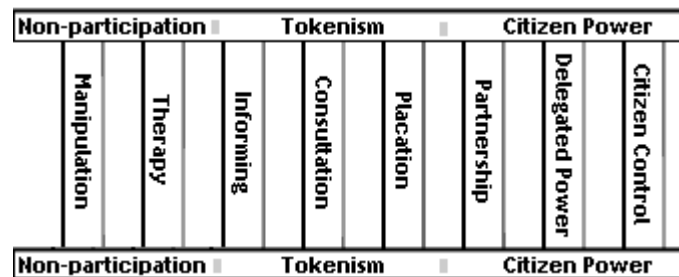


**VCE Student Lecture Notes – National Politics – 08 May 2009**  
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**What is Deliberative Democracy?**

- ✓ A commitment to **public participation** in political decision-making that extends **beyond just voting**.
- ✓ Citizens are actively **engaged in the design of policies and laws** that they ultimately have to live by.
- ✓ **Facilitated processes** to **deliberate** in a **civil manner**.
- ✓ **Enhances** representative and direct democracy, and **augments** the decision-making by the Executive of government.

**The Ladder of Citizen Participation** (after Arnstein, 1969)



**Example** (from local government)

Surfcoast Shire (towns along Great Ocean Road) had a **public problem**. With many unsealed roads and open drains, maintenance costs were rising. Increased population, traffic and tourism raised dust and caused erosion. The shire staff wanted the homeowners to invest in paving and drainage infrastructure. But many people chose to have homes there precisely because of the informal ambience of the neighbourhoods. The Council was in a **divided** situation.

The Council convened a **Citizens Jury**, 12 randomly selected homeowners from the community, who sat over two weekends at a local hall. They witnessed **presentations** by council staff, experts on roads and drainage, and alternative views by adjacent shires and the local residents' association. With the guidance of a professional **facilitator**, the Jury then **deliberated** to produce a set of **recommendations** to the Council. Rather than just vote on a Yes-No verdict, they **designed a plan** for paving to some high-use thorough-fares, "traffic calming" diversions, drainage works in areas especially prone to flooding and erosion, but no other "improvement" works. They found a **middle ground**.

Council had agreed at the outset to be **bound** by the recommendations.

*Juries determine verdicts in the law courts,  
 why not help set public policy too?*

**Participants in a deliberative process:**

- ✓ Address a "wicked" **problem**
- ✓ **Randomly-selected microcosm** of the community ("mini-public")
- ✓ Process is **independent** of stakeholders
- ✓ Assisted by qualified **facilitation**
- ✓ Progress through **small-group dialogue** and **inquiry**
- ✓ Reminded to maintain **mutual respect, open space** for each other, **listen empathetically**
- ✓ Explore problems before jumping to conclusions (ie. avoid "we should...")
- ✓ Informed by range of experts, stakeholders and resources
- ✓ Don't have to all be experts--each participant brings life experience, values, beliefs and stories to the forum -- **collective intelligence**
- ✓ Critically analyse for themselves where bias, misinformation, distortion and special interests lie
- ✓ Frame issues on their own terms
- ✓ **Learn from each other**
- ✓ **Reflect** on own positions and opinions
- ✓ Generate new knowledge and understanding
- ✓ Provide reasons for decisions
- ✓ **Design** innovative alternatives
- ✓ Consider both upsides and downsides of options
- ✓ Consider everyone impacted by the decisions
- ✓ Encouraged to **seek common ground**, not necessarily consensus
- ✓ Collaboratively write recommendations
- ✓ Have enough time to do the above
- ✓ **Recommendations are bound** to be implemented or put to referendum.

**Not all of these features and ideals are met in every process.**

## CORE PRINCIPLES for Public Engagement

presented in Apr 2009 by NCDD to U.S. Pres. Obama

1. **Planning and Preparation** - Plan, design, and convene the engagement specifically to serve both the purpose of the effort and the needs of participants.
2. **Inclusion and Diversity** - Incorporate diverse voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.
3. **Collaboration and Shared Purpose** - Support organizers, participants, and those engaged in follow-up to work well together for the common good.
4. **Listening and Learning** - Help participants listen, explore and learn without predetermined outcomes -- and evaluate public engagement efforts for lessons.
5. **Transparency and Trust** - Promote openness and provide a public record of the people, resources, forums, and outcomes involved.
6. **Impact and Action** - Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference.
7. **Sustained Participation and Democratic Culture** - Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

## Australian Citizens' Parliament (ACP)

- Demonstration of a large scale deliberative process
- Initiative of four universities and newDemocracy Foundation (NGO)
- Modelled on British Columbia Citizens' Assembly for Electoral Reform (2004)
- How can Australia's political system be strengthened to serve us better?
- 8000 randomly-selected from the electoral roll received invitations; 35% registered; 150 participants randomly selected (stratified) from those, one from each federal electorate
- Regional meetings to introduce participants to the process
- Online deliberations for 10 weeks, identifying possible proposal topics
- Assembled in Canberra 06-09 Feb 2009
- Final report received by Parliamentary Secretary to PM Rudd.

ACP Top Proposals	Priority #1: Freedom	Priority #2: Transparency	Most Innovative	Easiest to Implement	Most Important in Long Term
Empowering citizens to participate in politics through education	#1	#3	#5	#1	#1
Empowering citizens to participate in politics through community engagement	#2	#4	-	-	#3
Reduce duplication between levels of government by harmonising laws across boundaries	-	#5	#3	-	#2
Youth engagement in politics	#4	-	-	#3	#4
Open and accessible government	#3	#1	-	-	-

## ACP: Top 5 priority characteristics of a healthy political system

1. **Freedom** of choice, speech, lifestyle, information, self-expression, information, assembly; not a police state
2. **Transparency** - open and honest political system
3. **Guaranteed education** for all
4. **Justice and fairness in government** - representation of power should not be based on privilege and wealth; efficient distribution of community resources
5. **Inclusiveness** - especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, multiculturalism and minority groups.

## Barriers to deliberative democracy

- Cost and logistic complexity of running processes and events
- Reluctance of Executive to devolve power to citizens
- Reluctance of public to participate
- Authoritative habits of communication
- Inconsistent facilitation
- Misunderstandings about deliberative group processes
- Deliberative democracy incorrectly discounted as leftist or anarchic.

## Resources

- Australian Citizens' Parliament website <http://www.citizensparliament.org.au/>
- International Association for Public Participation (Australasia) <http://www.iap2.org.au/>
- Deliberative Democracy Network (USA) <http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/>
- BC Citizen's Assembly for Electoral Reform (Canada) <http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/>
- National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (USA) <http://www.thataway.org/>
- Dryzek, John. 2000. *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations*. Oxford University Press.
- Gastil, John & Levine, Peter (Eds). 2005. *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*. Jossy-Bass.

## Other ACP outcomes

- Influencing government to institutionalise deliberative processes
- Participants witnessed transformational learning during deliberation
- Returned home enthused, talking to their MPs and media, re-engaging with community.