



*Democracy*  
**2025**

# BRIDGING THE TRUST DIVIDE

*Democracy. Are you in?*



Museum of  
Australian Democracy  
Old Parliament House



UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA



INSTITUTE FOR  
GOVERNANCE  
& POLICY ANALYSIS

# DEMOCRACY 2025

Across Australia trust in our democracy is on the decline.

Trust is the glue that facilitates collective action for mutual benefit. Without trust we don't have the ability to address complex, long-term challenges. Trust is also closely tied to democratic satisfaction.

MoAD's (Museum of Australian Democracy) research, *Trust and Democracy in Australia*, shows that in 2018 satisfaction in democracy more than halved in a decade and trust in key institutions and social leaders is eroding.

By 2025 if nothing is done and current trends continue, fewer than 10 per cent of Australians will trust their politicians and political institutions – resulting in ineffective and illegitimate government, and declining social and economic wellbeing.

This problem must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

MoAD is taking action. We are bringing together every section of the community and igniting a national conversation on strengthening Australian democratic practice.

MoAD and our foundation partner, the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra (UC-IGPA), have embarked on an important initiative, **Democracy 2025**, to *bridge the trust divide and re-engage Australians with their democracy*.

MoAD holds a unique position, on the frontline of democracy, civic agency and change, a museum not just of objects but of ideas. We empower Australians through exhibitions, schools' learning programs and events that both stimulate and inspire. Trusted by the public, government, public service and business alike, we advance national conversations about democracy, past, present and future.

**Democracy 2025** is driving a process of national reflection and renewal on how we can rebuild trust and strengthen democratic practice in Australia.

This ambitious goal is critical to the health of our nation. Nothing less will do.

**Daryl Karp AM,  
Director, MoAD**

**Professor Mark Evans,  
Director, Democracy 2025**



## THE NEED FOR ACTION

Democracy is on the retreat globally. We have now entered what the Pew Research Centre has termed a global 'democratic recession' (Pew Research Center, 2017). Satisfaction with democracy is tipping around the world—there are now more authoritarian regimes than full democracies (Kellogg, *Varieties of Democracy Project*, 2018).

Weakening political trust erodes civic engagement, reduces support for evidence based public policies, promotes risk aversion in government, and creates the space for the rise of authoritarian-populist forces.

Australia has not been immune to this worldwide phenomenon. Despite 27 years of economic growth—which traditionally means increased satisfaction—Australians have grown more distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions and disillusioned with democratic processes.

## HOW DO WE KNOW?

MoAD's research shows satisfaction in democracy has more than halved over the past decade, dropping to 41 per cent in 2018. Levels of trust—in the Australian Government at 31 per cent and politicians at 21 per cent, whether state or federal—are at their lowest levels since survey data has been available (MoAD, *Trust and Democracy in Australia*, 2018). The research was conducted prior to the 2019 federal election..

Notably social trust between Australians has fallen below 50 per cent for the first time, to 47 per cent, and there is a growing group of disenfranchised voters feeling left behind and angry.

Yet MoAD's data also shows that there is overwhelming support amongst Australian citizens for a range of reforms aimed at strengthening democratic practice, especially improved integrity, political accountability, and public participation.

Restoring trust in our governance is critical to the health of our democracy and, more broadly, to the defence of democracy in our region. Doing nothing is not an option.





PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW MERRY

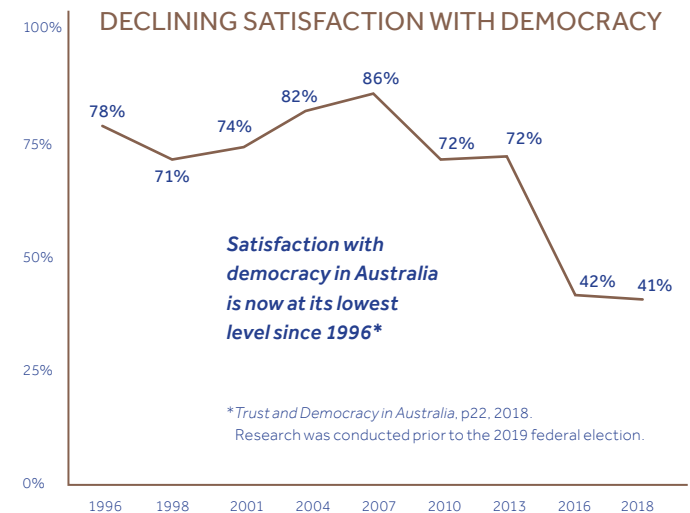
## OUR VISION

**Democracy 2025** is a world-leading initiative based at the spiritual home of Australian democracy – Old Parliament House, Canberra.

We deliver applied research, analysis and interpretation of the challenges facing representative democracy, and identify areas for potential innovation and renewal.

Bringing together business, government, the public service and the community, we bridge the trust divide by:

1. rolling-out innovative best-practice solutions to challenges facing democracies across Australia and the Asia-Pacific
2. creating active, engaged and informed citizens
3. influencing democratic leadership, capacity and practice
4. promoting excellence and innovation in democratic governance



## HOW WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We are igniting a national conversation about our democratic practice and building a new generation of democratically engaged Australians.

We are auditing the qualities of Australian democracy, investigating and experimenting with what works in terms of renewing our representative system of government and facilitating non-partisan conversations on how to improve our democratic practices.

At the community level, we are delivering transformational digital and face-to-face learning experiences to foster a politically literate citizenry and promote best democratic practices.

**Democracy 2025's** six core programs are delivered in partnership with national and international leaders in their fields.

### *Public Trust Index*

The creation of a Public Trust Index will set a baseline for the measurement and improvement of Australian democratic practice and integrate the four key elements that influence public trust—integrity, transparency, accountability and participation—into a single democratic dashboard.

### *Ignite Learning Program*

MoAD's onsite schools' learning programs currently reach 85,000+ students each year. Through Ignite, a new digital-based education program, we aim to reach every student in Australia.

### *Democracy Lab*

As a first for Australia, the Democracy Lab brings together the public, experts, politicians and government officials to co-design solutions for some of our big national challenges and experiment with new forms of democratic innovations.

### *Trust Building Public Leadership Program*

Co-designed with government, business and community sector leaders, this innovative program specifically aims to improve trust systems in Australia and integrity in governance.

### *Transformative exhibitions and events*

Interactive and engaging, MoAD's exhibitions and events showcase core concepts of Australian democracy and highlight our latest research, providing a unique space for visitor experiences and responses.

### *Australian Democracy in the Asian Century*

By building strong regional partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region to generate research, education and engagement, this program aims to enhance the quality of democratic practice.

## FOUNDING PRINCIPALS AND COLLABORATORS

**Democracy 2025** is supported by the expert thinking of our Founding Principals and Collaborators:

**Professor Mark Evans**, UC-IGPA Director Democracy 2025

**Daryl Karp AM**, CEO and Director of MoAD

**Professor Patrick Dunleavy**, Director of the Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom, London School of Economics

**Professor John Dryzek**, Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, UC-IGPA

**Michelle Grattan AO**, Political Editor, The Conversation, and Professorial Fellow at UC-IGPA

**Virginia Haussegger AM**, Director of the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation

**Sean Innis**, Director of the Public Policy and Societal Impact Hub, Australian National University

**Professor Gerry Stoker**, Centre of Governance, UC-IGPA

**Dr Nina Terrey**, Partner at Thinkplace

**Drew Baker**, Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Public Administration Australia

## SUPPORT DEMOCRACY 2025

Become involved with **Democracy 2025** and make a difference. With your help we can reset the national conversation and create a lasting social change.

Partnering with us helps expand **Democracy 2025's** research, education and public programs.

Help us promote excellence and innovation in democratic governance:

- **Donate to Democracy 2025**
- **Use our research**
- **Participate in our events and programs**
- **Join our network**
- **Collaborate with us**

Go to [www.democracy2025.gov.au](http://www.democracy2025.gov.au) for the latest news on research and events.

**Democracy 2025** is a critical investment in Australia's future.




## CONTACT


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