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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Dual Approach Drives Democratic Business**

It takes two to tango – and, it seems, doubling up is becoming an increasingly popular strategy for running a sustainable and successful business in the 24-7 digital age.

While co-CEOing isn’t a new phenomenon around the world, it has recently started to pick up pace in Australia and in SA. It’s something local business democracyCo discovered some time ago.

Emily Jenke and Emma Lawson share more than a similar first name. The duo are co-Chief Executive Officers of the company founded in 2014.

democracyCo is an Adelaide-based company which works with governments, business, not-for-profits and local communities to help them make better decisions together that improve peoples’ quality of life.

Ms Jenke – who also runs widely known boutique food business Talinga Grove with her husband, Paul – was an established facilitator and a deliberative practice specialist when she and Ms Lawson “joined forces”.

“We had both worked together in a contractor – customer capacity and we were always strongly aligned in our values and vision for changing the way Government connects and consults with communities,” Ms Jenke said.

Ms Lawson agrees. “I had worked in Government for quite a while and I was really ready to apply my skills more broadly and to pursue my passion – which is to change the way our democratic system really works,” she said.

democracyCo offers a range of services including deliberative panels, advice, policies, recruitment and training locally, nationally and internationally. It successfully ran the 2014 SA Citizen’s Jury on *Reducing the numbers of Unwanted Dogs and Cats* – an engagement process for which the company is now a joint finalist for a national award.

DemocracyCo also ran the first sitting of the 50 person Jury to kick-start the State Government’s consultation on the Nuclear Fuel Cycle and has been awarded the contract to run the second and final Citizen’s Jury on the NFC – a jury of 350 every day South Australians and one of the largest Citizens’ Juries to be held in the world.

The company has supported private sector clients including SA Power Networks and has also recently trained the Singaporean public service in Citizens Juries as they explore the potential for the process to be applied in their country.

Ms Lawson said expanding its international services was a priority for the business.

“We’re finding South East Asia has a real appetite for deliberative processes,” she said. “What is clear is that you don’t have to have a democracy to deliver a democratic process.

“Governments across the world are faced with the challenges of having to make decisions on increasingly complex issues but in the context of societies that want quick answers and solutions. Deliberative processes such as citizens’ juries offer governments the chance to cut through.

“For countries like China, for instance, a deliberative process enables them to include their people without changing their system of Government.”

Ms Jenke and Ms Lawson – who have five children between them – agreed complimentary skills sets and diverse contact networks had proven instrumental to their success.

“Emily is stronger on the ‘game day’ side of things – she is an outstanding and respected facilitator in her own right,” Ms Lawson said. “I bring significant project management and administration experience as well as insights into Government and navigating bureaucracy.”

“For us it has been the perfect fit, with so many benefits – particularly in regards to the scope of services we can provide to clients and the expertise with which we can deliver those services. The fact that if one of us has to travel, the other one is there still providing leadership and continuity has also been beneficial and appreciated by our clients.”

Ms Lawson and Ms Jenke are strong advocates for the dual CEO model but stress it’s not suited to everyone or every business.

“Your vision and values have to be the same,” Ms Jenke said. “Diversity in terms of skillsets, knowledge and experience is great, but what you believe in and what you want to achieve as a business, has to be aligned.”

**WHY GO CO-CEO?**

**democracyCo sets out the benefits:**

* Complimentary skills, knowledge and experience
* More and different ideas
* Shared responsibilities
* Increased flexibility
* Wider contact networks
* Automatic back-up – if one person is away/travelling/on leave, there is stable and consistent leadership
* Eases pressure especially in start-up phase of business.

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