

Co-design refers to a collaborative process between policy makers, implementers, process designers and people affected by an issue (or end-users) in finding solutions to shared problems.

4





5

invest in technological infrastructure

Organisers may consider investing in digital platforms and tools that are used to facilitate online deliberation. Although not perfect, deliberative platforms like **Decidim** or **Polis** have been used by governments, academics and citizens to better understand what people think in their own words.

6

introduce deliberative elements in existing engagement practices

The approaches and principles outlined in this Guidebook can be used to improve existing public engagement processes across Australia by making them more inclusive and reflective, and helping generate new and creative solutions to the issues at hand.

7

use existing databases of deliberative engagement and democratic innovations

Several public databases can help inspire those seeking to run deliberative processes. Examples are **Participedia, a crowdsourced database of democratic innovations; Latinno a database of participatory processes in Latin America; and the OECD database of representative deliberative processes.**

8

invest in staff training and development

Invest in training programs for public servants to develop competencies for facilitating deliberative engagement processes, and keep staff updated on best practices. A regular training program can be established in collaboration with the **International Association for Public Participation** (IAP2) Australia, the **Australian Facilitators' Network**, and short courses and masterclasses with the Centre for Deliberative Democracy.

9

support pilot projects

Consider small-scale pilot projects for staff to 'learn by doing.' This can be done in collaboration with academics and practitioners who have experience running deliberative engagements.

10

become an institutional member of global knowledge exchange networks

There are several well-established networks that organise free workshops, learning calls, and seminars on deliberative engagement, including **Democracy R&D**, **People Powered**, and the **Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies**. These networks are part of a community of practices sharing lessons on designing, implementing, and evaluating deliberative engagements.

Further resources

Best practice and guidelines

- Assembling and Assembly Guide, DemocracyNext.
- Breaking the Gridlock. Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World, United Nations. Development Programme (UNDP).
- Citizen Engagement in Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: A Guide to Mini-Publics, World Health Organization (WHO).
- Democratic Dialogue - A Handbook for Practitioners, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections, newDemocracy and United Nations Democracy Fund.
- Equity in Public Engagement: A Guide for Practitioners, Simon Fraser University, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue.
- Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Facilitating Deliberation- A Practical Guide, MosaicLab.
- Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes for Public Decision Making, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions. Catching the Deliberative Wave, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Meet People's Accessibility Needs, Australian Government.
- Practical Guidance on Climate Assembly Practice, Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies (KNOCA).
- Standards for Organising Citizens' Assemblies, Democracy that Works.

Databases

- Participedia
- Latinno
- OECD Database of Representative Deliberative Processes

Further reading and listening

- OECD Resources for Representative Deliberative Processes
- newDemocracy Research and Development Notes
- MosaicLab
- Buergerrat.de
- Democracy R&D
- Real Democracy Now!
- Just Participation
- Democracy Beyond the West: Agora Special Series
- Healthier Democracies from Public Agenda
- A Room for a View: Democracy as a Deliberative System
- Understanding Developments in Participatory Governance
- Building Democratic Resilience: Public Sphere Responses to Violent Extremism
- Deliberative Integrity Project
- Deliberative Democracy Digest
- Demo.reset: The South Side of Global Deliberation

Training and capacity-building

- MosaicLab
- Knowledge Network on Climate Assemblies
- The Engagement Institute (formerly IAP2 Australasia)
- DemocracyCo
- Centre for Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia

Commissioned paper

Dr Justin McCaul, The Australian National University

Introduction

Deliberative democracy is not a term widely used in either theory or practice by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. However, despite a lack of explicit reference to this term, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities draw heavily on the principles of deliberative democracy as the basis for their engagement with government.

In this report, the terms 'Aboriginal', 'Torres Strait Islander', 'Indigenous', 'Indigenous Australians', and First Nations' are used interchangeably to reflect context specific meaning. It is acknowledged that there is a range of opinions on the appropriate terminology. Increasingly, groups are both using and seeking recognition of their specific cultural and language groups. They identify themselves for example as Wiradjuri or Gadigal, as well as collectively as Indigenous Nations such as the Eora Nation. Guidance on the use of appropriate terminology is drawn from advice provided by Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)[1] and the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC).[2]

Terms such as self-determination and shared decision-making, evoke the kind of relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples seek with government, and the desire to be more closely involved in developing policies and designing the programs that impact their lives. Shared decision-making, for example, implies a relationship of equals, not one in which government acts as the sole decision-maker and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the passive subjects.

Various existing government programs at national and state level already include or at least refer to deliberative terms and concepts such as self-determination, empowerment, shared decision-making, nation-building, truth-telling, and free, prior, and informed consent. From the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, these terms make clear the demand and expectation that government engagement processes will include scope for deliberation in decision-making.

History of Indigenous Australians' exclusion from public policy

The domain of Indigenous affairs public policy in Australia is highly contested and the site of historical and contemporary political struggle.[3]

Conflict over public policy and lawmaking between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments is in large part due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation on the lives of Indigenous Australians.[4]

Colonisation caused devastating impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture. Violence and epidemic disease led to an immediate loss of life, and the occupation of land by settlers and the restriction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to 'reserves' disrupted people's ability to support themselves. Together with the forcible removal of children from their families and communities, Indigenous Australians have suffered ongoing inter-generational trauma. These factors are recognised as having a fundamental, structural and hence ongoing disadvantageous impacts including poor physical and mental health of Indigenous peoples worldwide, through social systems that maintain disparities.[5]

Historically, governments at all levels have imposed laws and policies on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, rather than including them into the decision-making process. It was not until the 1960s that Indigenous Australians were afforded citizenship rights notionally on par with other Australians. Democratic exclusion begins with the Australian Constitution. During discussions at the end of the 19th century on the drafting of the constitution, not a single Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person was included. As well as constitutional exclusion, dispossession and the denial of land rights until the Mabo decision in 1992 (which overturned terra nullius), as well as discriminatory policies such as the removal of children from their families, have caused deep-rooted socio-economic disadvantage, thus negatively impacting the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian democracy. The Australian Constitution, which federated the Australian nation and forms the foundation of Australian democracy, was enacted without any involvement by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.[6]

Various forms of social, economic, and political exclusion continue to adversely affect the participation of Indigenous Australians in the processes of government, and relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and government are often characterised by conflict, mistrust, and unequal power relations.[7]

For example, in 2007 the Federal government responded to a report of widespread sexual and domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NT) by declaring a national emergency. The Northern Territory Emergency Response ('NT Intervention') was highly controversial. The Australian Army was deployed and sweeping laws were passed without engagement,

[1] Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). [2] Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), First Nations Vocabulary – using culturally appropriate language and terminology (2022). [3] Janet Hunt et al, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Self-Determination, Mainstreaming and Indigenous Community Governance' in *Contested Governance*, ed. Janet Hunt, Diane Smith, Stephanie Garling, Will Sanders (ANU Press, 2008), 27-53; Patrick Sullivan, "Disenchantment, Normalisation and Public Value: Taking the Long View in Australian Indigenous Affairs", *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 14, no. 4 (2013): 353; Toni Bauman and Janet Hunt, *No More Business as Usual: The Need for Participatory Indigenous Development Policy and Skilled Practice*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, No 06/2022.

[4] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Determinants of Health for Indigenous Australians', *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare* (2024). [5] Yin C. Paradies and Joan Cunningham, "The DRUID study: Racism and self-assessed health status in an Indigenous population", *BMC Public Health*, 12 (2012): 1-12. [6] Peter Yu, 'Aboriginal Australians: Anything but Democratic, the Constitution Excluded My People', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (online, 10 June 2022). [7] Ibid.

deliberation or consent from the Aboriginal communities affected. The NT Intervention was criticised by many Australian legal experts and human rights advocates, as well as the United Nations, as failing to comply with international human rights law standards.[8]

As well as mistrust and conflict, another recurring theme in studies of Indigenous public policy in Australia is 'failure'.[9] As an example, take the persistent failure of government to 'close the gap' on Indigenous health inequality despite the promises of governments to fund and support better health outcomes.[10] Many of the most pressing areas of public and social policy such as income inequality, housing, and health, greatly impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.[11] Rather than simply view engagement over public policy as neutral interactions, a deliberative engagement strategy *co-designed with Indigenous people* can enhance the sense of democratic inclusion, break down barriers of mistrust and reduce conflict. This requires emphasising a continual process of *listening* to rather than talking over Indigenous people. This can be achieved by creating greater opportunities for Indigenous people to exercise shared decision-making with governments. Relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments can be significantly improved through genuine dialogue grounded in respect, trust, and listening.

Indigenous self-determination as a deliberative ideal

The solution to colonisation and persistent policy failure, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples argue, is greater self-determination. Indigenous self-determination aligns with a key ideal of deliberative democracy, which is that 'citizens should not be thought of as merely passive subjects of legislation or policies passed by politicians in legislatures, but as active citizens in their own self-governance.'[12]

The right of self-determination is expressed in articles 3 and 4 of the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)** and includes the right to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development', 'the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs', and 'ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.'[13] Adopted by almost all nation states in 2007 (Australia did not formally adopt it until 2009) UNDRIP is considered the minimum standard and best practice for governments engaging with Indigenous people and their representative institutions.[14]

These principles reflect the key premises of deliberative democracy. Decisions should be justified through the mutual sharing of information, arguments, and reasoning; the people most likely to be affected must be included; for outcomes to be deemed legitimate, agreement must be reached through persuasion rather than the use of coercion, manipulation, or deception; and lastly, any decision reached should be open to renegotiation if the views of others (particularly Indigenous perspectives) have changed. Though UNDRIP is a non-binding agreement, it nonetheless compels governments at all levels to ensure that Indigenous peoples have a say about their social, political, cultural, and economic needs in the processes of government.

A crucial principle of UNDRIP is *free, prior, and informed consent*, expressed in articles 10, 11.2, 19, 28.1, 29.2, and 32.2. As article 19 outlines: 'Free' implies consent that has been attained without coercion, intimidation, or manipulation; 'Prior' implies consent is sought and secured sufficiently in advance of any commencement or approval of an activity, policy or program; 'Informed' entails the provision of sufficient and accurate information on the scope of any proposed activity, policy or program so Indigenous people can make an informed decision; and 'Consent' is not irreversible but ongoing and open to renegotiation. Indigenous people reserve the right to withdraw consent during any engagement process with governments or other parties.

Free, prior, and informed consent allows Indigenous people to offer their own thoughts on how best to solve problems and meet specific needs of their community free from coercion. Indigenous people can present arguments in their own words to persuade others that their proposals are sound and achievable. In the deliberative spirit, this process entails the discussion of problems and testing and challenging proposals and counter arguments.[15]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples view self-determination as fundamental to their further participation and autonomy in Australian democracy. Greater self-determination increases the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to keep governments accountable, and to address both present-day disadvantage and the effects of past discrimination.

Between 1972 and the late 1990s, Australian Indigenous policy had bipartisan support at the national level for the ideal of Indigenous self-determination. From the mid-1990s until the present day, Australian governments have been less concerned with securing rights such as self-determination and more focused on practical outcomes such as addressing health, employment, and income inequality through programs such as Closing the Gap.[16] Yet research in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the US[17] confirms that self-determination improves outcomes not only in the lives of Indigenous people but also in a

[8]Alison Vivian and Ben Schokman, 'The Northern Territory Intervention and the Fabrication of "Special Measures"', *Australian Indigenous Law Review*, 13, no.1 (2009): 78-106. [9]Will Sanders, 'In the Name of Failure: A Generational Revolution in Indigenous Affairs' in *Howard's Fourth Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration* 2004-2007, ed. Chris Aulich (UNSW Press, 2008). [10]Productivity Commission, **Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Study Report** (2024). [11]Productivity Commission, **A Snapshot of Inequality in Australia Research Paper** (2024). [12]Jane Mansbridge et al, "The Place of Self-Interest and the Role of Power in Deliberative Democracy", *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 18, no. 1 (2010): 64-100. [13]Australian Human Rights Commission, '**UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**', *Australian Human Rights Commission* (n.d.). [14]See United Nations, '**United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**.' [15]See Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2000): 22.

[15]See Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 2000): 22. [16]Chris Holland, *Close the Gap: A Ten-Year Review: The Closing the Gap Strategy and Recommendations for Reset* (Australian Human Rights Commission, the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality, 2018). [17]Stephen Cornell and Joseph P Kalt, *American Indian Self-Determination: The Political Economy of a Policy That Works* (HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series No RWP10-043, Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 2010); William Nikolakis, Stephen Cornell and Harry Nelson (eds), *Reclaiming Indigenous Governance: Reflections and Insights from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States* (University of Arizona Press, 2019).

range of public policy areas such as health[18], economic development[19], and natural resource management.[20]

Pat Turner, a Gudanji-Arrernte woman with a long career in the Australian public service, explained the link between public policy-making and self-determination:

> Hearing us involves more than merely being allowed to speak. It involves more than merely listening. It requires respectful engagement, two-way communication, and ultimately action. It requires the non-Indigenous majority — most importantly governments — to act on what they have been told, and to explain their actions in response. It is the essential ingredient in shared decision-making of policies, of programs, and crucially it is the essential ingredient for our self-determination.[21]

Despite adopting UNDRIP, no Australian government has yet to formally enact the rights set out in UNDRIP into federal or state legislation.[22]

There remains an opportunity for national, state or territory governments to enact UNDRIP into law. They would be following the lead of Canada where the national government and the provinces of British Columbia and Northwest Territories have enacted UNDRIP into law. In November 2019, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia unanimously adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act 2019*,[23] becoming the first jurisdiction in Canada to enshrine UNDRIP into domestic law. The Canadian Government followed in June 2021 and the Northwest Territories in October 2023. In the case of British Columbia, the Act establishes a special secretariat to manage relations between Indigenous people and the British Columbia government and its agencies. It also provides for the provincial government to enter into agreements with Indigenous nations and to exercise statutory decision-making authority together.

[18]Daryle Rigney et al, "Indigenous Nation Building and the Political Determinants of Health and Wellbeing" (Discussion Paper, Lowitja Institute & Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, 2022). [19]Jon Altman and Peter Whitehead, "Caring for Country and Sustainable Indigenous Development: Opportunities, Constraints and Innovation" CAEPR Working Paper, 20 (2003). [20]Steve Hemming et al, "A New Direction for Water Management? Indigenous Nation Building as a Strategy for River Health", *Ecology and Society*, 22, no.2: 13 (2017). [21]Pat Turner, 'The Long Cry of Indigenous People to Be Heard: A Defining Moment in Australia' (National Press Club, Canberra, 30 September 2020). [22]In March 2022 Lidia Thorpe, a Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung woman and Independent Senator for Victoria, introduced a bill to the Federal parliament proposing to enact UNDRIP in Australian law. The bill was opposed by Labor and the LNP and in December 2023 the bill expired. See Senator Lidia Thorpe, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2022. [23]Government of British Columbia, 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act', (28 November, 2019).

Deliberative engagement in NSW: OCHRE and LDM

While there is clearly scope for greater use of deliberative and participatory democratic processes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments, there are programs in which the principles of deliberative democracy are already visible.

A major NSW Government initiative for engaging with Indigenous people which aligns with the ideals of deliberative democracy is the *Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment Plan* (OCHRE) and its *Local Decision-Making initiative* (LDM). OCHRE was formed after a 2011 NSW Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs recommended a new approach to improving education and employment outcomes for Indigenous people in NSW and enhanced accountability. It emphasises 'listening to' rather than 'talking at' Indigenous people.[24] The LDM policy framework provides a clear mandate and set of principles for government agencies entering into negotiations that includes sharing decision-making and working in partnership with Aboriginal Regional Alliances to respond to community needs.[25] *Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales* (AANSW) states that the 'ultimate aim of Local Decision Making is to ensure Aboriginal communities have a genuine voice in determining what and how services are delivered to their communities.'

A 2022 evaluation of OCHRE found that LDM, with its innovative and deliberative agreement-making processes, allow community voices to reach NSW Government and NSW Government agencies through bottom-up, Indigenous-led regional governance structures.[26] Despite the positive outcomes from OCHRE and LDM, and their successful demonstration of the important role of consensus-building, developing formal partnerships and shared decision-making, structural constraints and systemic biases persist. These include a lack of delegation authority of government staff on financial and administrative issues, a lack of capacity to support the priorities of regional Indigenous organisations and their communities, and the high turnover of government staff that hindered the building of trust and long-term relationships with Indigenous organisations and communities.[27]

[24]Aboriginal Affairs NSW Government, About OCHRE. [25]Deirdre Howard-Wagner and Morgan Harrington, *Local Decision Making Stage 2 Accords Negotiation: Barang Accord Negotiation Evaluation Report* (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy & Research, No 04/22, 2022). [26]Deirdre Howard-Wagner, Marnie O'Bryan and Morgan Harrington, *OCHRE Local Decision Making Stage 2 Accords Negotiation Evaluation: Synthesis Report* (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy & Research, No 01/22, 2022). [27]Ibid.

Indigenous deliberative engagement in Australia

When urging governments to *work with* rather than trying to *work for* Indigenous communities and organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are calling for shared decision-making or co-design to drive engagement strategies.[28] These calls for shared decision-making powers and greater self-determination have increased since the 1990s.

Uluru Statement from the Heart

It is doubtful such a bold institutional innovation would have come from a process that was led by government and a majority of non-Indigenous participants.

The 2017 **Uluru Statement from the Heart** drew heavily on the idea of enclave deliberation and deliberative decision-making processes. Over a 12-month period, organisers of the Uluru Statement facilitated 12 regional dialogues across Australia followed by a national constitutional convention at Uluru.[29] Each of the 12 regional dialogues included 100 carefully selected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants from the region. In a process similar to deliberative mini-publics, the national constitutional convention at Uluru involved 250 Indigenous participants.

The regional dialogues, as well as the national convention, were thoughtfully designed and facilitated deliberative forums led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and included Indigenous and non-Indigenous constitutional, legal and public policy experts.[30]

Another notable deliberative feature of the regional dialogue and national convention process was the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to discuss and identify policy options and preferences separately and amongst themselves, *before sharing their ideas with the wider public*. This is an example of what deliberative scholars call 'enclave deliberation' in which members of marginalised groups can discuss among themselves before entering public deliberation.[31] While the Voice proposal failed at referendum, an important lesson from the Uluru Statement process is that creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to engage in enclave deliberation ensures they are given the time and space to deliberate amongst themselves before entering wider public deliberation consisting of a wider cross-section of society. It is doubtful such a bold institutional innovation would have come from a process that included non-Indigenous participation as well.

Yoorrook Justice Commission

The *Yoorrook Justice Commission*[32] was established to investigate historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal people in the state of Victoria since colonisation. Prior to establishing the Yoorrook Commission, a democratically elected First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria was formed to negotiate with the Victorian government on behalf of Aboriginal people.[33] With the powers of a Royal Commission, the Yoorrook Justice Commission presents the first ever truth-telling exercise between Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples and an Australian government. This initiative complements the Victorian government's commitment to negotiate a treaty with Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Indigenous Land Management

An area of public policy in which the principle of deliberative engagement is visibly and widely used is Indigenous Land Management (ILM), or what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples refer to as 'Caring for Country.' Today, ILM is one of the largest areas of cooperation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments and provides a strong example of deliberative engagement.

Land and its management provide a critical pathway for governments to engage cooperatively with Indigenous people. To manage land effectively, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups establish traditional governance structures including land management enterprises and Indigenous ranger groups. Relationships of trust and respect within the intercultural (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) spaces of the ILM sector are recognised as critical to effective operation.[34] 'Sitting down together' and 'having a yarn' are two phrases that encapsulate the necessary processes of deliberation and respectful relationship-building; these processes enable movement towards addressing the deeper issues of social justice and equity that underpin effective two-way ILM.[35]

Processes such as native title and land rights regimes have seen large areas of land return to Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander peoples for self-management. There have been more than 600 native title determinations[36] which together with land rights means more than 50 per cent of the Australian landmass is covered by some form of Indigenous title.[37]

Closing the Gap

On 13 February 2008, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the historic National Apology to the Stolen Generations in the Federal Parliament. Following the apology, the Rudd Government announced a plan to achieve equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

[28]Grace Sarra and Marnee Shay, "'Co-Design" Is the Latest Buzzword in Indigenous Education Policy. Does It Live up to the Hype?', *The Conversation* (3 September 2023). [29]Commonwealth of Australia, *Final Report of the Referendum Council* (30 June 2017). [30]Megan Davis, "The Long Road to Uluru", *Griffith Review*, 60 (2018). [31]Carolyne Abdullah, Christopher F Karpowitz and Chad Raphael, 'Affinity Groups, Enclave Deliberation, and Equity', *Journal of Deliberative Democracy*, 12, no. 2 (2016).

[32]Yoorrook Justice Commission. [33]First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. [34]Janet Hunt et al, 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Self-Determination, Mainstreaming and Indigenous Community Governance' in *Contested Governance*, ed. Janet Hunt, Diane Smith, Stephanie Garling, Will Sanders (ANU Press, 2008), 27-53. [35]Melissa J. Nursey-Bray, Arnold Wallis and Phillip Rist, "Having a Yarn: The importance of appropriate engagement and participation in the development of Indigenous driven environmental policy, Queensland, Australia", Indigenous Policy, 20, no. 3 (2009); Karissa Preuss and Madeline Dixon, "'Looking after country two-ways': Insights into Indigenous community-based conservation from the Southern Tanami", *Ecological Management and Restoration*, 13, no. 1 (2012): 2-15. [36]National Native Title Tribunal. [37]Terri Janke, Zena Cumpston, Dr Rosemary Hill, Dr Emma Woodward, Stephanie von Gavel, Dr Pia Harkness and Joe Morrison. "Indigenous: Key findings. In: Australia State of the environment 2021" (Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, 2021).

Islander peoples in health and life expectancy. In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) met to approve the National Indigenous Reform Agreement which set out six Closing the Gap targets, with the aim of closing the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation. Each year since 2009, a Closing the Gap Report has been tabled in the Federal Parliament containing information on progress towards the six targets. Progress towards the goals has been slow and inconsistent, causing frustration amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.

A new Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap was signed in March 2019 in which Indigenous organisations and governments committed to a new way of working together. The new Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap expresses a structural change in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aligning with the principles of deliberative democracy, the agreement rests upon the belief that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.

The Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1: Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making aims to empower Indigenous people in each state and territory to share decision making roles and responsibilities with governments across key policy areas.[38]

However, in February 2024, the Productivity Commission released a review of the Closing the Gap Strategy. It found that, while the agreement commits governments to strengthen the capacity of Indigenous health organisations to participate in shared decision making, in practice the implementation of this was limited. The review found that Australian governments needed to develop a fundamentally new way of designing and implementing health policies and programs. A key recommendation of the review is for governments to increase power-sharing arrangements.[39]

Empowered Communities

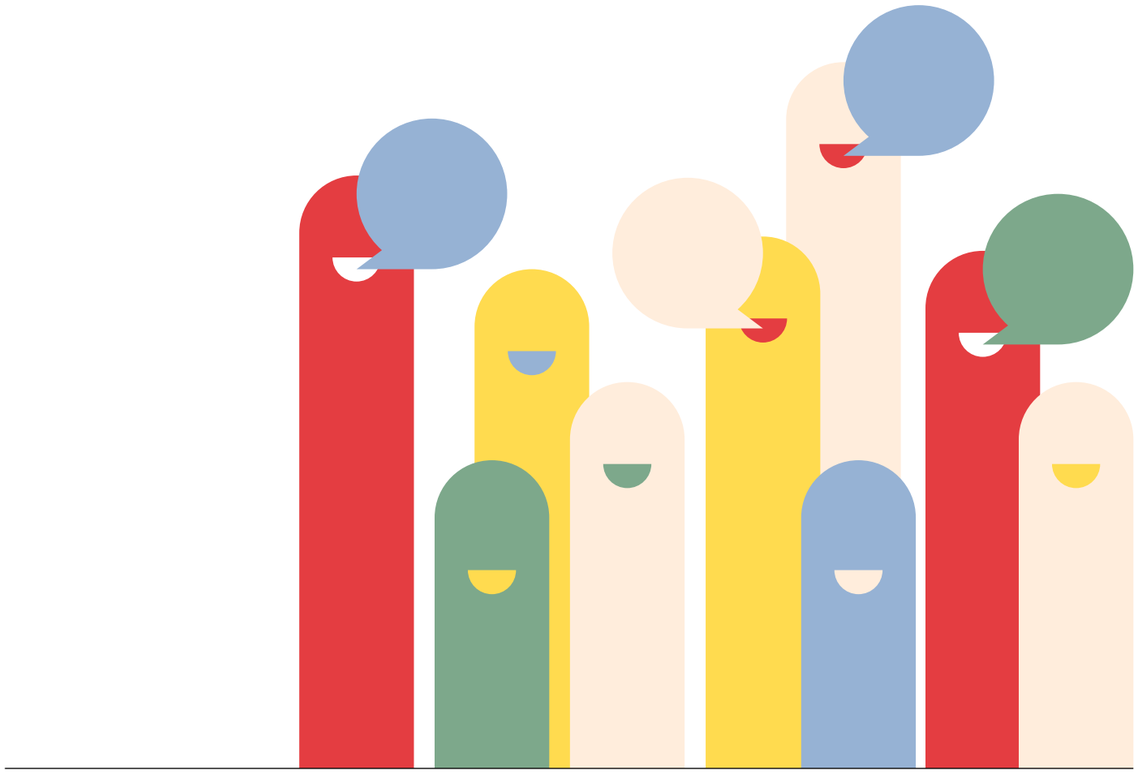
Empowered Communities is an Indigenous-led initiative comprising 10 urban, rural, and remote Indigenous communities across Australia. The leaders of *Empowered Communities* argue that empowering Indigenous communities to make decisions is the key to self-determination. *Empowered Communities* draws on the ideals and principles of deliberative democracy, and highlights that deliberative engagement is a commitment of both government and communities, to situate dialogue, negotiation, listening, and open mindedness at the centre of relations.

For the leaders of *Empowered Communities*, the intention is to get governments to change their mindset from sole decision-making authority to enabler of Indigenous decision-making. Leaders argue that the failure of governments to achieve progress in Indigenous affairs is ultimately due to, and reflective of, the widespread disempowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

> Government and its representatives need to come to the table willing to act as enablers and facilitators in an Indigenous-led process, not as the primary fixers of problems.[40]

Conclusion

The current approach to Indigenous affairs does not enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead our own development by taking responsibility for our lives, families and communities. We cannot effectively influence the decisions that most affect our lives. We are left as mendicants within the majoritarian system of democracy. The ideals and practices of deliberative democracy can be central to finding new ways of living together based on justice, self-determination, and mutual respect.



[38]Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Priority Reforms (Closing the Gap, n.d.). [39]Productivity Commission, Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Study Report (2024).

[40]Wunan Foundation Inc. Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples: Design Report (2015): 41.

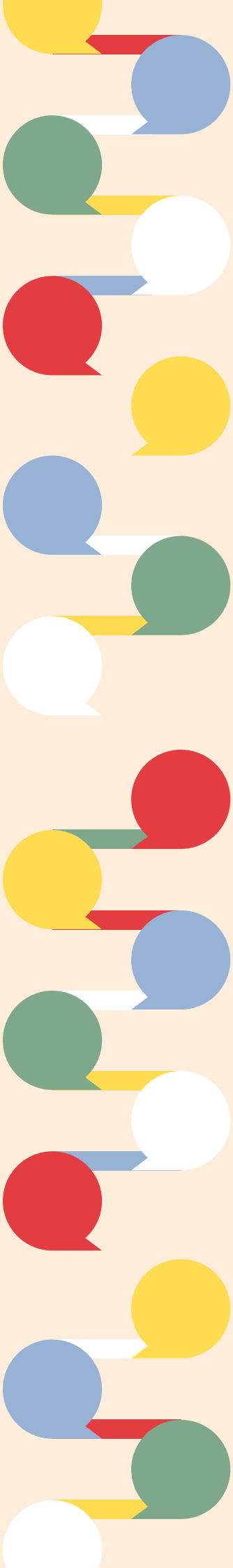
About the Centre for Deliberative Democracy

The Centre for Deliberative Democracy is a world-leading research centre based at the University of Canberra's Faculty of Business, Government and Law. It is committed to advancing both scholarly and applied research in deliberative governance and democratic innovations.

Through close collaboration with governments and civil society, the Centre's work aims to enrich public discourse, foster democratic resilience, and broaden opportunities for meaningful citizen engagement—both in Australia and globally.

The Centre offers masterclasses and training for professionals in community engagement, equipping them with the latest research insights and practical tools.

To learn more about the Centre's work or explore collaboration opportunities, contact: delibdem@canberra.edu.au



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