DEMOCRACY IN GEELONG (GEELONG CITIZENS' JURY)

Shaping the future of local democracy

SNAPSHOT

- **Process:** Citizens' Jury (+ wider engagement phase)
- **Timeframe:** June 2016 – May 2017 (2 months wider engagement & 4 days deliberation)
- **Client:** Local Government Victoria (Victorian Government)
- **Process design & facilitation:** MosaicLab
- **Jury selection & management:** newDemocracy Foundation
- **Participants:** 1200 wider engagement participants, 100 jurors
- **Outputs:** 13 recommendations (all implemented or supported)

REMIT

'Our council was dismissed. How do we want to be democratically represented by a future council?'.

OVERVIEW

The Geelong Citizens' Jury was a ground-breaking engagement process – no other community has ever had the chance to influence its council's structure to this extent.

The City of Greater Geelong Council was dismissed in April 2016. The Victorian Government then committed to consult the Geelong community about the structure of its future elected council.

> ***The whole process - the way it's independent, the way the jurors are selected, and particularly the open-ended question ... that was part of the excitement and strength of this project.***
>
> - Louisa Curry, Project Manager, Geelong Citizens' Jury (former Senior Governance Analyst, DELWP)

CHALLENGES & RISKS

- Complex, politically charged topic
- Perceptions of lack of independence
- Vocal former politicians and unbalanced media
- Polarising question
- Low community confidence in local government
- Varied communities of interest across diverse municipality

RESPONSES/KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Real influence: jury empowered to change the system
- Vocal objectors and media invited to observe process
- Independent jury management and selection
- Jurors tested opinion by using critical thinking
- Jury access to diverse inputs, evidence and speakers
- Comprehensive wider engagement process including conversations with diverse groups

> ***I'm a big believer in people together achieving more than people apart, and I think this has been a really awesome example of democracy in action.***
>
> - Juror

KEY OUTCOMES

- Diverse range of voices included in wider engagement phase
- 1200 Geelong people provided input into jury's deliberations.
- Minister for Local Government tabled the jury's report in Parliament and made a formal response to the jury
- Victorian Government implemented both practical recommendations made by the jury
- Victorian Government supported, in-principle, all 11 aspirational recommendations made by the jury