

The new Democracy Foundation Chairman's Report 2022

Summary

Change Politics was launched on the 15th of November last year at an in-person event at Walsh Bay, where Polly Cameron acted as MC and presented the 'Osher' video, with Osher Gunsberg and Craig Reucassel in attendance. It was followed up by a social media campaign. Travel resumed post-Covid, with Iain Walker, Kyle Redman and I attending several international conferences. The May general election in Australia resulted in six new 'Teal' Independent MPs including Allegra Spender, who is looking to promote a Citizens' Assembly on campaign funding reform. There has been much talk about the 'Voice' and the 'Republic' whilst the latter, given QE2's passing, is very much back on the national agenda. The visit of Art O'Leary, the former Secretary to the President of Ireland, is proving to be a helpful catalyst for a potential Citizens' Assembly on the Republic.

Locally

At the time of writing, the 'sign-ups' to *Change Politics* are less than 5,000, so Polly is working on second marketing video, and a 'stand-alone' strategy to attract new funding partners. The dinner we hosted for Art O'Leary in October led to a feature article by Peter Hartcher, which prompted Matt Thistlethwaite, the Assistant Minister for the Republic, to reach out to discuss the prospects of a Citizens' Assembly. Iain Walker also presented to Allegra Spender our political campaign funding reform proposal, which was well received. With these two prospects, there is the promise of at least one Federal Government sponsored Citizens' Assembly within the next two to three years. Thanks to Jay Weatherill, Iain travelled to Perth in October to present to *The Minderoo Foundation*.

Internationally

Graham Allen, the former UK Labor MP well known to us, has, with Iain's support, managed to insert a *Deliberative Democracy* cohort into President Biden's 2022 *Summit for Democracy*. I travelled to London in April for a preparatory workshop for the Athens Democracy Forum. Kathy Jones also participated. I then went thereafter to Paris for a lunch meeting with Yves Dejaeghere (FIDE), my wife Anita and the deputy Mayor, Anouch Touranian who is tasked with overseeing the newly established Citizens' Council. Claudia Chwalisz (DemocracyNext) and Yves have been retained to advise on the practical mechanics. Later, in September, Iain and I were involved in a workshop in Florence to discuss the prospects for citizens' panels in Europe. This is as a result of *The Conference on the Future of Europe*, which involved a complex process of citizens' panels at country and trans-national levels. There is now support from the Commission President for 'somehow' embedding panels into the Commission's program. Still in Europe in September, Bertelsmann Stiftung hosted the annual *R&D Conference* in Berlin to great success with over 200 participants, with Iain and Kyle in attendance. Kyle then travelled to Columbia for UNDEF. Meanwhile, I attended the 10th annual *Athens Democracy Forum*, where I presented the Sydney session outcomes from *Building Blocks for Democracy* program. Back in our region, New Zealand's *Local Government Inquiry* requested advice, and we have since provided a written report.

More Generally

Iain continues to drive practical outcomes and forge working relationships both locally and internationally. Polly is growing well into her leadership role for *Change Politics*, with Kyle providing essential academic and practical grounding. Moreover, Kyle can take credit for assisting Iain with drafting our various submissions. We are also pleased to report that *Democracy R&D* now has sufficient financial support for David Schechter to employ an assistant. [Seshboard](#) has been identified as a promising digital deliberation platform, and are we currently doing further due diligence. Attached is Professor Lyn Carson's Research Director's Report.

Luca Belgiorno-Nettis
October 31st 2022