

Capital Region Climate Change Forum: Citizens' Report

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Background

The Capital Region Climate Change Forum was held in Canberra from Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd December. The purpose of the Forum was to address the question:

“How should the people and organisations of the Capital Region respond to expected climate change impacts in the Region?”

The NSW Greenhouse Office and the ACT Office of Sustainability funded the Forum. The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney, organised and facilitated the Forum.

The Forum used an innovative community consultation approach – known as a **citizens’ jury** – to explore the above question. A citizens’ jury brings together a group of randomly selected citizens to deliberate on an issue of public interest. It directly involves members of the community in policy development and planning. Traditional forms of community consultation, such as surveys and submission processes, provide little opportunity for people to learn about and reflect on complex issues like climate policy. Most people simply do not have the relevant knowledge, and the necessary time, to contribute in a meaningful way. Community preferences expressed in these processes tend to be unreflective and fail to consider important dimensions of the problem.

The intention of a citizens’ jury is to promote **deliberation** on a subject by ordinary citizens. Deliberation ‘is an approach to decision-making in which citizens consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, converse with one another to think critically about options before them and enlarge their perspectives, opinions and understandings’.¹ In a deliberative process, participants are provided with information, training, time and other resources to allow them to learn about and debate an issue and come to a considered view. A deliberative process acts as a capacity-building exercise in which non-expert members of the community are empowered to discuss and form valid opinions about the subject.

Citizens’ juries and other deliberative processes have been used in Europe and the USA for several decades and are increasingly being used in Australia. Some Australian examples include the Australian Consensus Conference on Gene Technology in the Food Chain (1999), the Far North Queensland Citizens Jury (2000), the Container Deposit Legislation Citizens Jury and Televote (2001) and the Government of Western Australia’s Dialogue with the City (2003).

In a typical Citizens’ Jury, a randomly selected and demographically representative panel of citizens meets to carefully examine an issue of public significance. The participants hear from a variety of expert witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, the members of the citizens’ jury present their recommendations to decision makers and the public. This document contains the Citizens’ Report that emerged from the Capital Region Climate Change Forum.

¹ This definition emerged from the Deliberative Democracy Consortium’s Researcher and Practitioner Conference in 2003, <http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/faq/>.

The jury

The citizens' jury for the Capital Region Climate Change Forum comprised 20 people from the ACT and four adjacent Local Government Areas in NSW (Cooma-Monaro, Palerang, Queanbeyan and Yass Valley). Potential participants were contacted at random. Those who expressed an interest were sent further information about the process and the issue to be discussed. From those who confirmed an interest, 24 people were selected at random to meet specific demographic criteria for the Region. Some of these people were unable to attend on the days required, leaving a final group of 20 participants.

The actual demographic profile of the jury and the preferred profile, based on regional data, are shown in Table 1. Discrepancies between the actual profile and preferred profile are either a result of late withdrawals, unsuccessful recruitment in particular categories (e.g. 15-24 years) or a conscious decision to provide representation for the smaller LGAs.

Characteristic	Jury Demographic Profile	Preferred Profile
Gender		
<i>Male</i>	9	10
<i>Female</i>	11	10
Age		
<i>15-24 years</i>	1	4
<i>25-54 years</i>	9	11-12
<i>55-64 years</i>	5	3
<i>65 years and over</i>	5	2-3
Household type		
<i>Family</i>	15	14
<i>Lone person</i>	2	5
<i>Group</i>	3	1
Employment status		
<i>Employed</i>	13	13
<i>Unemployed</i>	1	1
<i>Not in the labour force</i>	6	6
Jurisdiction		
<i>ACT</i>	12	15
<i>Cooma-Monaro</i>	2	0
<i>Eurobodalla</i>	0	2
<i>Palerang</i>	2	1
<i>Queanbeyan</i>	2	2
<i>Yass Valley</i>	2	0

Table 1: Actual and ideal demographic profiles for the Region.

The speakers

Speakers on Days 1 and 2 of the Forum are listed in Table 2.

Speaker	Position and Organisation	Topic
Dr Bryson Bates	Director, Climate Program CSIRO	The Science of Climate Change
Steve Whan, MP	Member for Monaro NSW Government	The NSW Government approach to climate change
Clinton White	Executive Office Capital Region Development Board	The Capital Region
Mark Howden	Senior Principal Research Scientist CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems	Climate Change in the Capital Region
Sue Robb	Planner Cooma-Monaro Shire Council	Climate change and local government planning
Peter Ottesen	Sustainability Policy and Programs ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services	ACT Government's response to climate change
Hugh Saddler	Managing Director Energy Strategies	Greenhouse emissions and energy policy: A Capital Region perspective
Tracey Rich	Sustainability Officer Eurobodalla Shire Council	A local government perspective on climate change response
Rohan Nelson	Resource Economist CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems	Managing climate risks in agriculture and natural resource management
Michael H. Smith	Content Coordinator The Natural Edge Project	How should we respond to climate change in the Capital Region?
Ayesha Razzaq	Manager Wholesale ActewAGL	A utility perspective on climate change response
Dr Jonathan Banks	Pialligo Apples (WWF Climate Witness)	Observed impacts of climate change in his apple orchard
Adrian Whitehead	Campaigner Beyond Zero Emissions	An activist perspective on climate change response
Bishop George Browning	Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn	A faith-based perspective on climate change response

Table 2: List of speakers at the Capital Region Climate Change Forum.

The Capital Region

The Australian Capital Region, shown in Figure 1, includes the ACT and 14 adjacent Local Government Areas (LGAs) in NSW. Residents from five of these LGAs (Cooma-Monaro, Eurobodalla, Palerang, Queanbeyan City and Yass Valley) were invited to participate in the Capital Region Climate Change Forum. This area is marked in red in Figure 1.

The Region has a population of over 540,000 people and Gross Regional Product of over \$14 billion. The regional economy is centred on government and tertiary services in Canberra, and in rural industries, tourism, technology and manufacturing in the remainder of the Region.



Figure 1: The Australian Capital Region. Source: Capital Region Development Board.

The citizens' recommendations

On Day 3 of the Forum, after hearing from speakers on Days 1 and 2, the jurors developed a citizens' report, containing a series of statements and recommendations on climate change response in the Capital Region. The citizens formally presented their recommendations to John Hargreaves MLA, the ACT Minister for the Territory and Municipal Services.

The report developed during the Forum comprised a series of Powerpoint slides responding to eight questions suggested by the facilitators. Below, the points included on the slides have been reformatted and tidied up; no changes have been made to the content of the report. However, the facilitators have added comments in footnotes where appropriate.

Climate change science and regional impacts

Scientific

- There is a problem:
 - There is clear evidence that climate change exists and will impact our region
 - There are differing predictions on climate change, but the impact of even the tamest prediction is serious and needs to be addressed immediately
 - Trends are consistent with Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) upper predictions.²
- Information
 - There is currently insufficient public awareness about the specific impacts and the most appropriate responses.

Worst case scenario

There are claims that even radical action may not be able to be implemented quickly enough to prevent extreme and detrimental impacts, e.g. there is a claim that a 2 degrees Celsius increase would create runaway climate change.

Regional impacts - environmental

- Decreased rainfall
- Animals could become extinct, e.g. pygmy possum in alpine region
- Climate change will make tree establishment problematic
- Unpredictable frosts will have impact on food production
- Snow depth could be zero by 2050

² Facilitator comment: Here, the participants are referring to information showing that actual temperature increases and sea level rises since the release of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report in 2001 have tended to follow the upper range of projections presented in that report.

- Insects adapt much faster than plant life, which will affect infestations and how plants cope with this
- Animals migrating southward - we could lose current fauna, gain new ones and need to adapt to this
- The potential increase of area burnt by bushfires (could increase by 23x, according to CSIRO advice).

Regional impacts - human

- Our food production will be affected
- Health issues will increase, particularly for the young, old, poor and frail
- Tourism, e.g. snow tourism, Floriade.

Who should take action?

- Capital Region should try to lead the world by example.
- All of us need to take action:
 - We need access to relevant information to influence the majority to acknowledge climate change
 - Responsibility needs to be undertaken by all individuals.
- Existing community groups and influential people need to take action:
 - Promote climate change to influential people so they can lead to change
 - Use experts to drive momentum in the climate change issues.
- Businesses and large corporations need to take action.
- Governments need to take action.

What are the main barriers to action?

Lifestyle choices

- Desire by portion of community to maintain/enhance a high-consumption lifestyle:
 - Lack of incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
 - Low cost of non-renewable energies.³

³ Facilitator comment: For example, the low cost of coal power was seen as a barrier to greater penetration of renewable energy.

Government

- There is no coordination or collaboration between levels of government (federal, state, local)
- There appears to be government scepticism at the federal level
- Lack of community consultation and education
- Funding priorities⁴
- Lack of feedback on government initiatives.⁵

Business resistance⁶

Lack of education

- Lack of relevant targeted information to the community.

Do we need targets and timetables for reducing emissions? If so, what should they be?

- Yes, we need targets
 - Targets will assist in raising awareness among implementing authorities and the community
 - Need for coordinated approach (e.g. Cities for Climate Protection for local governments).
- The jury was unable to reach agreement on specific emission reduction targets.⁷

Review and feedback

- Need an audit to establish baseline emissions in the Capital Region⁸
- Audits of efficiency and effectiveness (performance audits) to measure progress.

⁴ Facilitator comment: By this, the participants meant that insufficient funding was allocated to climate change response compared to other government spending.

⁵ Facilitator comment: The participants felt that they did not know enough about what is already being done to respond to climate change.

⁶ Facilitator comment: This was listed as a barrier but the citizens did not provide further elaboration or examples.

⁷ Facilitator comment: There was a lengthy discussion on emission reduction and renewable energy targets, however the jury could not reach a consensus view on an appropriate target for the Capital Region in the time available. The discussion focused on a highly ambitious target of rapidly reducing to zero emissions, a less ambitious target of 50% renewable energy and a 50% emission reduction by 2020 (50/50 by 2020) and a more moderate renewable energy target. While there appeared to be majority support for a 50/50 by 2020 target, a sizeable minority supported a more ambitious target. The jury recognised that it did not have sufficient information to choose an appropriate target in the time available.

⁸ Facilitator comment: Actual greenhouse gas emissions in the Capital Region, particularly for transport, are not well understood and must currently be estimated.

Do we need to adapt to climate change in the region? If so, how?

- Yes, we need to adapt
- Adapt or suffer. The implications of not adapting are increases in:
 - Bushfire risk
 - Health risks
 - Agricultural impacts
 - Economic risks
 - Lifestyle impacts.
- How can we adapt?
 - Behavioural change
 - Promote education on climate change and adaptation measures
 - Incentives for adaptive behaviour
 - Penalties for non-adaptive behaviour
 - Lifestyle changes
 - Our environment (housing, travel, etc)⁹
 - Mitigation¹⁰
 - Regulatory changes (building codes, water restrictions, etc)
 - Supply of utilities (energy, water, etc)
 - Better and cheaper public transport.

⁹ Facilitator comment: For example, the participants discussed changes to housing design that would make houses safer under more extreme weather conditions.

¹⁰ Facilitator comment: There was some confusion between mitigation (reducing the impact of climate change by reducing emissions) and adaptation (avoiding the impacts of climate change by changing behaviour). The group that focused on adaptation raised several mitigation options as well. They are recorded here for completeness.

What actions should be taken to reduce emissions from energy use?

Buildings

- Improve energy efficiency – enormous potential:
 - Reduce standby power
 - Smart metering
 - Better insulation/ double glazing¹¹
 - Energy audits – Home Energy Advisory Team (HEAT) - extend beyond ACT¹²
 - Combined heat and power/ district heating
 - Mandate improved design for new buildings.

Renewable Energy

- Use solar and wind power
- Support large scale renewable projects on grid, including through GreenChoice¹³ power purchase
- Support/ fund research into renewable technology (solar, wind)
- Solar hot water.

Individual Actions

- Switch to green power
- Reduce energy use.

¹¹ Facilitator comment: The group was impressed by a Californian example discussed by one of the speakers where subsidies for double glazing effected a market transformation such that double glazing is now the industry standard.

¹² Facilitator comment: The group also discussed, but did not record, the possibility of providing the HEAT program free of charge via government subsidies.

¹³ Facilitator comment: GreenChoice is ActewAGL's accredited Green Power product. The participants would likely support other Green Power products – GreenChoice is the specific product they were familiar with from the speakers.

Education

- Increase public awareness
 - Of financial savings from reducing energy use/increasing efficiency
 - How individual actions make a difference to global emissions.
- Use all methods (internet, community forums, school curriculum, newspapers, television)
- Publicise demonstration sites (Aranda and Amaroo Primary Schools¹⁴, demonstration houses).

Government

- Provide incentives for reducing emissions
 - Tax deductions and subsidies
 - Increase GreenChoice uptake through government funding
 - Energy performance contracting.
- Reduce government energy use
 - e.g. Street lighting.
- Provide information on energy use
 - Publish results of energy savings schemes against targets (Performance Reports)
 - Benchmark Capital Region against other regions
 - Create websites of environmental success stories.
- Fund and publicise cost/benefit analysis of energy options, e.g. nuclear, renewables, coal.

What actions should we take to reduce emissions from transport?

- Comment: A higher proportion of the Capital Region's emissions come from transport compared with the rest of the country.

Local transport

- Increase the use of public transport e.g. improved bus services
- Increase use of alternative fuels
- Consider light rail.

¹⁴ Facilitator comment: Aranda has an environment program that mixes learning with reforestation. Amaroo has installed a renewable energy system with solar hot water, photovoltaic cells and a wind turbine.

Regional transport

- Reduce food miles¹⁵
- Develop fast trains¹⁶
- Replace trucks with trains for bulk goods.

Urban planning

- Rethink Canberra planning and use more infill to create a more compact ACT
- Encourage cycling.

Use alternative fuels and electric vehicles

Taxes and Tariffs

- Use of incentives, disincentives and funding mechanisms

Other actions

Government

- All levels of government should have a co-ordinated approach to climate change
 - Federal; regional; community; state / ACT; local.
- Clear governance is required from all sections of government
 - Planning
 - Prioritise more funding to climate change
 - Revenues, taxes and incentives.
- Reinstatement of the ACT Office of Sustainability
- Make the Capital Region a model for action
 - e.g. using Cities for Climate Protection program or similar program
- Public sector to work closely with private sector e.g. Capital Region Development Board
- Encourage investments in climate change response schemes e.g. through superannuation
- Incentives for scientific community to solve problems of emissions with industry e.g. prizes, grants.

¹⁵ Facilitator comment: “Food miles” is a measure of how far food travels before it is consumed and therefore how much greenhouse gas is generated in bringing the food to the table.

¹⁶ Facilitator comment: A fast train running Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne was specifically discussed.

Environmental

- Encourage agro-forestry and reforestation
- Sequestration¹⁷

Education

- Day-to-day solutions
- Plain-English information about climate change
- Involve community groups (Landcare, church, etc)
- Educated communities make educated choices and demand action.

Networking

- More utilisation of scientific expertise
- Involve schools (primary and secondary)
- Policy consideration of low income families
- Respond to arising health issues.

¹⁷ Facilitator comment: Here, the participants are referring mainly to carbon sequestration in biomass through forest planting. However, they were not averse to carbon capture and underground storage (geosequestration).