

ANZSOG



# The 6 Foundational Elements of Deliberative Democracy

Australia &  
New Zealand  
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# The 6 Foundational Elements of Deliberative Democracy

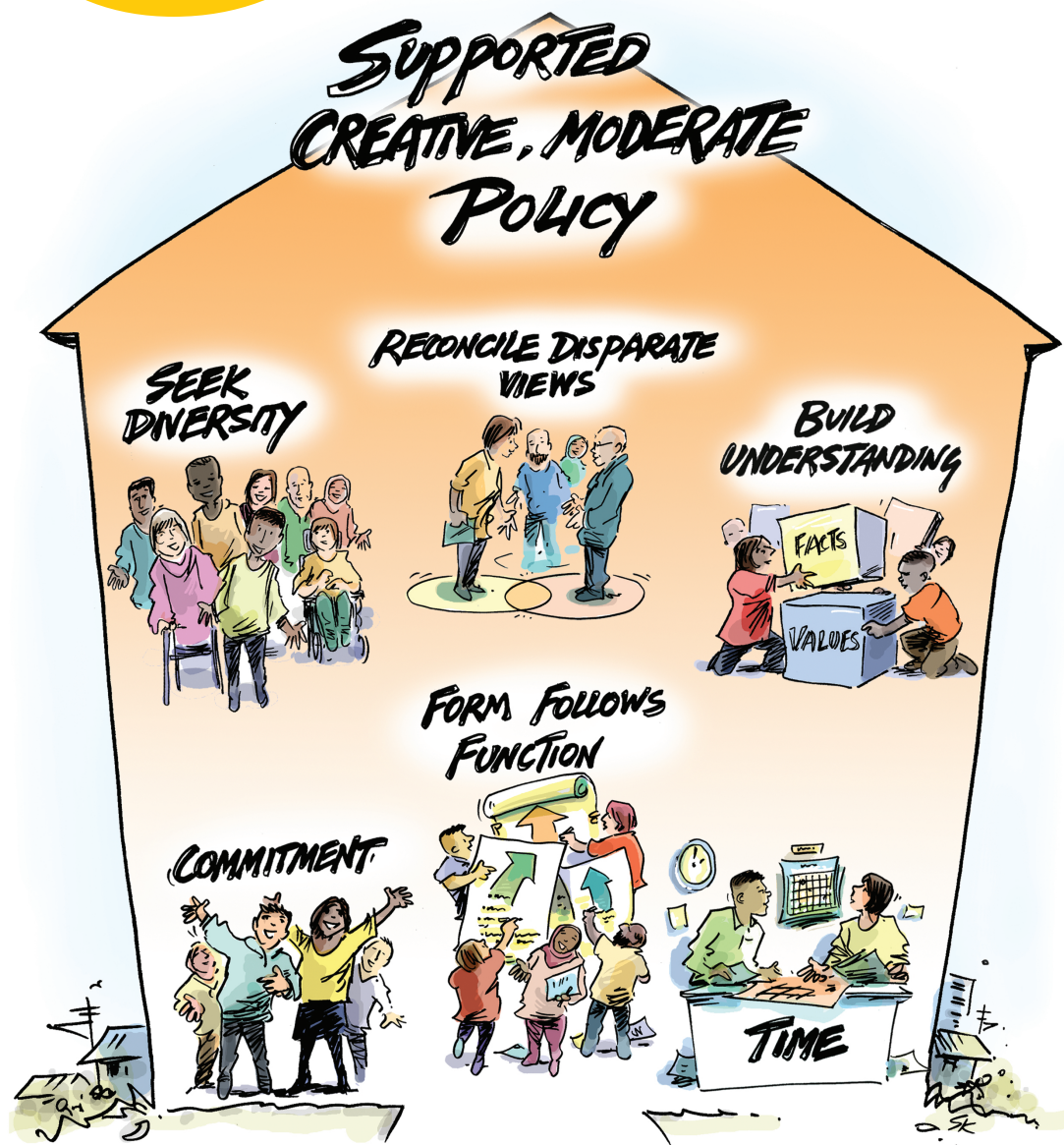


FIGURE 1: THE 6 FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

# THIS DOCUMENT

DemocracyCo have prepared this document to provide background information on the theory of deliberative democracy and deliberative democratic processes. The concepts and frameworks described will be explored further during their session.

## WHAT IS DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY?

**Deliberative democracy is a theoretical tradition that is now informing democratic engagement. Democratic engagements, following the principles of deliberative democracy, are designed to enable a plurality of voices, to shine a light on the tensions and conflicts between different actors, and to enable a shared space for forging understanding on collective problems.<sup>1</sup>**

Numerous methodologies underpin deliberative democratic work including – deliberative polling<sup>2</sup>, citizen's assemblies, consensus conventions, citizens' juries, deliberative guides (National Issues Forum guides<sup>3</sup>) and participatory budgeting.

The same key foundational elements underpin deliberative democratic methodologies. We find that it is these elements that make deliberative processes so effective. As a consequence, it is these elements that can be used as central planks in the design of your engagement processes – enabling new innovative methodologies to be developed which meet government and community needs.<sup>4</sup>

## 6 OCCASIONS WHEN DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES ARE HELPFUL

**Deliberative democratic processes are helpful when you ...**

1. want to build a 'social licence' for change
2. want to reform a complex or divisive area of public policy – a wicked problem
3. want to understand an informed mainstream view
4. want to hear from parts of the community that are hard to engage – including middle Australia or 'quiet Australians'
5. have a polarised community and you need to find the 'middle ground' – the place where community and or stakeholders can agree or find an agreed resolution / way forward
6. have strong stakeholders with vested interests and you need to find a way through.

1 Nicole Moore, "Co-design and Deliberative engagement", MoAD, 2019, <https://www.democracy2025.gov.au/documents/Democracy2025-report3.pdf>

2 <https://participedia.net/method/147>

3 <https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guides/issue-guides>

4 D.M Farrell, etal, "Deliberative mini publics design features", University of Canberra, <https://www.governanceinstitute.edu.au/magma/media/upload/ckeditor/files/Deliberative%20Mini-Publics%20Core%20Design%20Features.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3FciT4ubixSpsbErvH3FVgfMwo2cOTtTBxtWsfPRWNf99bqw13v4U3Oas>

# WHAT CAN DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY HELP YOU DO?

## → REFORM

– Deliberative democracy can help governments to achieve change by building a ‘social licence’. Deliberative democratic processes are perfect for the toughest of issues, those which don’t have a simple solution.

## → POSITIVELY ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS

– Stakeholders are the key to success of any reform process. Deliberative democracy enables you to design and utilise a process that involves key people and organisations in a way that is cognisant of their knowledge, influence and interest.

## → GET BEYOND THE ‘SQUEAKY WHEELS’ AND UNDERSTAND MAINSTREAM AUSTRALIA

– Random selection of participants (a commonly used tool in deliberative processes) helps you to access a broader cross section of Australian society than is attracted to traditional open access engagement processes such as town hall meetings and advertised consultations.

## → PRIORITISED BUDGETS

– One of the greatest challenges for governments during fiscally constrained times is engaging the population (including stakeholders) in addressing budget issues. Deliberative democracy helps to build understanding of the ‘trade-offs’ involved in budgeting and enable community involvement in the prioritisation of government expenditure.

## → RECONCILE DISPARATE VIEWS

– Deliberative processes are useful where there the trade-offs are not simple and there are strong disparate views. These processes can help polarised groups to find common ground, expand their horizons and as a result, find a way forward.

## → ACTIVATED COMMUNITIES

– In many circumstances government cannot achieve change alone; achieving sustained society wide change requires the additional support and combined action of communities and industry. Deliberative processes can be used to mobilise community and stakeholders.

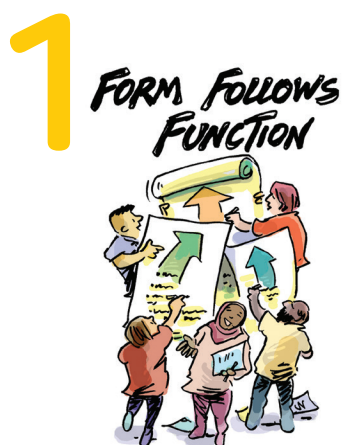
## → UNDERSTAND AN INFORMED, MAINSTREAM VIEW

– There is an information imbalance between what is easily available to those in decision-making roles and what is available to the public. Given this, communities, stakeholders and citizens generally form opinions about the merits of a policy proposal in a vacuum and based on personal bias. Deliberative processes can provide a microcosm of how issues are considered in real life.

## → INNOVATIVE IDEAS

– Ask the same people you will get the same answer! Bring together a diverse range of people, with different skills, knowledge and backgrounds and you will get new innovative ideas.

# THE 6 FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY



Be clear about what you want to achieve (the government/agencies objectives), who you need to involve and seek to deeply understand the context in which you will be engaging. This will enable you to design a process that squarely addresses your organisational needs and responds to needs of those you need to engage.



Go slow to go fast. When you are addressing complex issues, it takes time. Start slow at the start to go fast at the end, and start together!

You can't 'bring people along' if you only involve them at the end!

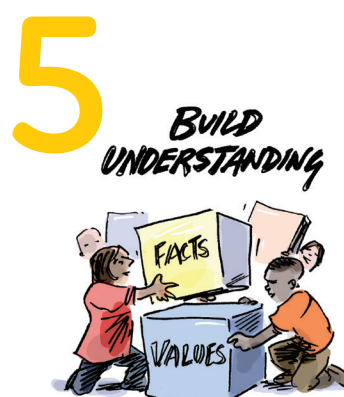


Without having an upfront commitment that their work will go somewhere, citizens' and stakeholders simply won't turn up!

Be clear about the influence the work will have on the final decision.



Access the 'spectrum of views.' Get beyond the squeaky wheels and those already engaged – ensure all impacts and consequences are considered and understood. Ensure that the 'middle' has an opportunity to contribute as well as those with strong views.



Support people to interrogate information critically and alert people to the biases they bring. Use values and framing exercises which support people to understand why they understand something in one way (potentially different to another) and design processes which enable discourse with high levels of participation, content, and respect toward others and opposing opinions.



Provide information that people can critically analyse and interrogate. Start from an open question or problem, so people can have room to move toward a constructive, rational conversation. Bring people together in 'one room' for human contact – online communication simply is not enough. Promote a variety of ways for all people to actively participate in their decision-making processes.

### **Want to learn more?**

To further develop your and/or your organisation's deliberative democracy capabilities please contact ANZSOG ([e.education@ANZSOG.edu.au](mailto:e.education@ANZSOG.edu.au)) who run a deliberative democracy course – called Raising the Citizens' Voice.

You can also learn more by visiting [www.democracyco.com.au](http://www.democracyco.com.au)

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