

Your **voice**
your **hands**
and even your **feet**
have the **power**
to be **heard**



MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT AT THE NEW EXHIBITION

DEMOCRACY

ARE YOU IN ?

DEMOCRACY. ARE YOU IN?

MEDIA KIT



Museum of
Australian Democracy
Old Parliament House



MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2018

AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY: ARE WE IN CRISIS?

MoAD opens new, thought provoking exhibition: *Democracy. Are You In?*

If there is a single word which characterises the *Democracy. Are You In?* exhibition opening this week at the Museum of Australian Democracy, it would be trust. And that's a quality that's in worryingly short supply in Australian politics.

The Museum of Australian Democracy's new exhibition has an urgent question for you: *Democracy. Are You In?*

Arising from a research partnership between MOAD and the University of Canberra's Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA), the exhibition's starting point is evidence that we're increasingly disconnected from government. IGPA found "compelling evidence of the increasing disconnect between government and citizen reflected in the decline of democratic satisfaction, trust in politicians, political parties and other key institutions".

Here's how Professor Mark Evans who heads IGPA explains it: *"Everyone says distrust of government is part of the Australian culture, but if you look at survey data, there has been a stark decline since the John Howard era. We've had some peculiar high profile events that did not play out well in the electorate with the dismissal of several prime ministers. Those incidents figure very strongly when you discuss issues of integrity within focus groups.*

When you ask about the characteristics of an ideal politician, the key dimensions are integrity, local connection, and delivery. Trust is earned by creating solid benefits for the community. Nationally, the view is that prime ministers haven't been effective in getting big ticket items up, there's a lot of inconsistency between the rhetoric and what's being delivered.

"There's a dominant assumption among politicians that you cannot have those sorts of conversations with the public, but citizens say that's not true. They expect to have grown up conversations, and they cannot understand why politicians are still engaging in adversarial politics on major issues".

Told through powerful stories of democracy in action, Objects of interest include the Rainbow flag signed by supporters of the Marriage Amendment Bill 2017, a Berlin Wall fragment, Jessie Street's brooch and modelled microphone, and Neville Bonner's tobacco tin with soil from Jagera Country

While the exhibition celebrates both significant activities and individuals who have shaped our democracy it also casts an eye to the future – exploring new ways for ordinary people to have their say:

MOAD director Daryl Karp sees *Democracy. Are You In?* as a call to action. *"I think that democracy around the world is under serious threat. While ours is a world leader, we're not without our own risks. This is our contribution. It's about giving people a voice that does count, one that says 'Be involved. Don't step away.'"*



Director, Daryl Karp says *“The Museum of Australian Democracy engages people in a conversation about Australia’s democratic past and their involvement in its democratic future. Celebrating the spirit of Australian Democracy and the power of your voice within it, the museum is a touchstone of stability and a response to pressures and the erosion of trust faced by liberal democracies around the world. We are a safe place in which individuals can reassess their own roles in upholding Australia’s democratic values.”*

And that’s the central point here: major change needs robust democratic processes, these in turn require citizens to participate. This exhibition is not about whether gun reform, the 1967 referendum on indigenous recognition, or same-sex marriage were good ideas - it’s about how we got there as a nation.

Former Deputy PM Tim Fischer’s .303 rifle was a treasured heirloom for the Vietnam veteran. When PM John Howard responded to the Port Arthur massacre with the 1996 Firearms Act, some gun owners resisted.

Fischer says of his rifle, *“it’s a product of Australia, passed down from my father but when I sold the farm at Boree Creek, I thought, well, it has another role to play. Even a deputy PM can give up his gun”*.

On trust in the political process, Fischer says *“I doubt Australia would have resolved the guns issue so well, had social media existed in 1996 and ’97. What’s changed now is that even a sensible proposal immediately goes to the extremes before any consideration of its merits. There’s a whole new template that breaks the bond between elected leaders and representatives. That’s made it a different ball game”*.

Marriage equality also engendered intense national debate.

Greens leader Senator Richard di Natale says of that, *“as much as I rejected the plebiscite process, it was a sign of the community coming together and a very strong campaign to shift public opinion”*.

Pointing to declining support for major parties, he says, *“It’s interesting that people are voting for disruptors to the status quo. There is a thirst for something different from a political system totally captured by other interests. The challenge is to provide genuine, enduring alternatives, for which people are searching. We can all do that by continuing to build a movement for change”*.

ENDS

For further information, please contact Annika Scott, annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au, (02) 6270 8165 or 0400 946 608

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Hon Tim Fischer, former deputy prime minister
- Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy
- Professor Mark Evans, Institute of Governance and Political Analysis, University of Canberra (IGPA)



Museum of
Australian Democracy
Old Parliament House

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Annika Scott

annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au

02 6270 8165 | 0400 946 608

ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL:

High res images of the exhibition are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dmt8w4e0bbasa65/AAA4Whmt5ET8m6wZjt1IVABqa?dl=0>

MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2018

HOW DO WE SURVIVE? “A STEEP DECLINE IN TRUST....”

MoAD opens new, thought provoking exhibition: *Democracy. Are You In?*

If there is a single word that characterises the Democracy: Are You In? exhibition opening this week at the Museum of Australian Democracy, it would be trust. And that’s a quality that’s in worryingly short supply in Australian politics.

The 2018 Edelman Trust barometer, which measures these things globally, says that only 35% of Australians trust our government by contrast with 46% of Canadians, with very similar democratic traditions. Trust in government is far stronger in nations like India and Indonesia. In the U.S., the recent trust decline is the steepest ever measured among what Edelman calls “informed citizens”

The University of Canberra’s Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis (IGPA), partnered with MOAD to look closely at the relationship between trust, our political system and democracy in Australia. Using a quantitative survey of a representative sample of 1244 Australians and 10 focus groups, the findings were sobering.

IGPA found “compelling evidence of the increasing disconnect between government and citizen reflected in the decline of democratic satisfaction, trust in politicians, political parties and other key institutions”. So serious were these findings that IGPA labelled them “a culture shift from an allegiant to a divergent democratic culture”

It’s all the more worrying because on any measure, Australia is a stable democracy where we enjoy social and economic wellbeing, and a proud tradition of democratic freedom.

Here’s how Professor Mark Evans who heads IGPA explains it: *“Everyone says distrust of government is part of the Australian culture, but if you look at survey data, there has been a stark decline since the John Howard era. We’ve had some peculiar high profile events that did not play out well in the electorate with the dismissal of several prime ministers. Those incidents figure very strongly when you discuss issues of integrity within focus groups.*

When you ask about the characteristics of an ideal politician, the key dimensions are integrity, local connection, and delivery. Trust is earned by creating solid benefits for the community. Nationally, the view is that prime ministers haven’t been effective in getting big ticket items up, there’s a lot of inconsistency between the rhetoric and what’s being delivered.

“There’s a dominant assumption among politicians that you cannot have those sorts of conversations with the public, but citizens say that’s not true. They expect to have grown up conversations, and they cannot understand why politicians are still engaging in adversarial politics on major issues”.

Ongoing research from the exhibition will be collated and report back to Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, and the exhibition will also be updated with findings about what ordinary Australians feel and think.



Museum of
Australian Democracy
Old Parliament House

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Annika Scott

annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au

02 6270 8165 | 0400 946 608

MOAD director Daryl Karp sees “Democracy: Are You In?” as a call to action. *“I think that democracy around the world is under serious threat. While ours is a world leader, we’re not without our own risks. This is our contribution. It’s about giving people a voice that does count, one that says ‘Be involved. Don’t step away.’”*

ENDS

For further information, please contact Annika Scott, annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au, (02) 6270 8165 or 0400 946 608

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Hon Tim Fischer, former deputy prime minister
- Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy
- Professor Mark Evans, Institute of Governance and Political Analysis, University of Canberra (IGPA)

ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL:

High res images of the exhibition are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dmt8w4e0bbasa65/AAA4Whmt5ET8m6wZjt1IVABqa?dl=0>



MEDIA RELEASE

3 August 2018

OBJECTS TELL THE TALE OF OUR DEMOCRACY

MoAD opens new, thought provoking exhibition: Democracy. Are You In?

What does a humorous survival kit from the Cathy McGowan 2016 campaign have in common with a .303 rifle once owned by former deputy PM Tim Fischer and Greens leader Richard di Natale's rainbow sneakers?

The answer is that they're all about Australian democracy. As the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) has a good, hard look at political processes in the 21st century for its "Democracy: Are You In?" exhibition, they've chosen objects about *"creating a sense of urgency, a wake-up call to say there is a problem with our trust in democracy and people need to be engaged"*.

"It's not just politics either", historian Libby Stewart says. *"Our banks, our churches, all the institutions of democracy are under scrutiny. People feel powerless, so we wanted these objects to also tell a positive story"*.

The exhibition has big themes aplenty about how political processes work in this country: the 1967 referendum on indigenous issues, gun control and same sex marriage all demonstrate a democracy in action, responding to its citizens. So does the growth of minor parties, protest votes, and alternative ways of thinking about government like citizens' referenda? Bringing this to life means making connections to ordinary Australians. There are personal stories from campaigners and leaders like Jessie Street, John Howard, Tim Flannery and Neville Bonner, and from international figures like Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai.

"The objects really make the point about getting involved", Stewart says. *"Anyone who went to a Midnight Oil concert will remember the megaphone. These are objects people recognise from their own lives and the causes they cared about"*.

Striking digital displays allow people to come to their own conclusions about where our processes sit globally. You can place yourself on a spectrum of political satisfaction, and give MOAD your thoughts on what we should expect from our politicians, and how you'd improve our democracy.

MoAD Director, Daryl Karp says *"it's important to understand that the exhibition isn't debating the merits of individual issues. We know that passions are strongly held on both sides of many of these issues. Our intention isn't to assign a judgement but to say that this country can tackle big issues and make change through the democratic process."*

It's not enough to say democracy is in trouble - have a think about what the options are. Is there anything else? What can you do?"

ENDS



Museum of
Australian Democracy
Old Parliament House

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Annika Scott

annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au

02 6270 8165 | 0400 946 608

For further information, please contact Annika Scott, annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au, (02) 6270 8165 or 0400 946 608

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Hon Tim Fischer, former deputy prime minister
- Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy
- Professor Mark Evans, Institute of Governance and Political Analysis, University of Canberra (IGPA)

ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL:

High res images of the exhibition are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dmt8w4e0bbasa65/AAA4Whmt5ET8m6wZjt1IVABqa?dl=0>



BACKGROUND

3 August 2018

Some IGPA findings about Australian attitudes towards democracy

***Research sourced from MOAD's Power of One exhibition responses, and from the extended, ongoing research collaboration between IGPA and MOAD.**

- Despite 20 years of economic growth, democratic satisfaction has decreased steadily across each government from 85.6 % in 2007 (Howard), to 71.5 % in 2010 (Rudd), 71.7 % in 2013 (Abbott) and 42 % in March 2016 under Malcolm Turnbull.
- Only 5% of Australians exhibit strong trust in government. 74% have a critical perspective. 25% trust government ministers in contrast with 72% who trust the police and 56% the judiciary. The majority of Baby Boomers (born 1946 - 1964) who have benefited most in economic terms from a period of affluence no longer trust their politicians.
- Successive surveys show that citizens see themselves as observers of, rather than participants in, formal politics. 90% regard themselves as without influence over the federal government. 70% feel powerless about other levels of government.
- However, most Australians strongly support democratic processes such as consultation, compromise and democratic judgement, and have a good understanding of how they work. Findings also indicate that citizens could be up for a more extended role if a different kind of politics was on offer.
- Results from IGPA's last three surveys suggest that the fundamental cause of distrust in contemporary Australian politics is the role of mainstream political parties and politicians and the personalisation of politics by the media. This is reflected in the increasing number of Australians turning away from mainstream political parties.
- Among the things that citizens like about Australian democracy: our peaceful and stable political history; free and fair elections; a range of political parties which represent different points of view; minor parties and independents often hold the balance of power; good local representation; accountability to the voters; the chance to participate in decision making; a good economy and lifestyle; good social factors (e.g. education, health, welfare and other public services)
- Among the things that citizens dislike about Australian democracy: political parties are too similar; Big business and the media have too much power; women, young people and people from diverse backgrounds are not well represented within politics; too much compromise and not enough decisive action; minor parties and independents hold too much power; the battle between the two main political parties puts me off politics; media focuses too much on personalities and not enough on policy; politicians don't deal with the issues that really matter; politicians can't be held to account for broken promises
- Politically engaged people were significantly more likely to trust the federal government. Those on low incomes and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were significantly less likely



to do so. People were more likely to trust their local MP than MPs in general or government ministers.

- The majority of survey respondents described the standards of honesty and integrity of elected politicians in Australia as low. This proportion increased with age. People aligned to the political right, the politically engaged, and those who speak a language other than English were significantly more likely than others to rate the standards of elected politicians as high than those on a low income.
- Younger people were more optimistic than older people. Those aligned to the political left were more likely to think standards were improving than the right-aligned. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and those who speak a language other than English were also significantly more likely to describe standards as improving.
- Suggestions for what Australians think might help solve our problems: citizens' juries; online plebiscites; citizens' legislature; a lower voting age; a maximum voting age; optional preferential voting or a 'none of the above' choice; caps on political advertising and donations; party democratisation; increased role for local decision makers; right of recall for MPs; reducing the size of electorates; allowing all MPs a free vote in Parliament



Museum of
Australian Democracy
Old Parliament House

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Annika Scott

annika.scott@moadoph.gov.au

02 6270 8165 | 0400 946 608

***Democracy. Are You In?* is now open daily from 9am to 5pm at MoAD.**

ABOUT MOAD

The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House celebrates Australia's proud history as a democratic nation and actively promotes the participation of its citizens in determining its future.

MoAD is a museum not just of objects but of ideas. In our iconic heritage building, we tell the story of Australia's journey to becoming one of the world's most vibrant and multicultural democratic nations.

MoAD is a place where stories, conversations and narratives from myriad perspectives can be heard and discussed.