

#MONTHLYMYTH - DECISION MAKERS & DELIBERATIVE PROCESSES

mosaiclab.com.au/news-all-posts/2016/12/30/monthlymyth-decision-makers-have-no-role-in-deliberative-processes



Welcome to MosaicLab's first ever #MonthlyMyth post. There are a number of myths and misconceptions that often surface in relation to facilitation, deliberative democracy, outrage management, conflict management and community engagement more broadly.

As part of our work to promote quality engagement practice and share information and learning we are addressing some of the most common myths and misconceptions each month on our blog. We hope you find this series interesting, informative, and perhaps a little surprising!

We're kicking off with a myth that often surfaces in relation to deliberative processes. This misconception can be a barrier to leaders and decision makers embracing deliberative engagement, and is commonly held by those who haven't experienced this type of process before and fear loss of control.

MYTH:

Decision makers have no role in a deliberative process.

IN REALITY

Deliberative engagement is an engagement approach where a randomly selected group of people that are affected by an issue or decision come together to deliberate over an issue. Together, the group prepares a report that details their response to the question (remit) before them and details their recommendations. This report tends to hold 'weight' in the decision making process, meaning that, ultimately, the community has a higher level of

influence over the outcome or decision than the they generally would in a standard engagement approach. Naturally, this can sometimes cause concern around the role of the 'decision maker'.

Decision makers need to commit to the process and the promise being made to their stakeholders or community. However, in most cases, the report is sent to very senior decision makers for consideration or final approval. When referring to the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, the level of engagement is **collaborate** rather than **empower**.

These processes intentionally try to give more influence to citizens. They require the decision maker to be brave, but not to give up total control, and the decision maker certainly doesn't become obsolete.

So how is the decision maker involved in a deliberative process?

When designing a deliberative process, it's important that decision makers have considered input into process design and development. Ultimately, they are making a commitment to seriously consider and respond to the recommendations of a group of citizens, so they need to be brought in from the early stages of the planning process.

In addition, it's advantageous to ensure decision makers are involved throughout the process, observing and potentially speaking with the jury or panel during the group's deliberations. Decision makers are also in the room on the final day of deliberations, when they receive the group's final report in person.

Additionally, leaders and decision makers need to respond to the group's report. This includes detailing how they will implement the group's recommendations, and if there's anything they can't implement, they explain why.