

**18.06.2024 - media release**

### **Mackellar Housing jury finds common ground to fix the housing crisis**

A jury of people from Mackellar with a range of backgrounds and living circumstances were prepared to come together and have the hard conversations the major parties shy away from on housing.

After careful deliberation and consultation with subject matter experts, they were able to find consensus on 4 policy areas. Their proposals were detailed and nuanced and my team and I will be analysing them deeply before reporting back in August.

The full day deliberative democracy event was held on Saturday 15 June at Miramare Gardens and was attended by 29 Mackellar residents who were randomly invited and then were further whittled down through an independent sortition process to reflect the makeup of Mackellar.

The full details of the jury's proposals will be made public on August 6 when Dr Sophie Scamps, the Independent MP for Mackellar, will also respond and explain how she will advance the jury's ideas.

The day began with an explanation from not-for-profit organisation, newDemocracy Foundation about the objectives of the day: to try to reach three consensus ideas that the jury felt would provide the foundation for Dr Sophie Scamps MP to address one of our most pressing issues: the housing crisis.

The jury then heard from five experts with very different perspectives on housing policy and how to address the current crisis.

"I would like to thank the jurors for their time and their truly thoughtful and considered ideas," Dr Scamps said.

"This was a big investment by each of them in both time and in energy. Our jury ranged in age from 18 to 91 and came from different backgrounds and life experiences of the housing market, from owners to renters to people in social housing or still living at home."

"The jury was able to consider all options – free from the politics that has always surrounded this issue. Their input will enable me to better understand what my electorate thinks about this complex area of policy.

"I am going to think deeply about what the jury has suggested to me and how I can advance these ideas in Canberra."

Afterwards jurors expressed their enthusiasm for the process.

"It was a great opportunity. I found it informative and I wish we could do it more often," said one juror, Colin.

"We are lucky that we live in such an interesting community. Housing policy is a difficult area and one that has been let go for too long. The challenge is trying to fix it in the short term."

“I thought the process went really well and we came up with good recommendations as a result of the collaborative thinking,” said Joanne. “It’s the wisdom-of-the-crowd type of idea. What comes out the other side is something we can live with.”

Deliberative democracy has been used often in Europe as part of formal decision making. Citizens are chosen randomly and then whittled down to best reflect the make-up of the community. They are then given access to experts and asked to come up with consensus solutions to a complex problem - in this case what to do about the housing affordability crisis.

The group is tasked with not merely considering what its members want, but also what trade-offs they can accept in order to agree on a list of priorities.

The five experts were:

Dr Peter Tulip, Centre for Independent studies, who advocated for federal infrastructure funding to be explicitly linked to reaching higher density targets;

Dr Richard Denniss, The Australia Institute, who explained the impact of concessional tax treatment of investment properties and the role of social housing in the housing market;

Wendy Hayhurst, Community Housing Association, who outlined the fall in the proportion of social and affordable housing in Australia over the last four decades and how we compare to other countries in providing government owned housing.

John Brockhoff - The Planning Institute of Australia, who stressed the importance of planning and ensuring that development met community expectations and provided high quality environments;

Melissa Neighbour, YIMBY, who advocated for federal funds to be tied to development targets and directed to local councils to ensure that local infrastructure, such as parks and open spaces are delivered at the same time.

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