

What is a deliberative meeting like?

There are different types of deliberative meetings. Some focus on participants achieving a consensus, while others aim to reach a common understanding amongst participants - not necessarily, agreement - about the topics they have been deliberating on.

'You could relate to what they had to say'
(Past participant's comment)

It is important that participants understand what they are aiming to achieve through their deliberations. This allows them to work together effectively. The aim of the deliberative meeting you would be attending will be clearly explained to you on the day of the meeting.

'I felt welcome, I felt as though I was included in everything that was going on'
(Past participant's comment)

Often a large number of people will come together for these types of meetings. These people would be seated at tables in small group numbers to deliberate – possibly 6–10 people per table group.

And, typically, trained table-facilitators work with each table group. This helps to ensure that each participant has the opportunity to effectively deliberate and feel comfortable to contribute.

'Your opinion is valued because (a) you're allowed to voice it; and (b) other people listen to it...You have respect and you value the other person's opinion'

'Without exposure to that how do you empathise and understand other people's lives...without exposure to other things, well what else do you judge your opinions on?'

'This has actually changed me a little bit...yeah, it's changed my outlook on a few things'
(Past participants' comments)

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MONASH University

Making a Difference with **CITIZEN DELIBERATIONS**



Do you want to influence health policy by being part of a deliberative meeting?

What is a deliberative meeting?

A deliberative meeting is a particular way of bringing people in a community together so they can exchange information with their government or other decision-making body.

These meetings may also be part of a larger engagement process that is designed to learn from many different people in a community.

This pamphlet highlights what you can expect when you participate in one of these deliberative meetings.

What happens when people deliberate?

In a deliberative meeting participants are not simply asked to provide an opinion – they are given opportunity to reason together.

To do this, you would be given time to reflect on information and think critically about it. You would then be asked to discuss your thoughts on this information and engage with some different ideas.

This would involve: explaining your opinions; respectfully listening to people with different perspectives; and asking questions that arise for you.

'It's about information, but it's also about opening your heart so that the person on the other end can open theirs'
(Past participant's comment)

You don't need any particular qualifications to deliberate. Rather, the value and expertise that each person has to offer, comes from their own life experiences.

You have probably even deliberated in the past - at school, in a workplace, or at home - when you were working with others to understand an issue or make a decision on something that was important to you.

Why deliberate?

Many people believe deliberative meetings offer a more democratic and meaningful way for members of the community to exchange information with their governments.

This is because deliberative meetings capture diverse perspectives in a community to influence policy in a dynamic, open and transparent way.

'I found it a very encouraging sort of thing from a government department – one of the most encouraging I've ever struck'

'Everybody's opinion is valued... You felt understood'

'It wasn't just tokenism... you were being valued'
(Past participants' comments)

Research shows also that using deliberative meetings to obtain a community's views on issues and policies that affect their lives, leads to better-informed and more legitimate decisions.

'I feel very proud of the fact that some of my input was actually considered worthy of putting it into the final report... I was proud to be part of it'

'It opened my eyes a little bit to think about what...other experiences people out there have... just to realise that there's other views out there that may be quite different from mine and just to be a bit more mindful of that'
(Past participants' comments)

Deliberative meetings are being used around the world to make many important decisions - including policy development – though the use of these methods of engagement in health policy is still quite new.

