

# What Randomness and Deliberation Can Do for Community Engagement

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## Abstract

A range of innovative participatory approaches have been used in Australia to discuss policy and current issues: citizens' juries, consensus conferences and so on. These methods are sometimes categorised as deliberative, inclusive processes (DIPs) and are distinctive because they involve typical citizens who are not aligned to interest groups or engaged in lobbying or policy making.

The authors consider that three principles are essential in the design and conduct of DIPs: representativeness, deliberativeness and influence. This paper elaborates on these principles — that is, representativeness achieved through random selection, deliberativeness achieved through moderated in-depth discussion and influence achieved through contractual arrangements between the facilitators, participants and sponsors.

This paper represents a work-in-progress of the data collected from an ongoing inventory of those DIPs that have been convened to date in Australia. The extent to which these DIPs have fulfilled the authors' crucial three principles is analysed, albeit tentatively because data collection continues. Finally, the authors speculate on ways that these principles can strengthen community engagement.

## Keywords

Public deliberation, representativeness, influence, community engagement, random selection

## Background

Western democracies are thought to be experiencing a democratic deficit with declining trust between governors and the governed. Others believe the system to be robust. Involving the public in decision making is integral to democracy and community engagement in its various expressions is one way of ensuring that a citizen's influence can extend beyond the empty ritual of the ballot box (Kahn 1999). It seems clear, despite the fact that some citizens still have faith in the current system of representative government, that a democratic imperative exists to strengthen the policy making system so that citizens can be confident that decision making is effective (Fung and Wright 2003; Gastil and Levine 2005).

Australia provides a fertile ground for community engagement given its landcare activities and community development programs; however, it is not a leader when it comes to deliberative, inclusive processes (DIPs). Australia, historically, has lagged behind countries like Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States with their consensus conferences, planning cells, citizens' juries, televotes and deliberative polls — some of them dating back to the 1970s. Australia can boast of some isolated attempts with randomly-selected groups brought together in a deliberative space in the 1960s and 1970s (under the influence of Fred Emery's work with industry councils and search conferences; see Emery 1989) but the authors know of no other DIPs in Australia until the early 1990s in northern New South Wales.

What is a DIP? It is not a traditional form of consultation, like a non-interactive public meeting or a permanent advisory committee or an opinion poll or a call for written submissions. These traditional methods are consultative but could not be described as *deliberative*, i.e. involving group deliberation, or *inclusive*, i.e. involving people selected in a way to ensure they are a microcosm of the community, although an opinion poll is an exception. The difference between traditional forms of consultation and DIPs can be seen in the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum which describes increasing levels of public impact: from information dissemination to an empowered citizenry (Table 1).

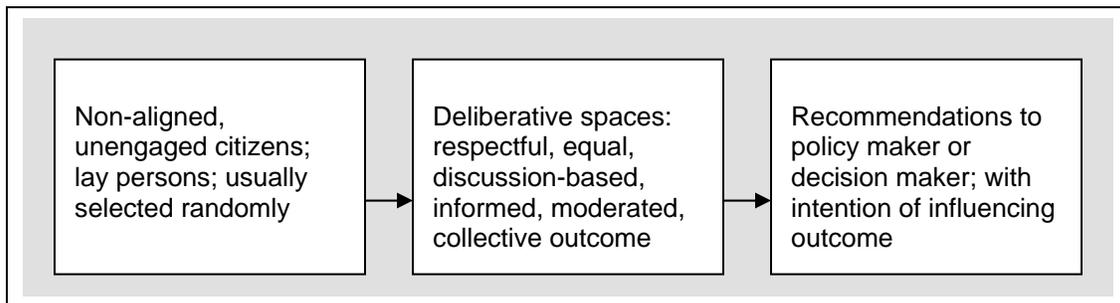
DIPs can be found in the final two columns: *collaborate* and *empower*, with deliberative polls, the weakest of the DIP model, under *involve*. (Of course, other empowering strategies for community involvement or community development also belong in those final two columns, but this paper and the inventory it reports are focused exclusively on DIPs.) However, in the IAP2 spectrum the emphasis is on *influence* and the spectrum has difficulty accommodating the principles of *representativeness* or *deliberation*.

A DIP, then, is a participatory method that draws together a cross-section of a population, usually through random selection, to deliberate over an extended period, usually a few days, about an issue of concern. They are typically one-off events though they might be part of a larger engagement strategy. The deliberations are assisted by a neutral, skilled facilitator and the group's goal is to make a decision or to find common ground and offer recommendations to decision-makers. Ideally, the decision maker attends to these recommendations.

**Table 1. International Association for Public Participation’s Public Participation Spectrum:  
website <<http://www.iap2.org>>**

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<p>Objective:</p> <p>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solution.</p>	<p>Objective:</p> <p>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.</p>	<p>Objectives:</p> <p>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.</p>	<p>Objective:</p> <p>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</p>	<p>Objective:</p> <p>To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.</p>
<p>Promise to the public:</p> <p>We will keep you informed.</p>	<p>Promise to the public:</p> <p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>Promise to the public:</p> <p>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>Promise to the public:</p> <p>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Promise to the public:</p> <p>We will implement what you decide.</p>
<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Fact sheets Web sites Open house</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Workshops Deliberative polling</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Citizen Advisory Committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making</p>	<p>Example Tools:</p> <p>Citizen Juries Ballots Delegated decisions</p>

DIPs can take many forms with some having more representative participants than others or being more deliberative than others. In summary, there are three principles which are seen as ideal ingredients for DIPs (Carson and Harz-Karp 2005) and the following diagram (adapted from the work of Hendriks 2005a) summarises these three principles of representativeness, deliberation and influence.



**Figure 1. Deliberative, inclusive processes (adapted from Hendriks 2005a)**

The representative participants are *descriptively* representative. The aim is to attract participants who reflect the composition of the wider population. They are not delegates acting for others; instead they are meant to resemble or describe the population from which they are drawn. In some cases, when the numbers are small, stratified random sampling takes place, matching the characteristics of the small sample to the demographics of the larger population (in terms of socio-demographic relevance: for example, sex, age, occupation, geography, education). When large numbers are involved (with a deliberative poll or a 21st century town meeting) then random selection should provide a statistically representative sample (see Box 1 for an example of large-scale DIP).

The WA State Minister for Planning and Infrastructure convened the Dialogue with the City.

The design attempted to engage the whole community. This included a survey of 8,000 residents, interactive web site, one hour TV broadcast, series of full page issues stories in the major newspaper, art and essay competitions in schools on the future of the city, and additional listening sessions for those frequently not heard — youth, the Indigenous and those from a non-English speaking background.

The process culminated in a '21st century town meeting' of 1,100 participants, held in September 2003. One third were stakeholder invitees, one third were respondents to advertisements, and one third were respondents to a random sample. Opportunities for deliberation were provided for in innovative ways. The forum combined interactive computer technology to determine key themes, with a planning game that enabled each participant to take the role of a planner to determine where and how the future growth of the city would occur. Participants were purposefully seated at tables of ten to maximise the mix of expertise and views. A lead facilitator moderated, with a volunteer facilitator and scribe at each table. The end result, a new planning strategy for metropolitan Perth was submitted to the WA Planning Commission and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure in 2004 (Carson & Hartz-Karp 2005).

**Box 1. Example of a large-scale DIP: Dialogue with the City, Perth**

Representativeness via random selection has many advantages. It ensures that the people who are deliberating are not aligned with an interest group (the 'squeaky wheels' who are usually evident when traditional consultation methods are used). This means that the missing voices can be heard and that the voices being heard are likely to reflect the wider population. Randomness is not only fair — based on the principle that each person has equal chance of being selected — but is also seen to be fair (though some believe that random selection creates legitimacy problems in some contexts — see, for example, Hendriks 2004; Parkinson 2003; Seiler 1995). There is an important additional advantage: the more diverse the voices that are drawn into a deliberative space, the greater the opportunity for lively deliberation. Ghettos of like-minded people who easily reinforce their shared views (Sunstein 2002) can, therefore, be avoided.

Even with a large, statistically representative gathering of participants, small group work is essential. This is because of the second important principle: deliberation. In summary, deliberation (or *public deliberation*, a term that is increasingly used in the literature) is:

“discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making ... full deliberation includes a careful examination of a problem or issue, the identification of possible solutions, the establishment or reaffirmation of evaluative criteria, and the use of these criteria in identifying an optimal solution” (Gastil 2000, p. 22).

Small group deliberation provides an opportunity for dialogue and deliberation. When people are given extensive and accessible information and a chance to discuss their fears and concerns, they have the ability to grapple with quite complex material and to move toward consensus. They also have the capacity to generate new ideas and solutions. This is evidenced by the many consensus conferences that have been convened throughout the world, including one in Australia in 1999, on genetically-modified organisms (Einsidel et al. 2001; Renouf 1999). See Box 2 for a description of a small-scale deliberation that also involved a complex issue.

In 2001 the Institute for Sustainable Futures convened a citizens' panel as part of its social research on the subject of container deposit legislation (its director had been appointed by the Minister for the Environment to undertake an independent review). A steering committee had oversight of the selection process (random mailing to 2000 households throughout NSW) and the design of the process (a modified citizens' jury). The panel was chosen to match a profile to ensure a cross-section of the population according to sex, educational qualifications, age, area of residence, household structure, ethnicity and employment. The panel was given background information agreed to by stakeholders. They also had access to a library of information plus independent experts over the two-and-a-half days they deliberated, with the support of two skilled, neutral facilitators. The panel's final report was incorporated into the report that was delivered to the Minister.

### **Box 2. Example of a small-scale DIP: Container Deposit Legislation, NSW**

The role of the neutral, skilled facilitator in fostering good deliberation cannot be overstated. However, this role is emphasised in some DIP models like citizens' juries and consensus conferences, but not in planning cells (Hendriks 2005b). With juries, for example, it is imperative that a group be able to find its own way through an issue's complexity with the assistance of an experienced manager of group process. Typical citizens are not necessarily familiar with the skills of data analysis, ideas generation, prioritising and decision making. A facilitator is able to open his or her toolbox of process skills to assist the group to reach its goal expeditiously and with a high level of satisfaction from all group members.

This is not a manipulative role but a genuinely facilitative one: to enable the group to reach its goals by protecting the neutrality of the process. Groups experiencing poor facilitation have been known to ask a facilitator to leave if inappropriate influence is being exercised (Carson and Martin

1999, p. 110); groups have also been known to protect facilitators when a dominating participant inappropriately challenges the facilitator's essential role (as happened during Australia's first consensus conference). Group members need to be free to explore, challenge, argue, compromise and do whatever they need to do to establish common ground and move toward their desired, collective outcome. Ultimately they may not all agree but deliberation allows for 'incompleteness' and minority views as it is not a quest for perfection (Fishkin 1995, p. 41 cited by Delli Carpini et al. 2004, p. 317).

The third principle, influence, refers to the degree of impact that a deliberative and representative group has on decision making. This can be a most vexing aspect of a DIP: robust participatory methods can be employed and the group's satisfaction may be high but the participants can be left with frustration when their efforts come to nothing. One research study, albeit using hypothetical scenarios, indicated that power sharing "is the single most important variable in public satisfaction with decision-making processes and outcomes", more important than the timing of the consultation or even the outcomes (Bentson 2003). The "impact of their voice" is crucial for participants (Delli Carpini et al. 2004, p. 333). In the case study described in Box 1, the DIP was fortunate to have the imprimatur of an enabling leader, a government minister, and the participants' recommendations were adopted by the state government of which the minister was a part. This is unusual.

When there is little promise of enactment of recommendations, participants are occasionally offered reassurance through a contract that explicitly defines the group's terms of reference. For example, in the case study described in Box 2 the organisers and the participants signed a contract in which the latter promised their full and open participation and the organisers guaranteed that the citizens' recommendations, no matter what they might be, would be included verbatim in the final report to the environment minister. It was not within the organisers' power to enact the recommendations; the best that they could do was to faithfully report the participants' judgment and a contract helped to clarify this important distinction. Of course, a more ideal scenario would be to guarantee some action on participants' recommendations and that the decision-makers would report back to the citizens on the progress of this; this has been done for some recent planning cells projects in Germany (Hendriks 2004).

These three principles should be seen as interdependent. The rich diversity that is achieved through random selection strengthens deliberation. However, representativeness (say, in the form of plebiscites or referenda) without group deliberation can be a shallow exercise in aggregation and over-simplification of complex arguments. Influence, with neither genuine representativeness nor deliberation, can result in the sort of decision making that leads to a crisis of legitimacy.

It should be noted that complete representativeness is an ideal that might never be achieved. Without conscription there is always an element of self-selection; even when random selection is used people can refuse the invitation to participate. A stratified sample can help to overcome this weakness by randomly selecting within the pool of self-selected people. However representativeness can be seen as a worthwhile ideal and can be constantly improved upon. If people are encouraged to participate through an open public invitation the result will be very different from that which would be achieved if people were randomly selected and given a personalised invitation with an explanation of the selection process.

Deliberation is a similarly worthwhile ideal and consultation practitioners are continually refining the activities that lead to effective deliberation through professional bodies like IAP2 and researcher/practitioner conferences and networks such as the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, the Collaborative Democracy Network and the Journal of Public Deliberation<sup>1</sup>.

The authors contend that an aspiration toward the fulfilment of each of these three principles is an essential starting point for convening any DIP. It was with these three principles in mind that the authors approached the data that were collected for an inventory of Australian DIPs, to test how projects that purported to have DIP characteristics actually operated in practice.

### **Australian inventory**

The authors began to assemble an inventory of Australian DIPs in 2004. It should be noted that one of the researchers has been responsible for convening four of the DIPs in the inventory and had personal involvement (in process design, oversight, small-group facilitation), with six others. Both researchers have an interest in seeing robust participatory methods flourish.

The inventory is not yet completed but sufficient data have been collected and analysed to provide some early indications about the state of play in Australia. As at March 2005, we have information on 35 DIPs which were convened in Australia between 1993 and 2005. Table 1 shows the location (by state, territory or national) and year of each of these DIPs.

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<sup>1</sup> URLs: Deliberative Democracy Consortium <<http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/>>, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation <<http://www.thataway.org/>>, the Collaborative Democracy Network <<http://www.csus.edu/ccp/cdn/>> and the Journal of Public Deliberation <<http://www.auburn.edu/~farnejb/jpd2.htm>>.

**Table 1. Inventory of Australian DIPs (as at 1 Mar 05) by location and date**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NSW</b>	<b>VIC</b>	<b>QLD</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>1993</b>	1						1
<b>1994</b>	1						1
<b>1999</b>	2					2	4
<b>2000</b>			1				1
<b>2001</b>	2			7		1	10
<b>2002</b>	1	1		4	1		7
<b>2003</b>	2			2			4
<b>2004</b>	2	2		3			7
<b>TOTAL</b>	11	3	1	16	1	3	35

On being questioned by the researchers (the authors of this paper), convenors of participatory methods assigned the term DIP to what they were doing and, hence, their case study qualified for this inventory. However, defining a consultative method as a DIP has proven to be problematic. Australia has a tendency to adapt and combine deliberative methods (Carson and Hart-Karp 2005) which means that a citizens' jury as it is convened in Australia is typically a modification of its original (US) form (in terms of duration, selection methods and so on). The designer of deliberative polls in the US (James Fishkin) is quite particular about his scientific method of sampling which incorporates deliberation; yet even this method (under Fishkin's own watchful eye) was adapted in Australia in ways that have not occurred elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Table 2 is an attempt to categorise the methods that were uncovered in the inventory, bearing in mind the difficulty of categorisation when methods are modified.

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<sup>2</sup> The deliberative poll on reconciliation in 2001 used a distinctively different selection method to ensure good representation from Indigenous people.

**Table 2. Various DIP methods by location**

METHOD	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	ACT	National	TOTAL
Citizens' jury	9	2	1	3			15
Deliberative poll					1	2	3
Enquiry by design				4			4
21 <sup>st</sup> century town meeting				3			3
Consensus conference				1		1	2
Deliberative forum	2	1		5			8
<b>TOTAL</b>	11	3	1	16	1	3	35

Because the convenors assigned their own definitions some real anomalies arose. For example, the *consensus conference* in WA bore little resemblance to the national consensus conference. The latter involved a large steering committee which handled selection, briefing materials and a deliberation that spanned two preparatory weekends and three days of public deliberation; this was identical to the internationally-recognised method for consensus conferences (for example, Joss and Durant 1995). In contrast, the WA *consensus conference* could be more accurately described as a series of one-day *deliberative forums* in the researchers' opinion. The methods labeled in WA as *deliberative forums* and *enquiry by design* shared many similarities but were quite different from Australian citizens' juries which in turn were unlike the internationally-recognised citizens' jury model (for example, Crosby 2003; Gastil 2000). The category citizens' jury also includes a parent jury, a youth jury and a policy jury which shared many characteristics and all were described by convenors as juries.

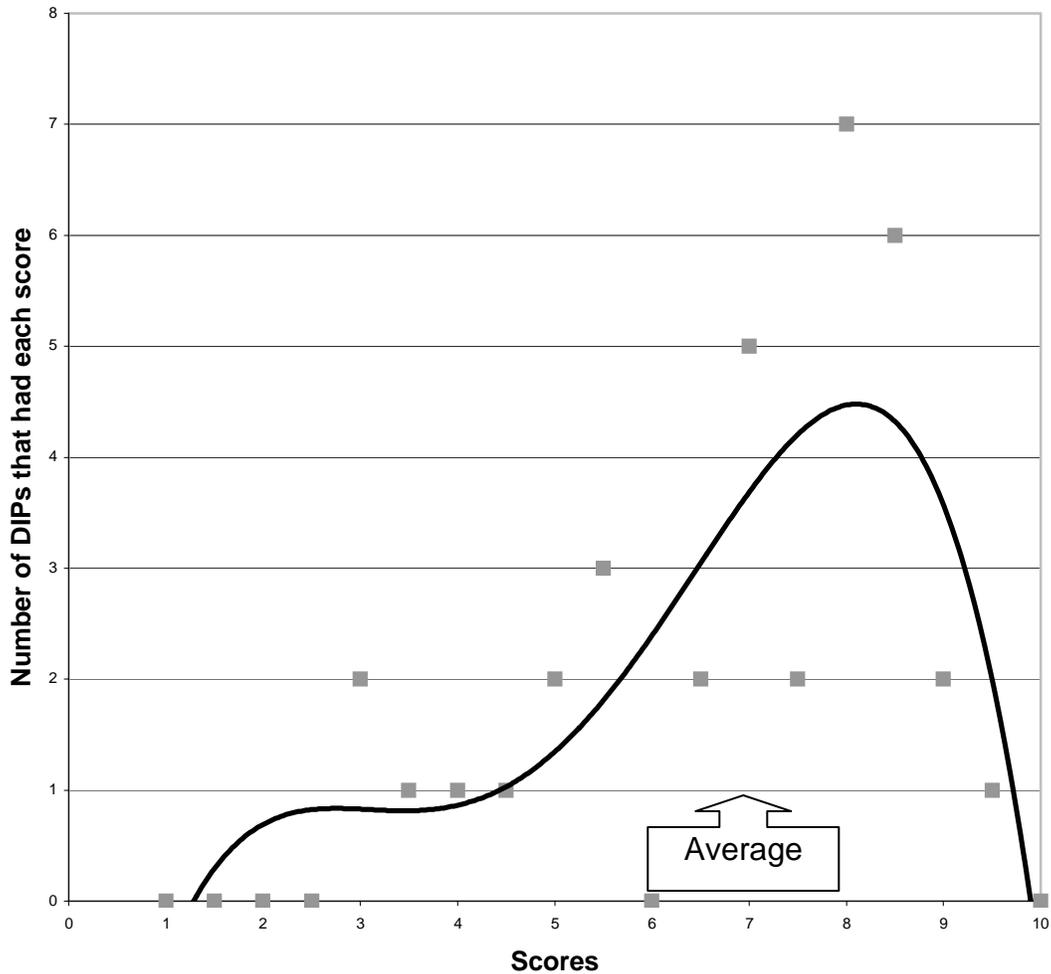
Categorisation was designed to help the researchers understand the nature of the DIPs that were convened but proved to be of questionable value on its own. However, additional questions uncovered the extent to which each case study's performance measured up to the set criteria. Once data collection is completed it is the researchers' intention to evaluate in depth the extent to which these DIPs conformed to the three aforementioned ideal principles. Figures 2a, 2b and 2c (in the next section) represent a very early attempt to do this.

## Findings

Each of the graphs (Figures 2a, 2b & 2c) is based on scores allocated by the researchers according to the scoring system detailed in Table 3. Scores were allocated independently by the two researchers, then averaged. Later we discussed our scoring to clarify our decisions, then tested them against those of a practitioner to confirm our assumptions. This produced the results that appear in each graph.

**Table 3. Scoring system**

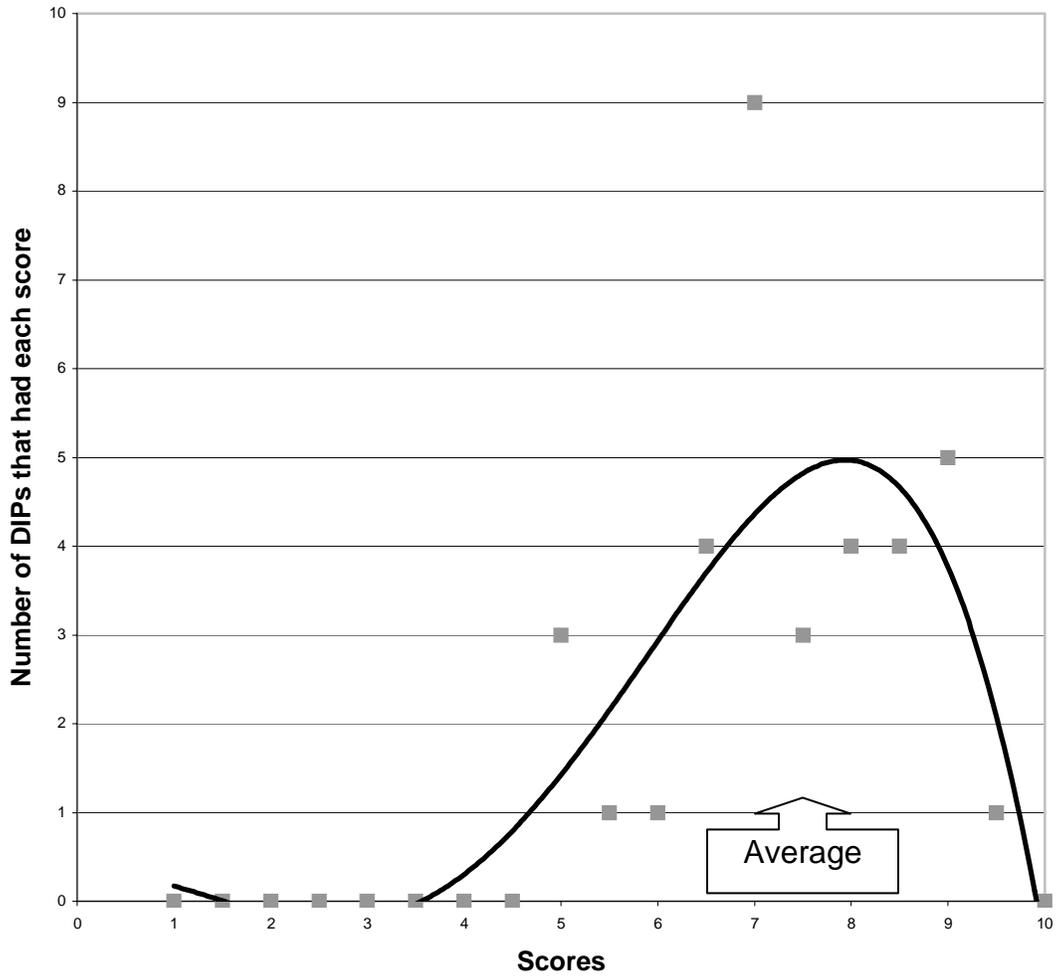
<b>Score</b>	1 2 ...		... 9 10
<b>Representativeness</b>	Participants do not strongly reflect relevant characteristics of the relevant population, e.g. high degree of self-selection, too strongly aligned with interest group		Participants strongly reflect relevant characteristics of the population, e.g. randomly selected to match profile of that population
<b>Deliberation</b>	No opportunity for informed debate and reflection, e.g. questions and issues pre-set such as in a survey		Opportunity for informed deliberation, e.g. extensive discussion between people with diverse concerns
<b>Influence</b>	Little promise of enactment of recommendations		Strong contract to enact recommendations



Average score for Representativeness: 6.9  
 Standard Deviation: 1.8  
 The curve is a line of best fit through the DIP data shown.

**Figure 2a. Extent to which the DIPs conform to ideal principle of Representativeness**

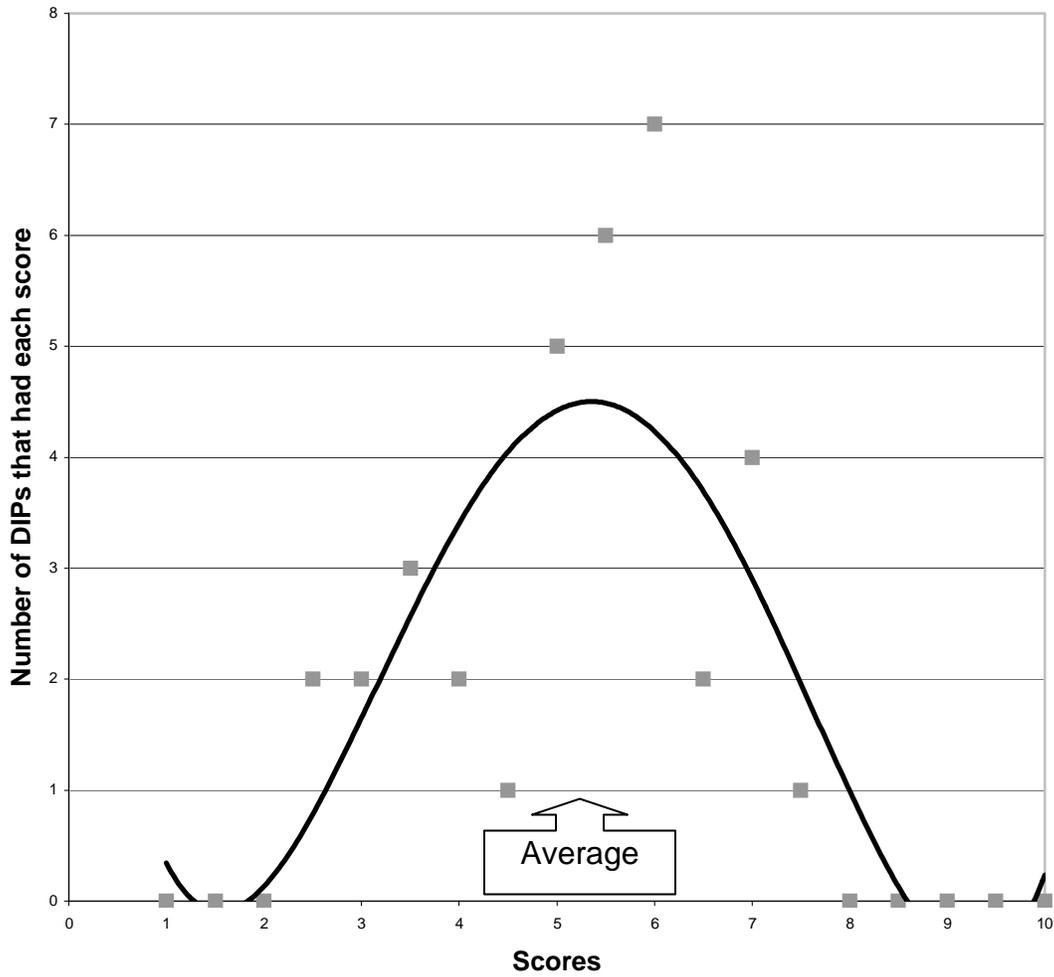
A large number of the DIPs had a score between 7 and 8.5, showing that they are highly “representative”. However, there were quite a few that were less so, receiving a lower score (between 3 and 7), which pulled the average down to 6.9. The wide range of scores indicates that this criterion is not consistently satisfied, and that people planning and running future DIPs could consider studying and using a randomising approach to selection as used by the higher-scoring DIPs studied.



Average score for Deliberation: 7.4  
 Standard Deviation: 1.2  
 The curve is a line of best fit through the DIP data shown.

**Figure 2b. Extent to which the DIPs conform to ideal principle of Deliberation**

All DIPs scored at least 5, with the average being a very creditable 7.4. This criterion seems to be well-demonstrated, though of course future DIPs would do well to consider how to maximise this important principle.



Average score for Influence: 5.2  
 Standard Deviation: 1.1  
 The curve is a line of best fit through the DIP data shown.

**Figure 2c. Extent to which the DIPs conform to ideal principle of Influence**

The scores for *influence* were lower overall than for the other two principles; only one scored more than 7. The average score of 5.2 indicates that there is considerable room for improving the degree of influence exhibited by DIPs in the current environment. In assessing the influence a DIP we faced a number of difficulties — some of which we discuss further below.

**Table 4. Summary of scores for the DIPs against each of the three ideal principles**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Average score</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Representativeness	6.9	1.8
Deliberation	7.4	1.2
Influence	5.2	1.1

We note that Western Australia is responsible for half of the processes summarised in Table 1. This is because of the extraordinary activity of one process champion and consultant, Janette Harz-Karp, and one enabling leader, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, The Hon. Alannah MacTiernan. There is no equivalent in any other state of Australia, and possibly in the world, where a single politician has embraced DIPs with such enthusiasm during her term of office; since the party of which she is a member was re-elected to government in February 2005 this may continue for a further four years (assuming the Minister continues in her planning portfolio). This situation confirms the catalytic nature of combining a skilled process champion with an enabling leader (Carson forthcoming).

Because we were reliant upon convenors to describe their DIP the labelling of participatory methods as citizens' juries or consensus conferences, for example, arose from a convenor's familiarity with certain terms, not necessarily because it conformed to an internationally recognised method. It is hoped that this study as it continues will bring some clarity to the fuzziness which surrounds the labelling of a DIP.

Despite this fuzziness of categorisation, we can conclude that the citizens' jury is the most favoured model for designing DIP projects (see Table 2, whether or not we ignore WA). It is worth noting, however, that Australia has never experienced a citizens' jury as it was originally intended in terms of its length, micro-processes etc. However, West Australians experienced the first citizens' jury to conform to the original Jefferson Center standards in Perth in May 2005, under the direction of Ned Crosby who first created the citizens' jury method in the US. This may influence future citizens' juries that are conducted in that state and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

We also found that representativeness and deliberativeness are the principles that have been best fulfilled. Given that a high degree of both was essential for a process to be included in our inventory this is perhaps unsurprising. For example, the questions which extracted information

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<sup>3</sup> See Jefferson Center website for further details of US model: <<http://www.jefferson-center.org/>>.

about *representativeness* were as follows (our original questions were expanded to mirror the questions asked for the international map of the field, mentioned below, to ensure consistency):

- How many individuals participated in the DIP?
- How were participants of the DIP recruited? (print media, broadcast media, grass roots groups, etc.)
- How were participants of the DIP selected? (open, random selection, scientific selection, etc.)
- Were participants ever disqualified from participation in the DIP?
- Limiting factors (Please note any factors that might have limited participation during the DIP).

The responses gave us a clear indication of the extent to which convenors attracted voices that would normally not be heard and also uncovered some predictable limiting factors: for example, time constraints, distance, timidity. To find out about *deliberation*, we asked:

- How was deliberation in this DIP conducted? (If the process employed or adapted an existing deliberative methodology please describe that method, e.g. ChoiceWork Dialogue, Study Circle, etc. and how it was used in this exercise).
- What were the dates during which the DIP was held (use approximate dates if exact dates are not known; dd/mm/yyyy)
- Was this DIP a "one-off" event, part of a series of events, or an institutionalized way of doing business?

Once we knew the length of the DIP and the method used we made assumptions about the depth of deliberation. This was because both the generic method (for example a citizens' jury) and the specific case study (for example, the jury convened in Wollondilly in New South Wales) were familiar to the researchers. At times we were able to draw upon independent evaluations (for example, those completed for Australia's first consensus conference and NSW's citizens' forum on container deposit legislation: Crombie and Ducker 2000; McKay 1999, 2001). However, we encountered less clarity when we approached responses to the *influence* questions which were as follows:

- Please describe the intended outcomes of the DIP
- Please describe the actual outcomes from this DIP (i.e. recommending report to members of congress, development of a community-improvement project, or draft policy statement).
- What contract was made with the participants, if any?
- Please describe follow-up steps taken after the DIP. Be sure to include those of a) participants, b) the sponsors, c) government, and d) any other actor(s).
- Please list and describe your DIP's indicators of success.
- Please describe the methods employed to measure success as defined above?
- Using the indicators of success described above please summarize the level of success achieved in this DIP.

Influence scored far lower on our assessments. It is probably not surprising that this score should be lower than the others; it requires wresting some level of control over the outcome from the sponsors and/or decision-makers. Sponsors are not always those charged with making decisions but when they are, they may be expected to be reluctant to put themselves in the hands of a group of unknown people in whom the sponsor may have little trust.

However, we realised the difficulties we had created. This analysis prompted us to identify and separate two notions of *influence*:

1. the extent to which the decision maker agreed to or was persuaded by the discussion during the actual DIP, or by the recommendations arising
2. the extent to which there was a binding agreement that the results of the DIP will affect the decision and implementation (roughly, this is “Empower” in the IAP2 spectrum shown in Table 1).

If one is interested in how much decision-makers have shifted their views or had their opinions confirmed by the DIPs, then the first meaning above tells us that. However, it is highly contingent; if the sponsor had happened to think differently, and had not in fact been persuaded by the discussion, that does not make the *process* itself any weaker, even though its *influence* score would be lower. So, if one wants to know how to design an effective DIP, then the second meaning above may be preferable — it provides a readier recipe for planning a DIP process, as it suggests focussing on how to encourage the sponsor to allow such a contract.

A number of other questions arise: If a contract was negotiated with participants and this contract offered guarantees from the convenor only, can it be seen as lacking influence? If participants were empowered by the process and became activists for the issue, could this be interpreted as influence? If sponsors or stakeholders (often in the form of expert speakers) were influenced is this sufficient to conclude that influence has occurred? Further, an apparently influential outcome from a DIP may fail in the implementation (for example because of resistance or ineptitude amongst those charged with carrying out the recommendations).

We concede that our questions gave us a great deal of interesting information but they left us incapable of adequately answering questions about the degree of influence. We noted, for example, the distinctiveness of the Western Australia experience because of its enabling Minister but what other issues might be affecting each policy landscape? Our attention to *influence* provides a focus for further consideration of how DIPs can do more for community engagement: What can practitioners, sponsors and participants do to increase the *influence* of their DIPs?

## Conclusion

The authors are also collaborating with an international team to complete a map of the field of DIPs worldwide. It is interesting to note the burgeoning global interest in this field and the commensurate desire to track the implementation of DIPs. However, Australia is definitely lagging behind. Without the anomalous experiences in WA, the rate of take-up of DIPs in Australia would be far less impressive. This is an area for future investigation: the comparative indifference toward DIPs by Australian decision-makers, as well as an investigation of the sphere of government (local, state, federal) that is most conducive to this form of community engagement.

The three ideals with which this paper and the inventory began are all difficult to achieve. *Representativeness* and *deliberation* though difficult to achieve are perhaps less threatening to decision-makers than ceding *influence*. Given the challenges associated with achieving influence and the importance for participants of doing so, perhaps DIPs should be renamed DIPIs to accommodate this ideal: deliberative, inclusive, influential processes.

These three ideals do not present the entire picture, of course. One recent in-depth comparative study of DIPs in Germany and Australia (Hendriks 2004) shows that there are many contextual factors such as policy narratives, politics and broader cultural issues that shape the capacity for DIPs to work productively in practice. Further work in this direction would be invaluable.

Robert Goodin introduces his book, *Reflective Democracy*, with the following words:

“Democracy is a much-contested concept. Fundamentally, though, it is a matter of making social outcomes *systematically responsive* to the *settled preferences* of *all affected parties*” (Goodin 2003, *our italics*).

This is the deliberative democracy project in a nutshell and the framework for this paper. Citizens can have real *influence* when decision-makers are *systematically responsive*; however this means that a representative grouping must be found from amongst *all affected parties*; and their discussion must be geared to determining *settled preferences*. Goodin follows this introductory sentence with another:

“Voting is the classic mechanism for ensuring systemic responsiveness of that sort” (Goodin 2003, pp. 1).

Unlike the kind of internal deliberation that Goodin advocates, we contend that deliberative, inclusive processes provide a robust mechanism for moving beyond the empty ritual of voting. However, our inventory demonstrates that Australia has a very long way to go.

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