

Active Democracy

Issue 1, February 2022

Welcome to the first issue of Active Democracy, Active Democracy Australia's Newsletter. You are receiving this because you have asked to be put on our mailing list, or have indicated your interest in some other way. (Please let us know if you wish to unsubscribe.)

We hope to bring you information about Active Democracy Australia, about electorate groups (whether formed or in the process of being formed), about organisations, events, developments, challenges and opportunities relevant to strengthening democracy, and about new research and new ideas in this area.

We welcome your ideas for content. Perhaps you have just started a group or are planning to do so. Or your group has taken a particular initiative. Or you have a question or an issue that you think needs to be aired and discussed publicly.

Please help us to shape this newsletter, just as you are helping to shape Australian democracy through your electorate level action.

Join in our Building Local Democracy Zooms

Starting this month, we will be holding ongoing two-monthly Zooms.

These will provide an opportunity for more in-depth, two-way discussion of the sort of subjects covered in the newsletter: issues, challenges, opportunities, new developments, events and so on. As well, we may discuss projects or tasks that a number of groups have taken on. Sometimes one or more speakers may be invited to start the discussion of a particular topic.

You don't have to be doing anything in particular to participate in these Zooms. We just want to provide space for people to come together and discuss issues and ideas. You won't be pressured into taking action.

If you would like to see particular topics discussed on one of these zooms please let us know.

The Zooms will be in even-numbered months (February, April, June etc.) on the Wednesday closest to the 15th of the month, 7.30 to 8.30 pm. So the first three will be on 16 February, 13 April and 15 June.

Please email us at mail@activedemocracy.org.au if you wish to join the Zooms and we will send you a link. Please also say if you wish to join a particular one or to receive a link on an ongoing basis.

The February Zoom

This will have two main items for this Zoom:

- **Where are you at?** A whip around those present so you can introduce yourself and briefly share one or two questions, issues, ideas, plans or accomplishments.

- **The #OurDemocracy survey.** This is a project that some emerging groups have already agreed to participate in. It involves assisting to distribute a public survey as part of the #OurDemocracy campaign, a campaign to build public support for a range of legislative changes to strengthen democratic institutions and practices in Australia. The campaign's [Framework for a Fair Democracy](#) lists the changes being sought. Active Democracy Australia believes that electorate action groups and local voters should decide the issues they want their MPs to focus on, but unless we change the rules to reduce the power of party donors and powerful interests, it will be much harder for the priorities of local voters and groups to be heard and acted upon.

The upcoming federal election

The only thing we know for sure is that an election must be held by the end of May. When it will be and what the outcome will be are the subjects of much discussion. Labor is pulling ahead in the polls and could govern in its own right. But polls can be wrong, as they were in 2019.

Covid has thrown a whole raft of additional issues into the electoral mix, but issues like climate change, integrity in politics and the treatment of women in politics are still in the forefront of voters' minds.

'Voices' and other groups have been formed in over 40 electorates to date, and many Voices groups have nominated or endorsed community independent candidates. These groups are listed on the electorate pages of Active Democracy Australia's website, and we wish them well in their campaigns to bring a new level of responsiveness to representation in these electorates.

But outcomes are very unpredictable. In 2019 about 1200 independent or small party candidates stood for election, and only 6 were elected. That's a success rate of 0.5%, or putting it more positively, they won 4% of seats. Having the backing of Voices groups could make a big difference; we'll have to wait to see just how much difference. And depending on the seats won by the major parties, independents and minor parties may or may not hold the balance of power. Even if they don't, they can be more responsive to their constituents and a significant positive force in parliament and national discussion.

We at Active Democracy Australia believe that, whatever the outcome for independents and minor parties in this election, reforming the way the major parties function through electorate level voter action will remain a major imperative for the foreseeable future.

**Produced by [Active Democracy Australia](#)
Contact: mail@activedemocracy.org.au**