

BIOGRAPHY

Kathy Jones is one of the three founding directors of newDemocracy, chaired by Luca Belgiorno-Nettis. Her initial interest in “doing democracy better” came from her observations and experiences of the way government, the media and the bureaucracy had become an impenetrable cabal in some jurisdictions.

She is passionate about showing how real citizens engagement in government through deliberative processes can improve decision making; and ultimately our democracy.

Kathy has 25 years’ experience as a senior communications practitioner in both the private and the public sectors, overseeing strategic stakeholder engagement and community relations functions and projects. She is also a Board member of The Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering. Since 2001, Kathy has been the owner and company principal of KJA – a stakeholder engagement consultancy.



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

Democracy - why is it important? And what can we as communicators do about it?

Currently electoral figures show that we’re suffering from a crisis of non-participation. At the last NSW local government elections, over 40% of NSW voters did not participate in the elections.

A lack of interest can lead to instability and ultimately corruption in government. This is a powerful reminder of the increasing importance of ensuring we have a healthy democracy. It's our democracy that helps define us as well as governing us.

In its December 2013 Report, the Scanlon Foundation showed declining levels of public trust in federal parliamentarians "to do the right thing for the Australian people" (falling from 48% to 27% between 2009 and 2013).

This is where the wailing and gnashing of teeth about apathy and disconnection usually starts. But that’s too simple an answer. Plenty of citizens out there want to be involved.

As communications and engagement professionals, we have an important role to play in maintaining the legitimacy of our Australian Democratic system through our work.



newDemocracy has worked with a number of local Government Authorities on Citizens Juries. In each of these case studies the role of the engagement champion within the hosting organisation has been key. They have helped to gather the vital support of the elected officials and the executive of the organisation. They have worked with the middle managers who are responsible for providing the best quality information available to the jurors, so they do not feel threatened by the outcome and they have ensured there has been an effective communications campaign so that the process and the outcomes are credible.

Kathy Jones, Board Director, newDemocracy Foundation

