

Application Form

**PART 1: BASIC DATA**

**Experience data** (complete the information below in a clear and concise manner)

<b>Title of the experience:</b> Community Engagement – from conflict to consensus		
<b>Name of the city or region:</b> City of Mitcham		
<b>Inhabitants of the city or territory:</b> South Australia		
<b>Country:</b> Australia		
<b>Institution presenting the candidacy:</b> City of Mitcham and democracyCo		
<b>Website of the experience or institution:</b> <a href="http://www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au">www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au</a> <a href="https://yoursay.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/hawthorndene-oval">https://yoursay.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/hawthorndene-oval</a>		
<b>Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution:</b> <a href="https://yoursay.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/hawthorndene-oval">https://yoursay.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/hawthorndene-oval</a>		
<b>Start date of the experience:</b> 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2021		
<b>End date of the experience</b> (if operational, indicate "ongoing"): 28 <sup>th</sup> March 2021		
<b>Budget of the experience:</b> AUD\$20,000		
<b>Type of candidacy</b> (Mark with an X in the right column)	New experience	X
	Innovation on an existing experience	
	Continuity of an experience	
<b>Type of experience</b> (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	Participatory budgeting	
	Participatory planning	X
	Standing council	
	Workshop/meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	

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	Public Hearing/Forum		
	Poll/referendum		
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces		X
	E-government/Open government/Digital platforms		
	Citizen initiative		
	Other (specify):		
<p><b>Objective of the experience</b></p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)</p>	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation		X
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion		X
	Community empowerment		X
	To empower non-organised citizens		X
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation		
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"		
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		X
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public		X	
<p><b>Territorial area</b></p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column)</p>	All the territory	Local	
		Regional	

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<i>(you may choose more than one)</i>	District	X
	Neighbourhood	
<b>Thematic area</b> (Mark with an X in the right column) <i>(you may choose more than one)</i>	Governance	
	Education	
	Transport	
	Urban management	X
	Health	
	Security	
	Environment/Climate change and/or urban agriculture	
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements.	X
	Culture	X
	Housing	
	Job creation	
	Decentralization	
	Local development	X
	Training/learning	
	Economy and/or finances	
	Legal regulations	
Social inclusion	X	
All		

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	Other (write the topic)	
<p><b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated with the practice</b></p> <p>Mark with an X in the right column (more than one option can be chosen)</p> <p>You can also add the specific target</p>	SDG 1 - No poverty	
	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	
	SDG 3 - Good health and well- being	
	SDG 4 - Quality education	
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	
	SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	X 11.3.2 11.7.1
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	
	SDG 13 - Climate action	
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	X 16.6.2 16.7.2
	SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals	

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## PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links if you consider it appropriate.

### **Context**

*In a **maximum of 300 words**, it presents the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, the territory in which the experience takes place.*

The City of Mitcham is a clean and green City - a great place to live and work. With an enviable blend of both urban and rural environments, a prestigious heritage and sense of tradition, Mitcham and its surrounds offer a unique experience for those tempted by cultural exhibitions and festivals, native bushland, heritage and architecture, scenic views and more.

The City of Mitcham, with a population of approximately 65,000, is situated some 6kms from the City of Adelaide, in South Australia, and extends into the beautiful Mitcham Hills, comprising an area of 75.7 square kilometres. Founded in 1853, the City of Mitcham is Adelaide's second oldest Council area and celebrated 150 years in 2003. Residents of Mitcham live in 32 suburbs all of which have their own particular style and community spirit. From the leafy backdrop of the Hills environment to the foothills homes which share magnificent panoramic views of Adelaide and the plains, the variety and uniqueness of the area is obvious.

Whilst largely residential the City of Mitcham has two key commercial areas in the Blackwood and Mitcham Centres with neighbourhood shopping in other areas. Industrial activities occur on the western boundary of the City adjacent to South Road. The City is also well served by many tourist attractions.

The City of Mitcham is governed by a Mayor and 13 Elected Members, elected democratically every 4 years. The City is supported by an Organisation comprised of one CEO, 4 General managers & 250 staff.

### **Precedents**

*Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins, if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city/municipality/region. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (**maximum 300 words**)*

The Hawthorndene Oval is a much-loved community oval that is surrounded by beautiful mature native trees and its valley setting gives a strong sense of place.

The oval is used extensively by the community and the Coromandel Valley Ramblers Cricket Club (the Club) who have been using the oval for in excess of 90 years. There are no cricket specific facilities, other than a pitch, at Hawthorndene Oval.

The Club's proposal to develop changerooms with a social space, deck and veranda generated very significant community comment and reaction, verging on outrage. A local resident group formed (with some 140 members, at present), a social media page was started which features passionate commentary about the matter. The Club's desire to have

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a liquor licence and training nets at the oval has further added to the degree of community reaction.

Council received a wide-ranging Freedom of Information request in relation to the oval and the club dated back to 2014.

In late 2020, the City of Mitcham Council resolved to engage democracyCo, as specialists in deliberative democracy, to design and deliver a process which would see a community panel work together to provide recommendations to Council on the way forward – considering the various views and divergent needs, and current feeling in the community.

The primary purpose of the community panel was to clarify issues, dispel misinformation and discuss a range of ideas for the future of Hawthorndene Oval.

### **Objectives of the experience**

*What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience (**maximum 100 words**)*

The objective of Community Engagement for the Hawthorndene Oval was to ensure direct involvement of local residents and stakeholders regarding the review of a Community Land Management Plan and future use of the Oval.

The Hawthorndene Oval Community Panel was tasked to provide input through a deliberative approach with the aim to optimise diversity, reach and inclusion.

Through a deeper understanding of the issues, views, needs and wants of the broad Hawthorndene Oval community, City of Mitcham sought to deliver sustainable long-term outcomes for people, families and groups that utilise the Oval.

The objectives of the thinking behind the panel were to:

- Bring people with diverse views together in a constructive facilitated environment – enabling people to find agreement with each other and offering the opportunity to potentially find an agreed way forward (or options for a way forward).
- Bringing randomly selected voices to the table – not those just with strong views
- Enable Council to understand what a broader cross section of the community thinks / wants
- Enable ‘bridge building’ between those with strong views.

### **Methodology**

*Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels (**maximum 300 words**)*

The process included:

- Community Open survey – to allow everyone to have their say
- Random invitation to community to join the Panel

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- Recruitment of Panel (random stratified sampling) of 30 people comprising:
  - 80% members of the community – recruited through a combination of Council databases + letterbox drop within a 500m radius of the Oval (direct neighbours)
  - 10% cricket club & association members
  - 10% local stakeholders (environmental & business)
- 4 day deliberative process (facilitated) across 2 concurrent weekends
- Handover of recommendations to Council.

During the workshops the group were facilitated by democracyCo and encouraged to reach a level of consensus on their advice to Council. During the session the group went through a process of information sharing, asking questions, debating and discussing aims and concerns in detail.

The process was described by one participant as “really intense with everyone appearing to be committed to the process”. During the workshops it was apparent that there were strong views with moments of tension at times but also goodwill. This was due to the strong connection the community have with the oval. There was a genuine effort for the group to understand different positions and while the group didn’t conclude the workshops in full agreement they gained better understanding of opposing views and crystallised their concerns.

This session was conducted as a “world café” whereby there were three rounds and members of the group were divided into four groups and rotated at the end of each round. Elected Members were invited to attend the final hour of the panel’s last workshop for the official handover.

If the group could not or chose not to pursue consensus, democracyCo provided group members with the opportunity to create a “minority report”. This was to be submitted as a separate report outlining any concerns and points of difference from the group in detail. No minority report was received.

On conclusion of the community engagement process, the outcomes were presented to Council for their deliberations and on 11 May 2021, Council supported the panel’s recommendations. Link to council report item 9.2:

[https://www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/891245/11-May-2021-Full-Council-Agenda.PDF](https://www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0029/891245/11-May-2021-Full-Council-Agenda.PDF)

This process highlighted to Council an innovative way that Council can engage with its community to assist with decision making. The panel were also grateful for the opportunity, with the majority stating they would welcome the opportunity to be involved in this type of engagement again.

Due additional funding being required, the facility project is ongoing however the community engagement process was successful in rebuilding trust within the community and ensuring council adopts a deeper level of community engagement for projects of this nature.

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**Innovation**

*Explain what you consider most innovative in the practice. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The process was an Innovation for the City of Mitcham – having never used a deliberative approach. Given the issue was dividing the community, democracyCo advised that those views & people be involved as full members in the panel – in equal and balanced numbers. This was to ensure that these groups participated actively in the process and contributed to the deliberative experience and development of ideas. Importantly, the majority of participants (80%) were community members (aka bridge builders).

During the deliberations, democracyCo implemented techniques which were deliberately designed to seek common ground.

- Establishment of group behaviours to ensure the group recommitted to these through the process
- Ensuring facts & evidence were central to the deliberation, as opposed to views and opinions.
- The use of sociometry techniques to assist the community to reach agreements and understand where opportunities were for finding common ground.

**Inclusion**

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The panel involved 20% stakeholders who were recruited through personal invitation. The remainder were a diverse sample of the Mitcham Hills in gender, age, and location.

democracyCo used Mitcham Council's email distribution list for Hills residents (comprising approximately 3000 emails) to select 1000 residents to invite via email. In addition, to ensure we have strong representation from residents who live approximate to Hawthorndene oval, democracyCo 'letter dropped' 100 invitations in the letter boxes of randomly selected residents within 500 meters of the oval.

From those who registered their interest in response to the above invitations, democracyCo will undertake a random stratification process – seeking to choose a group that is diverse in age, gender and location.

The City of Mitcham was not involved in recruitment in any way - to ensure integrity of process.



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**Communication**

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience so that the population knows about it and gets involved. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The process was promoted within Council reports and on Council's social media channels, website and engagement platform, YourSay Mitcham.

Direct mailout to local residents near the oval.

1000 randomly selected residents an email invitation – inviting them to register their interest in being part of the panel.

**Articulation with other actors**

*It explains how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this joint. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

Key to the success of this process was the sensitive and tailored engagement of stakeholders, who had strong and sometimes vested interest in the outcome. While the temptation may be to exclude them from the process (and instead seek pure community advice on the way forward) we instead embedded them, their strong views and their interests in the process. This enabled those tensions and differences to largely be resolved in the room – as they were clear and understood by the community and the community (aka 'bridge builders') worked to search for a solution that each party could 'live with'.

This made for a highly tension filled deliberation – which was supported by the skills and expertise of democracyCo facilitation – ensuring that deliberations were balanced, respectful and always focussed on the outcome of finding a way forward together.

**Evaluation:**

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether citizenship has participated in the evaluation of the practice (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

On the final day of deliberation the panel/working group participated in a consensus activity – to understand how much the 'room' agreed with future plans and proposals that had been discussed over the four (4) sessions. democracyCo used sociometry to model consensus – a technique which asks participants to stand on one side of a line on the floor demonstrating that they 'can live with it' or 'can't live with it'. The deliberations over the course of the sessions resulted in variations to the initial proposals and also many participants shifting their views.

The panel/ community working group were also given the opportunity to evaluate the engagement process and whether they had found participation to be worthwhile.

An overwhelming majority of participants indicated they appreciated the opportunity to engage at this deeper level with local government on plans and proposals that affect their

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local community. Also, many participants indicated they would be happy to participate in future engagements following this approach.

A survey of panel participants included comments such as:

*"I am very grateful for being given the opportunity to be part of this working group.*

*I hope that Mitcham Council continues to use this avenue to consult with their ratepayers. A special acknowledgement to Emily for her role as facilitator of this process, especially bringing the group together... This meant that the group was able to successfully work through and create our recommendations to Mitcham Council. It was also great to be able to speak to Mitcham Council members after our final presentation."*

*"Regardless of outcome, and even though the experience was emotionally exhausting, it left me feeling I'd done all I could on an issue that really mattered to me. Thanks to the Council for the opportunity."*

### **Impacts and results**

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and which are their profiles. What have been the impacts on public policies, on the functioning of the administration and on citizens. (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

The working group spent time in their first two meetings discussing what they valued about the space and desired future uses.

When discussing shared values 5 main themes emerged that were common to all participants:

1. Connection
2. Play
3. Balance
4. Refuge
5. Growth

What became clear from the community panel discussion was a desire by the community to protect these values by promoting inclusivity and creating a balance between formal and informal use of the space and protecting the natural environment for the benefit of the community and native wildlife.

It was stated that future plans for the oval should reflect these values, and that childhood development and growth began in the playgrounds and progressed to the oval space.

The panel also stated the need to give recognition to indigenous voices in consultation and future planning as this was not reflected in current draft plans. This call by the community panel for greater recognition of the local Kurna people to be consulted more deeply led to a larger consultation across a further 5 spaces within the City of Mitcham as a collaboration between the Kurna Yerta (Native title group) and Flinders University including cultural heritage surveys completed across multiple sites.

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The community engagement process also resulted in a facility design with a greater focus on provision of accessible public toilets, a shared clubroom for the cricket club with an operable wall to enable the facility to convert into a community space when not in use for sports. A greater focus was placed on the facility design to incorporate environmental outcomes such as the inclusion water tanks and visual impact in the landscape.

### PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

*A summary of the experience: origin, objectives, operation, results, monitoring and evaluation (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before, this summary is the one that will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**)*

In late 2020, the City of Mitcham Council resolved to engage democracyCo, as specialists in deliberative democracy, to design and deliver a process which would see a community panel work to provide recommendations to Council on the way forward – considering the various views and divergent needs, and current feeling in the community.

The primary purpose of the community panel was to clarify issues, dispel misinformation and discuss a range of ideas for the future of Hawthorndene Oval.

The objective of the deliberative engagement for the Hawthorndene Oval was to ensure direct involvement of local residents and stakeholders regarding the review of a Community Land Management Plan and future use of the Oval.

The Hawthorndene Oval Community Panel was tasked to provide input through a deliberative approach with the aim to optimise diversity, reach and inclusion.

Through a deeper understanding of the issues, views, needs and wants of the broad Hawthorndene Oval community, City of Mitcham sought to deliver sustainable long-term outcomes for people, families and groups that utilise the Oval.

**The process included:**

- Community Open survey – to allow everyone to have their say
- Random invitation to community to join the Panel
- Recruitment of Panel (random stratified sampling) of 30 people comprising:
  - 80% members of the community
  - 10% cricket club & association members
  - 10% local stakeholders (environmental & business)
- 4 day deliberative process across 2 concurrent weekends
- Handover of recommendations to Council.

Following the work of the Panel, the outcomes were presented to Council for their deliberations and on 11 May 2021, Council supported the panel's recommendations. This process highlighted to Council an innovative way that Council can engage with its community to assist with decision making. The panel were also grateful for the

opportunity, with many stating they would welcome the opportunity to be involved in this type of engagement again.

### **Ensuring diversity & inclusion**

The panel involved 20% stakeholders who were recruited through personal invitation. The remainder were a diverse sample of the Mitcham Hills in gender, age, and location.

democracyCo used Mitcham Council's email distribution list for Hills residents (comprising approximately 3000 emails) to select 1000 residents to invite via email. In addition, to ensure we have strong representation from residents who live approximate to Hawthorndene Oval, democracyCo 'letter dropped' 100 invitations in the letter boxes of randomly selected residents within 500 meters of the oval.

The City of Mitcham was not involved in recruitment in any way - to ensure integrity of process.

As previously stated, the City of Mitcham as a result of this consultation have embarked on a broader and deeper process of engagement with the local Indigenous community and embedded this process of Cultural Heritage surveys, site visits and face to face meeting with Kaurna representatives into other engagement activities across the city.

### **Innovation**

The process in of itself was an Innovation for the City of Mitcham – having never used a deliberative approach in this way. Given the issue was dividing the community into two polarised groups, democracyCo advised that both those views & people be involved as full members in the panel – in equal and balanced numbers. This was to ensure that these groups participated actively in the process and contributed to the deliberative experience and development of ideas. Importantly, the majority of participants (80%) were community members (aka bridge builders).

Overall the community engagement process resulted in a deeper connection between local government and community and a realisation by council that connecting with community early in the planning process was critical to ensure greater trust and transparency and also ensuring a better balance in terms of planning and design of community and sporting facilities. The cricket club, having participated in the panel/ community working group were willing to compromise on a range of their initial proposals including withdrawing the proposal for cricket nets, a liquor licence and reducing the hours of use they were seeking to allow local residents more time for community recreation / informal use of Hawthorndene Oval.

The commitment of local community into the community panel/working group in terms of their time (over 2 weekends/ 2 full days and 2 evenings) cannot be underestimated. It is this energy and commitment from a diverse group of community who ultimately led to the successful outcomes.