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GEELONG CITIZENS' JURY Debrief



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Kismet Forward provides specialist advice and support in the areas of community engagement, facilitation, conflict management coaching, program logic, strategy, evaluation, training and project management.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2016, following investigations and reviews and a recommendation from the independent Commission of Inquiry, the Victorian Parliament dismissed the Greater Geelong City Council and administrators were appointed.

The Victorian government committed to consult the Greater Geelong community about the structure of its future elected council before the election of a new council in October 2017. A citizens' jury was the method selected by the Minister for Local Government.

Twenty-four jurors from the original 100 citizens' jurors participated in a debriefing session independently facilitated by Kismet Forward. Jurors were asked to reflect on the experience of being part of the citizens' jury process and to provide advice for future citizens' jurors and the facilitators of future citizens' juries.

What we heard – a reflection

Participants helped to build and describe a timeline of their experience as jurors. Among the most telling insights was the impact that negative media coverage had on jurors who felt frustrated that the media did not understand the process.

Jurors also described the excitement and challenge they felt on the jury days. Although these days were seen by some jurors as difficult and long, the spirit of collaboration and the outcomes outweighed the negatives.

Overwhelmingly, looking at the timeline and what had been achieved engendered a feeling of real pride and accomplishment in many jurors.

Impact on Jurors

The following are the key insights into the impact the process and experience had on jurors. They describe what jurors felt was the main thing they learned and/or experienced.

- The power of collaboration
- The importance of good facilitation
- Having an open mind
- The importance of preparation
- The benefits of listening to others
- The good in our fellow community members
- The need for a transparent process
- Development of new skills and attitudes
- Working as part of a diverse group
- Why democracy is important
- How Council works

Advice for future jurors could be summarised by one statement - just do it!.

Other advice included:

- Develop a thick skin in regard to media reporting
- Have an open mind
- Be prepared to express your opinion
- Be committed and do your homework
- Do it for the learning experience
- It's enjoyable and rewarding
- Do it for the common good.

Informing Future Citizens' Juries

Aspects recommended as worth repeating for future citizens' juries include:

- Variety of guest speakers
- The jury selection process, especially the diversity of jurors selected
- The Love It/Like It/ Live With It process
- Clickers for voting
- Information and material provided both pre and during the jury process
- Transparency of process and skill of facilitators.

Aspects which jurors felt should be reviewed include:

- Ensuring adequate timing for activities
- Potentially reducing the introductory exercises
- Consideration of noise and space especially for jurors with hearing difficulties
- Ensuring there is genuine commitment from jurors

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In April 2016, following investigations and reviews and a recommendation from the independent Commission of Inquiry, the Victorian Parliament dismissed the Greater Geelong City Council and administrators were appointed.

The Victorian government committed to consult the Greater Geelong community about the structure of its future elected council before the election of a new council in October 2017. A citizens' jury was the method selected by the Minister for Local Government.

A citizens' jury is an innovative way to involve everyday people in decision making. It is a transparent engagement approach that puts the community at the centre of the process. Geelong has broken new ground with this process. In fact, no other Victorian community has had the opportunity to influence the structure of its council to this extent.

Local Government Victoria (LGV) in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning commissioned the nonpartisan, philanthropic research organisation newDemocracy Foundation to independently design and oversee the process.

The Geelong Citizens' Jury was comprised of 100 citizens in the Geelong area. In August 2016, invitations to participate were sent to approximately 15,000 randomly selected residents and from those people who expressed interest, the newDemocracy Foundation randomly selected participants to be descriptively representative of the demographics of Greater Geelong in terms of age, gender and geography. These methods helped ensure that a full range of perspectives most likely to be held by the wider community were broadly represented in the jury.

The Minister asked the jury to make two types of recommendations:

1. Practical recommendations for an electoral structure compliant with the Victorian local government legislative framework.
2. Aspirational recommendations that might not be compliant with this framework and that might include other ideas to improve local democracy.

The jury was supported in its task by professional facilitators from MosaicLab: Nicole Hunter, Keith Greaves, Kimbra White and Jane Lovejoy.

The following 'roadmap' depicts the intended process for the jury. It was largely followed, however a fourth jury day was convened to finalise the report.



The jury presented its interim report to the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP during November 2016 and their final report to Geelong MP the Hon Christine Couzens in January 2017. The Minister has promised to:

- Table the unedited jury report in Parliament.
- Submit to Cabinet the outcomes of the jury's deliberations
- Consider aspirational recommendations in future reviews of local government legislation
- Respond to the jury, including providing the Government's response.

Jurors were invited to participate in a debrief session in February 2017 in order to provide closure, reflect on the personal impact of the process and to contribute to the successful planning of future juries. To this end, debrief participants were asked to reflect on the jury process rather than the content of their deliberations.

Twenty-four jurors took up the offer and attended the debrief, which was independently facilitated by Jennifer Lilburn of Kismet Forward. This report details the questions asked and the responses/discussions that took place.

Verbatim quotes by jurors (verbal or written) are shown as *'italicised quotations'*.

2. WHAT WE HEARD - REFLECTION

Summary of insights arising from the feedback:

- Negative media coverage had significant impact on jurors who felt frustrated that the media did not understand the process.
- Jurors felt excited and challenged on the jury days. Although these days were seen by some jurors as difficult and long, the spirit of collaboration and the outcomes outweighed the negatives.
- Looking at the timeline and what had been achieved engendered a feeling of real pride and accomplishment for many jurors.

2.1 Recollection of Events

Participants of the debrief helped to build and describe a timeline of their experience as jurors. Using the letters in the first column of the table below, they were asked to identify the milestones which most epitomised each of the descriptors in the second column.

M	The most memorable thing about the process
S	The most significant thing that happened
B	The best thing that happened
F	The most frustrating thing that happened
H	The hardest thing personally that I had to deal with
L	The thing that led me to learning the most
C	The thing that most challenged the process
I	The thing that I had greatest impact over
E	The most exciting thing



PROJECT TIMELINE

Pre-August 2016

Prior to the formation of the jury there were many wider engagement activities. These activities were not considered during the debrief process, which focussed solely on the jury experience.

Before August 2016, activities were limited to media coverage announcing the formation of the jury.

The Geelong Advertiser article 'Citizens' jury will shape our council' was seen by five jurors as the most **exciting** thing, two as the most **significant**, and one as the **best** thing that happened. Two related articles were felt by two jurors as to be the most **memorable** and one as the most **significant**.

August 2016

Media coverage also defined the month of August. The Geelong Independent articles 'Citizens' jury to review direct election of Mayor', and 'Concern over jury representation' were felt by two jurors to be the most frustrating occurrence of the month, and one juror felt it was the occurrence over which they felt they had the most impact .

Journalist Natalie Hutchins' article 'A chance to have your say on council' elicited positive emotions from five jurors. Three felt it the most **exciting** thing, one the most **significant** and one the most **memorable**.

September 2016

Jury selection began and the wider engagement/public survey was open to the public to share its views. The Geelong Advertiser featured a short article listing the key dates of the jury process which one juror felt was the **best** thing to happen.

October 2016

The initial juror 'Meet and Greet' session was held on 13 October. Three jurors found this **significant**, two the **best** thing that happened, two felt it was the activity over which they had the most **impact**, and one juror found it **exciting**.

'Meet and greet night was friendly.'

An online discussion was held from 13-29 October. Two jurors found it to be the activity that was personally most **difficult**, one **learned** the most from the online discussion, and one felt it was the most **challenging** aspect of the process.

'The online discussions, I felt uncomfortable with it because of the concern about on line privacy.' (sic)

A welcome kit was also posted to jurors. One juror felt they had the greatest **impact** over this activity¹ and another found it to be the most **memorable** occurrence.

The first jury day was held on 29 October. Three jurors thought it was the **best** thing to occur,

1- It is possible that this juror misinterpreted the meaning of the term 'The thing that I had greatest impact over'

two found it the most **memorable**, two the most **significant**, one felt they had **learned** the most from this activity, one found it the most **frustrating** and one juror felt it was the activity over which they had the most **impact**.

November 2016

Two online discussions were held during this month. Two jurors found these discussions the activities over which they had the most **impact**, one the activity in which they **learned** the most, and another felt the first online discussion to be the most **significant** activity of the month.

Jury Day 2 was held on 12 November. Eight jurors found this activity to be the one in which they **learned** the most. A further found it to be the **best** activity, and another four the most **memorable**. Two jurors each described this as: the **hardest**; the activity over which they had the most **impact**; most **significant**; and the most **memorable**. One juror found it to be **frustrating**.

Jury Day 3 on 26 November seemed to be the most challenging and difficult activity of the whole process. The general consensus was that it was a very rushed day with too much to do in too little time.

Ten jurors described it as the most **challenging** to the process, eight the most **frustrating**, and six the **hardest**. However four jurors found it the most **exciting**, and four the most **memorable** activity. Four jurors described it as the activity over which they had the most **impact**.

'Jury days were very busy – day 3 was frustrating, difficult, challenging.'

'We were going to need more time once the mayor decision had taken so long – effectively compressed the rest of the day.'

'In report writing we nearly botched the whole thing – shouldn't be rushed. People need to be thinking quite clearly through the process.'

There was a flurry of media activity related to the role of Mayor. Four jurors found articles related to former Mayor Darren Lyons as **frustrating**, and one as **significant**.

December 2016

The December time period was frustrating for many jurors because of predominantly negative media coverage. The most significantly frustrating of these articles was The Geelong Independent's 'The process is rigged'². Eight found this article the **hardest** to deal with personally, three the most **challenging** to the process, two felt it to be **frustrating**.

'Felt frustrated that it wasn't understood by the media.'

Another article 'Lyon's mayoral no-go' was felt by one juror as the most **challenging**, and another the **hardest** thing to deal with.

One person felt that they had had greatest **impact** over a letter to the editor 'Praise for mayor election process' by Priscilla Pescott.

1- The article was referred to but not provided for the debrief. Hence, it may be incorrectly titled.

January 2017

Jury Day 4 was held on 21 January. Six jurors cited this day as the **best** thing that had happened. Five jurors felt it was the activity in which they had the most **impact**, five the most **exciting** thing. Four jurors each found it the most **memorable**, the most **significant**, and the most **challenging** to the process. One juror found it **frustrating** and two found it **hard** personally.

'(The) fourth day was liberating because we could make suggestions about changing or improving how local government is set up or operated. If any of those get up and (are) implemented then we really have made a difference.'

'Disappointed – felt bad for the whole team that day. Didn't realise how long the process would take. Maybe should have allowed for an extra day.'

The online discussion 4 held 7 - 20 January was the activity which one juror felt was the experience in which they **learned** the most. Another juror found the Senator's article³ the most **challenging** to the process.

February 2017

The debriefing session (in which they were participating at the time) was seen by two jurors as the most memorable, and by a further two as the activity in which they learned the most. One found it the best activity, and another the activity in which they felt they had the most impact.

Newspaper articles featured in February⁴ were seen as **challenging** to the process, **memorable** and **frustrating**.



3 - The article was referred to but not provided for the debrief.

4 - Referred to by jurors but not provided for the debrief.

2.2 When I look at the timeline I feel



'Looking [at the timeline] I feel astonished about the varying intensity of engagement and that so many people with so many different views could come to agreement.'

'Amazed that we came to consensus with a 100 people. A sense of satisfaction that we found consensus despite having such different views.'

'(Looking at the timeline) I felt a sense of achievement and hope for the future. I'm surprised that we got so far.'

'[Felt] Frustrated that it [the process] wasn't understood by the media'

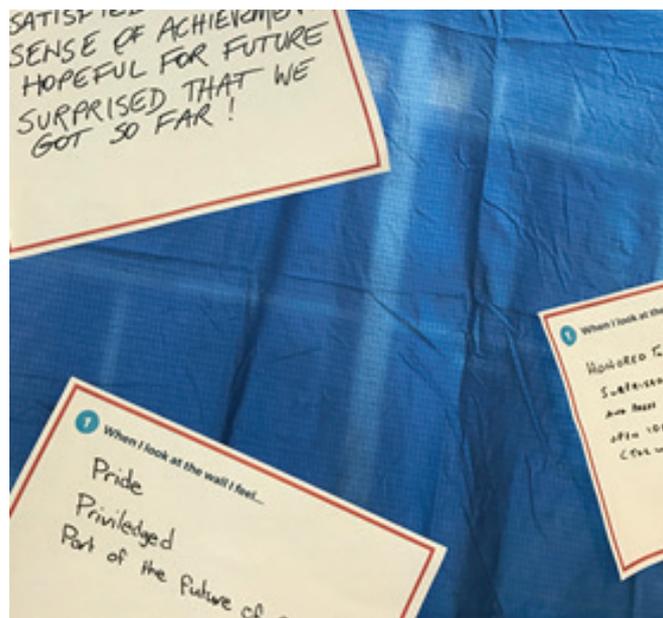
What stands out when you look at the wall?

'Overall what was best and most memorable was people's involvement – that they did their reading, that they were prepared and that they were involved in the process'

- Pulses of high intensity engagement interspersed with periods of lower intensity engagement and reflection
- The wall is meaningless and does not satisfactorily define the elements of the process
- Support from MosaicLab and newDemocracy
- The ideas/thoughts of 100 people
- Jury day 3 was intense
- The practical report was the most memorable for jurors
- We experienced all emotions on the days
- Hard work
- We had lots of input and information
- The “populist” media, mostly bias towards elected Mayor
- The amount of work and diversity of topics to be considered in November

If you had 60 seconds to show this wall to a newcomer, where would you spend the time?

- Explain the process of the four jury workshop days.
- Days 2 & 3
- Days 3 & 4 decisions being made
- Introductory day and last day
- Overall process
 - Getting information, discussing, debating, testing, deciding.
 - Input → process → output
 - The whole process in a nutshell and the end result!
 - Process of forming jury
- Dealing with media reporting
- Community engagement
- The collaborative spirit, compromise
- Exposure to expert speakers
- Excitement about the project



3. IMPACT OF THE PROCESS ON JURORS

Summary of insights arising from the feedback:

Why democracy is important

The importance of good facilitation

Development of news skills and attitudes

How Council works

The power of collaboration

Working as part of a diverse group

The need for transparent process

The benefits of listening to others

Having an open mind

The good in our fellow community members

The importance of preparation

3.1 What did you learn from the experience of being a juror?

'For me it's being aware of the democratic process and having a wide view – keeping the whole of community benefit in mind. You need a wider lens than your own view.'

The importance of good facilitation

'100 people can work together for common good with impartial and knowledgeable facilitators.'

- The importance of a facilitator during group work
- 'Incredible' facilitation strategies and the patience/tact/kindness of facilitators

Having an open mind

'Apply critical thinking to all of the process – when something is said or information is given – challenge it; think about what the evidence is, is it consistent. Rather than sticking with a view that might not have evidence to support, be open to considering other views.'

- That you need to be committed in what you are doing but also be willing to listen to other people's point of view
- Juror's initial opinions were changed through deep discussion and collaboration with other jury members
- To listen to all arguments and weigh the evidence before voting

The importance of preparation

- Take time to study the issue, get information from a variety of sources, test and debate it, then decide
- That key to this process is the preparation, co-ordination and determination to not allow for any bias

The benefits of listening to others

'I learned new ways of listening, learning and engaging with others.'

'I learned what it was like to have your opinion fully listened to as everyone was given a voice - unlike most work situations where some people dominate and quieter people are dismissed'

- Learned about compromise, persuasion and listening
- That respectful listening and critical thinking are essential to good decision making
- The importance of ensuring everyone contributes and is heard

The good in our fellow community members

'Integrity is not dead'

'Everyone has a contribution to make regardless of education or political views'

'We, as humans, can respect and listen to others' opinions without rancour'

'People from all walks of life can bring together sound common sense'

The need for transparent process

'This process must walk a very fine line in ensuring transparency and efficiency in terms of validity and ethics'

'With excellent and strategic management public jury considerations can yield meaningful outcomes of value'

Development of news skills and attitudes

'I learnt I did not need to know everything'

'Personal reflection on my own political values – strong support for democratic representation but it can also go wrong in the age of social media and celebrity culture '

'With knowledge it is possible to make sound decisions'

'Being prepared to ask questions rather than rush to provide answers'

Working as part of a diverse group

'At the start I had a predisposition to no wards, no districts. Then I heard people from Bellarine and Lara talking and I realised my patch in Belmont was very different ... listening to those people changed my mind.'

- Diverse people with diverse opinions can come to a consensus
- The importance and power of collaboration

- The diversity of ideas are reflected in the quality/diversity of solutions
- Observing different ways of younger jury members and older members interacting and noting that older members of the community still have so much to contribute
- That core values form shared sets of understanding between diverse people

Why democracy is important

'It's given me a new way of thinking about democracy for the people, by the people. It should be much more of an integral part of government.'

- People of good will can put aside political differences in the interest of reaching democratic realities
- The true power and importance of participatory democracy and where it can head in the future
- How fragile "democracy" is and how easy it is to subvert

How Council works

'Better governance is important to the whole of the Geelong region'

- Depth of duties and aspirations of councillors and staff
- The interaction between business and politics on local government
- That we all should be aware of our council's workings

Other comments

'Personal sharing is a waste of time in this setting.'

'I was unhappy with one particular aspect of the process, and regretted not voicing this to Iain Walker during the process. I think I felt shy to complain about this issue, which was an important matter to me.'



3.2 Were your hopes for the process realised?

Eleven of the participants of the debrief session said that their initial hopes for the jury process had been realised. They explained as follows:

'We worked together and ended with a Council-elected mayor'

'Absolutely. I got to engage and witness democracy in action and was blown away with its effectiveness'

'Yes – juries are by their very nature a group of ordinary people wanting to discover the answer to the question – It is the goodness in human nature'

'Yes – this was achieved through a wealth of information, speakers, fair discussion for all attendees and the guidance of MosaicLab to come to an "I can live with it" result'

'Yes, I do think that we took on a 'state of art' approach to considering governance mechanisms that are globally smart and 21st century in ideas and process'

'I said that I hoped we built a sense of community through the process and I think we achieved this. The process for me was just as important as the output'

'Both practical and aspirational ideas were agreed upon by jury members and I was happy with the results'

'Yes, generally they were. Probably we will still have the politically ambitious standing but multi-councillor wards structure may ensure more diversity of experience'

'There is a wide range of knowledge that was shared'

'There was opportunity for all juror's voices to contribute to the report'

'I was happy with most of the decisions the jurors made. I was happy with most of the process.'

Two participants said that their initial hopes had not been realised:

'The Council system is still open to possible rort'

'Not really – people remained uninformed, most did not seem to have completed the reading and even on the last day were still making uninformed decisions'

Others were less definitive in their response, in some cases because they are waiting to see the response by government:

'I wanted what is best for Geelong rather than personal goals. Collective good, reassuring. All of Geelong rather than groups or identity politics'

'I think majority of jurors would be satisfied with recommendations. Whether hopes are realised depends on government response to recommendations'

'Overall, we are still waiting to see'

'I don't think so, the idea should be well handled by the parliament'

'I hope so – depends if our recommendations are accepted by parliament'

'Don't know yet. I wrote: an outcome that is supported by Geelong community and a council that is effective and lasting'

'Yet to find out if hope for "Geelong citizens to be heard and respected in democratic process"'

'Waiting to see if "real change" can be achieved'

'Potentially – increased accountability may be achieved but depends on response of government'

3.3 What piece of advice would you give other people who are thinking of becoming jurors for future projects?

Just do it!

- Be prepared, be excited and go for it.
- It's enjoyable and rewarding
- Do it for the learning experience

'Real decisions can be made by a small group of dedicated people.'

'People from all walks of life can make common sense decisions and they can listen and pay respect to others.'

Develop a thick skin in regard to media reporting

- Don't let negative media reports upset or distract you.

'Have a bit of a thick skin when it comes to reporting of the process by people who haven't been involved because they don't understand.'

Have an open mind, express your opinion

- Have an open mind to new ideas and perhaps to changing your opinion.

'Research and keep an open mind, listen to others without prejudice and be prepared to compromise'

- Be prepared to give your opinion in front of others, online, and in other forums and formats.

Be committed and do your homework

- Don't commit to being a juror unless you feel you can make it to all the meetings and do the necessary pre-reading.

Do it for the common good

- Have the community's best interest in mind.

'For me it's being aware of the democratic process and having a wide view – keeping the whole of community benefit in mind. You need a wider lens than your own view.'

'Realising that there's a world outside myself ... that's the essence of democracy; it's not 1 person 1 vote, it's thinking outside yourself and it's doing the best for the community.'

Other comments and suggestions:

- Apply critical thinking
- Ask lots of questions
- The process improves engagement between people
- Trust/follow the facilitator; the process is fair and well considered
- You may need to have a discussion with someone on the staff if there is a matter you feel is unjust

4. INFORMING FUTURE CITIZENS' JURIES

Summary of insights arising from the feedback:

Aspects recommended as worth repeating for future citizens' juries included:

- Variety of guest speakers
- The jury selection process, especially the diversity of jurors selected
- Facilitation tools such as clickers and 'Love it/Like it'
- Information and material provided both pre and during the jury process
- Transparency of process and skill of facilitators.

Aspects which jurors do not recommend repeating or which they feel need review include:

- Ensuring adequate timing for activities
- Consideration of venue noise and space especially for jurors with hearing difficulties
- Ensuring there is genuine commitment from jurors

4.1 What aspects of the process should be repeated?

- The variety of backgrounds and speakers was appreciated. There was a suggestion for more time allocated to the speakers especially when addressing the small groups.

'We enjoyed the variety of the various speakers and the different backgrounds and experiences that helped us focus on what we want.'

- Facilitation tools
- The Love It/Like It/ Live with it process was a popular 'collaborative' technique cited by many jurors.
- Clickers were also popular as they enabled privacy in the voting process.
- Jurors liked the way jurors were selected and were very pleased with the diversity of jurors selected.

'Great so many older people could make a valuable contribution.'

'Good sample of people.'

- Jurors were impressed with both the online material and the booklet given at the beginning of the process.
- The ethics and integrity and lack of political affiliation of both newDemocracy and MosaicLab were cited as vital to a successful process.
- 'Critical thinking' was also recommended by two jurors as being important for future jury processes.
- The 'friendly meet and greet night' was appreciated.
- 'Giving time to decide the mayor issue'

4.2 What aspects of the process should be done differently (or not at all)?

Timing

Jurors felt that a contingency for an extra day should have been communicated at the beginning of the process. Some jury days felt rushed and unnecessarily pressured.

Extra time for recommendation writing was raised as was the limited time for guest speakers to present. Some jurors suggested allowing time for structured debate.

One juror raised the difficulty of returning to the process after the holiday period – the break over December and January was too lengthy.

Suggestions for better use of time include:

- Shorten the introductory activities (e.g. those related to the personality/attitudes of jurors on Day 1)
- Don't compress 'other major issues related to the practical recommendations'
- MosaicLab could have guided the small group to be more focussed on their target discussion.

'I think, and with all due respect to facilitators, there was an underestimation of the complexity of the issues and the amount of time that would be needed to thoroughly discuss and decide on these issues.'

'Perhaps we spent too much time in the beginning, days 1 and 2, gathering information and doing the interpersonal stuff.. not unimportant, but we could have got through it a bit faster and to the issues at hand.'

Other jurors, while conceding that timing was an issue, felt that perhaps there was no other way because of the spirit of group learning and group connection.

'To help think about issues with more structure, it would be useful to have some sort of summary or precis of the issues and the implications of the issues of attacking it in a certain way. It could help people to understand and decide on what they thought about certain issues instead of going round in circles. It may have meant we got through the agenda faster- but....this goes against the idea of learning as a group, about deliberation and does not necessarily fit with different styles of learning.'

'In any creative process you do need to have time to mull and to listen. The conversations that we had couldn't have happened at any other time... I don't think you could have moved forward any faster- it's about listening... and you need time to do that listening.'

'There's a certain time needed when pulling a group together to have them operating at a group level – from what I saw... yes the introductory activities took time, but then we understood how we were going to work together. We also got more connected as a group. It did take a little time but I believe it was needed.'

Venue

Noise and space issues were a concern for some jurors particularly in regard to being able to hear properly.

'Couldn't hear what was happening and it was so frustrating - some of us in our 90s. Very difficult to follow what's happening.'

Juror Commitment

The issue of juror commitment was raised with some suggesting that payment could have been withheld until after the last day to ensure attendance. Others felt that expectations of time and other commitment, such as the quantity of background reading, should have been made clear up front.

'When initially invited to jury – we felt there might have been a need for a more detailed process described so people knew a bit more about what they were in for. Perhaps some might not have done it if this had been available...'

Other comments and suggestions

- Give more background context to reasons for council dissolution
- Provide a 'happy hour' at the end of process so that jurors can debrief each other

'I was very concerned that the parliament might not take it seriously because of some of the mistakes in the final report [e.g. some mistakes in the area where high school students forming a kind of council]. I had lots of concerns and that there are probably also some other errors.'

'Thanks to newDemocracy Foundation – for me democracy has been failing for many years, and I thought it was just me. But I see there are groups that are trying to deal with it ... democracy is just too important for it not to work. I hope that you have a bigger impact on the wider community and that's what it's about.'

'Very worthwhile experience for us, but also for council and the City of Geelong. I would recommend to any council or town that if they were having problems to try it – give people a chance to bring their ideas forward.'





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