

MEDIA RELEASE

17 August 2017



Australians are switched on to democracy but turned off by Canberra politics

A research report released by the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) provides compelling evidence of an increasing disconnect between government and its citizens, yet optimism about how to move forward.

The report was developed by MoAD and the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA) as part of the launch of the museum's *Democracy 100 You Can Make a Difference* initiative. The event brought together informed and passionate Australians committed to contributing to the health and vibrancy of our democracy, at a time when this has never been more important.

These *Democracy 100* champions include leaders, innovators and thinkers from a range of sectors including arts and culture, business, research and education, philanthropy, the media and government to have a multi-partisan conversation about the future of Australia's democracy.

"As a 21st century museum, MoAD is ideally positioned to bring together a network of democracy champions to tackle the big issues facing our democracy by identifying priorities for action over the coming decade and empowering people to advocate for change," says Ms Daryl Karp, Director of MoAD.

The report, *How Australian's Imagine their Democracy: The "Power of Us"*, compares mainstream Australian's views on democracy with those of the *Democracy 100* champions, including our democracy's core values, strengths and weaknesses and areas requiring renewal.

The findings show a decline of democratic satisfaction, trust in politicians, political parties and other key institutions, as well as a lack of public confidence in the capacity of governments to address public policy concerns.

"Nonetheless, *Democracy 100* champions remain confident in the adaptive capacity of Australian democracy to renew itself through the 'Power of Us'," says Professor Mark Evans, Director of IGPA.

"Citizens still appear to value the overall stability of their political system even if lack of political trust means they lack confidence in its ability to deliver, especially on more challenging policy issues."

The report also outlines a set of core democratic values identified by the *Democracy 100* champions. These are social equality, freedom of speech and assembly, religious toleration, free press, rule of law, separation of powers, free and fair elections, the parliamentary system, compulsory voting and human rights.

The data helped informed deliberations on the responsibilities of a democratic champion at the *Democracy 100* event last night. It will also underpin the content of a new exhibition, the *Power of Us*, to be launched at MoAD in 2018 and will guide future museum activities.

How Australian's Imagine their Democracy: The "Power of Us" states that Australians should rightly be proud of their hard won democratic traditions and freedoms and the achievement of stable government which has delivered social and economic wellbeing for its citizens. However, the findings should give all democrats pause for thought.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

For further information, interviews or photo opportunities, please contact Alice Brown: alice.brown@moadoph.gov.au, (02) 6270 8120 or 0410 997 741.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Ms Daryl Karp, Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy
- Professor Mark Evans, Director and Professor of Governance at the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis

VISUALS:

Images from the *Democracy 100* event are available to download via Dropbox:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uxpa4rles2f6fn3/AACamPPDHHxb2Exl6X_rxM44a?dl=0

THE SURVEY:

The research includes a quantitative survey of a representative sample of 1244 Australians and 10 focus groups with various 'slices of Australian life', called *The Power of Us Survey*:

- Mainstream Australians (recruited at random, mix of age, gender, family and socio-economic status)
- Older Australians (over 65, not working)
- Young Australians (under 23)
- New Australians (migrants to Australia that became citizens within the past 10 years)
- Rural and regional Australians (living outside metropolitan Australia)
- LGBTQI Australians
- Australians with disability (and their carers)

This report, *How Australians Imagine their Democracy: The "Power of Us"*, compares the findings of *The Power of Us Survey* with data derived from a pre-event survey covering what the *Democracy 100* champions think about Australian democracy, its core values, strengths and weaknesses and areas requiring renewal.

The full report is available to download via Dropbox:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/qqlmijqkm0v165/AAAW1C6fXWB1H8yIJcSXhEH4a?dl=0>