



THE CITIZENS' AGENDA FACT SHEET

<http://www.oursay.org/ca>

The Electorates

1. Melbourne (Victoria)
2. Corangamite (Victoria)
3. Bradfield (NSW)
4. Denison (Tasmania)
5. Fraser (ACT)
6. Fowler (NSW)
7. Longman (Queensland)
8. Oxley (Queensland)
9. Brand (WA)
10. Grey (SA)

How The Electorates Were Selected

The ten electorates represent many relevant aspects of the nation's political diversity.

Five criteria were used to make the selection.

1. Marginality
2. Location
3. Incumbency (govt. held seat)
4. Internet penetration/use
5. Demographic diversity

The fifth criterion consisted of three variables:

1. Ethnicity
2. Age
3. Socio Economic Status (as measured by education, occupation and income)

The Public Events

The 'town hall' meetings at which candidates will answer the questions from the project will be held on:

1. **Melbourne:** 10 September 6pm-8pm
2. **Corangamite:** 29 August 6pm-8pm
3. **Bradfield:** 1 September 3pm-5pm
4. **Fowler:** 1 September 11am-1pm
5. **Longman:** 7 September 3pm-5pm
6. **Oxley:** 7 September 11am-1pm
7. **Brand:** 5 September 5pm-8pm
8. **Grey:** 8 September 2pm-4pm
9. **Denison:** 31 August 2pm-4pm
10. **Fraser:** 6 September 6pm-8pm

Check the Citizens' Agenda website for location details.

Research Methodology

- A literature review to identify existing data on levels of political engagement in Australia.
- Both qualitative and quantitative representative public opinion polling before, during and after the Citizens' Agenda exercise, so that a 'base line' can be compared to the situation after the intervention. Initial focus groups are currently being planned to test out areas of questioning and the resonance of key terms.
- In depth interviews with a sample of participants exploring how the Citizens' Agenda initiative impacted on their interest in and sense of efficacy about political engagement.
- The collection of demographic and other data through the *OurSay* website.
- A series of interviews with political journalists during the election contest.
- Content analysis of media reporting, so the impacts of the Citizens' Agenda exercise on political coverage can be measured.

(Metrics are being developed to define different levels of political engagement, and delineate between special interest groups, the politically active and the politically disengaged/inactive.)

Research Questions

How does the Citizens' Agenda (CA) intervention affect political engagement?

1. To what extent does the CA intervention impact on participants' interest in, engagement with and sense of efficacy about political engagement?
2. Who does the CA intervention engage - special interest groups, politically active people, or previously inactive people?
3. Does the CA intervention engage people who were otherwise disengaged or excluded? Who are they and why are they now engaged?
4. Do changes in levels and forms of engagement continue beyond the CA?
5. Who is excluded from the Citizens' Agenda exercise, and why? Is this a different group from those previously excluded or disengaged from political participation?
6. Does the Citizens' Agenda exercise have the potential to be 'hi-jacked' by vested interests?
7. Are the issues raised through this project at odds with the perceived predominant interests of the public (health, education, unemployment etc.) as expressed through public opinion polling etc.?

How does the Citizens' Agenda intervention affect media reporting of the election contest?

1. Do the issues that 'rise to the top' as a result of the social media exercise differ from those normally/previously reported by the media, and if so how.
2. Does the CA intervention reduce or alter the amount of political coverage devoted to personality based reporting, horse race journalism etc.
3. Does the visible participation of citizens in the CA exercise alter the way political journalists do their job, and if so how?
4. Do the issues that arise from the Citizens' Agenda intervention differ from those that are highlighted by traditional public opinion polling?
5. Does the CA impact on participants' views about media coverage of politics?

The Team

Associate Professor Margaret Simons is a journalist of 31 years' experience; Dr Simons is Director of the Centre for Advanced Journalism at the University of Melbourne. She has written extensively on media, journalism futures and political journalism.

Professor Helen Sullivan joined the University of Melbourne as Director for the Centre of Public Policy in September 2011. Prior to this she worked in the UK most recently as Director of the Advanced Social Science Collaborative and Director of Research and Knowledge Transfer in the School of Government and Society, University of Birmingham. She has a longstanding interest in citizen - state relationships and has undertaken numerous studies of citizen participation in public decision making.

Dr Denis Muller is a Senior Research Fellow with the Centre for Advanced Journalism. He has been a senior editor of Fairfax newspapers. From 1984 until he left newspapers in 1993, he worked closely with Irving Saulwick, one of Australia's leading public opinion pollsters, in the management and writing of the Saulwick Poll which was published in The Age as AgePoll and in the Herald as HeraldSurvey. In 2006 he completed a doctoral thesis on media ethics and accountability. Most recently, he worked with Mr Ray Finklestein QC on the federal government's independent inquiry into media standards.

Dr Aaron Martin was educated at the ANU, the Institute of Political Studies (Paris), Stanford University and the University of Melbourne. He returned to the University of Melbourne as Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences in 2011. Aaron's research focuses on young people and politics, political participation, public opinion and policy agendas. In 2010 he has awarded an ARC grant with Keith Dowding (ANU) for a project entitled 'Policy Agendas in the Australian Commonwealth.' Aaron also sits on the Australian Electoral Commissioner's Advisory Board on Electoral Research.

Dr David Nolan is a Media and Communications researcher at the University of Melbourne. Prior to coming at the University, he was educated at RMIT University (Melbourne) and the University of Manchester (UK). His work focuses on the shifting role performed by journalism in institutional and social politics, particularly as it affects processes of social, economic, technological and political transformation. In 2010 he was awarded an ARC Linkage Grant focusing on 'Media Treatment and Communication Needs of Sudanese Australians'. This grant examines media coverage of Sudanese Australians and its impacts, and includes an innovative 'media intervention' designed to increase capacities, levels, and qualities of media representation for the Sudanese community.

Luke J Heemsbergen serves as a research officer for the project and is a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. Luke's education in Political Science spanned Canada and the UK and he worked for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade before deciding to return to a career of full time research. He currently serves as the co-editor of Platform: Journal of Media and Communication and The Melbourne Journal of Politics.

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