

Voice 4

**Indi**

[www.voiceforindi.com](http://www.voiceforindi.com)

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# VALUES

**These are the values that guide our actions and decisions. These are the means to ensure our actions are transparent and honest.**

**V4i** is committed to encouraging a diversity of voices and opinion and participation in the electoral process both regionally and nationally.

**V4i** is committed to ensuring that our electorate voice is heard and represented at the national level.

**V4i** is committed to encouraging respectful and mature representation of our democratic voices.

**V4i** is committed to undertaking activities which will create an invitation to participate in our democracy.

**V4i** is committed to developing and using simple, elegant processes when engaging with the electorate.

**V4i** is committed to being honest and respectful, being well informed, and referring to reputable sources when making statements.



# INTRODUCTION

During March and April 2013, there were 440 people of the federal electorate of Indi who participated in Kitchen Table Conversations to talk about what matters to them in the electoral process and for the upcoming federal election. The conversations were organised by Voice for Indi.

This Report provides the outcomes of those conversations.

## Who is V4i ?

The Voice for Indi (V4i) committee was set up by 11 residents of Indi who share a common goal of strengthening the relationship between community and policy-makers. We believe there is a need for a strong voice from civil society that carries a clear and powerful message to our political representatives.

Voice for Indi aims to become a voice for the people of Indi, and to act as a conduit to our federal representative. The overall purpose is to rebuild the relationship between our politicians and the people and create a new standard for politics in Australia. The Voice for Indi committee advocates for an electorate that is democratically engaged, and representation that is gracious and supportive.

Voice for Indi has worked on developing a system for community engagement and providing a new means of political action.

We aim to mobilise a voting public that is well informed and engaged, and develop political representation that is receptive and open to the broader community.

When the group formed in 2012, we established our aims to:

- Build an active 21st century democracy based on civic engagement, respect and ideas, for the electorate of Indi and even beyond.
- Create an electorate with a range of strong and competitive candidates.
- Develop leadership with vision that truly represents and delivers for the people of Indi.

To achieve this, we want:

- to enrich political conversation in our electorate and beyond.
- the people of Indi to be recognised for their progressive and interesting ideas, and their ability to transform these ideas into action.
- Indi to be recognised nationally for the way its citizens engage and for their enthusiasm for new ideas for building their communities.
- all members of our electorate to have the opportunity to be involved in community decision making and we want Indi to develop a system that enables this.
- to become a case study for 'grass roots' community engagement.
- a respected federal representative who improves public discourse across the electorate.

A key outcome, so far, of these goals has been the organisation of Kitchen Table Conversations across the electorate.

# What are Kitchen Table Conversations?

Kitchen Table Conversations are simple and powerful – helping people discuss what really matters in a comfortable environment. Hosts (who are self selecting) invite small groups to have conversations based on focused themes. Participants might be friends, neighbours, family, workmates or people known from community networks. The conversations are usually shaped around starter questions.

For the Kitchen Table Conversations in the Indi electorate, people were invited to host conversations through publicly advertised briefings held in Wodonga, Wangaratta, Benalla, Mansfield and Melbourne. Hosts then volunteered to bring together small groups of up to nine others to have focused conversations, guided by some theme questions provided in a Conversation Kit.

The following discussion starters were suggested:

## Living in the Indi community:

- What makes for a strong community?
- What are the best things about living in Indi?
- Are there any particular issues of concerns that you feel should be brought to the attention of your elected representatives?

## Political representation:

- What do you think makes for a really good political representative?
- Do you feel you have an adequate voice to date in the way you are represented? If not, why not?
- What would make for a stronger relationship between people and elected representatives?

## Issues and concerns:

- Are there particular issues of concern in Indi that you feel strongly about?
- Are there particular issues **within** the Indi electorate that you feel should be focused on in the run up to the Federal election on 14 September 2013?
- Are there issues **beyond** the Indi electorate that you think should be focused on in the run up to the 2013 Federal election?
- Any ideas as to what you think could be done that might deal with these issues effectively?

Participants' ideas and discussions were collated by hosts and sent back to the Voice for Indi Committee. The Committee then spent two weeks reviewing and collating the conversations, to ensure that all of the ideas have been included in this Report. Only ideas that were repeated have been edited to ensure the readability of this document. The Committee also sought outside expert advice as we went through this collating process.

## Who participated?

There were 440 individuals involved in the Kitchen Table Conversations, with 55 conversations across 40 postcodes. There were 278 females and 162 males with ages ranging from under 18 to over 75 years. Some met for coffee, others for a birthday lunch, after yoga, at the pub, for dinner with a good wine (or two), as social workers, at a health centre, at cafes, at a Civic Centre, at dining tables, at U3A, camping in the Stanley forest, as senior student leaders, in staff rooms, as Indi expats, and some, for the chocolate slice and good conversation.



# WHAT DID WE HEAR ?

## What makes a strong community?

good relationships • respect • manners • leadership • trust • innovation • different interest groups • passionate people who love where they live and look after each other • equal distribution of wealth • affordability • social cohesion • everyone feels able to contribute • good infrastructure and services • social connectedness • encouragement for local people to lead solutions and projects • acceptance • diversity • tolerance • community hubs that pull people together • events and festivals • shared values • infrastructure parks/roads • schools • folk festival • community owned enterprises • means for participation • sporting opportunities • employment opportunities • honesty • security • caring • a commitment to the longer term and future generations • a community that recognises and celebrates its diversity and is able to work with this diversity • working to achieve greater understanding and consensus • ensures all parts of the community are provided with information about what's going on • strong communities have a shared vision about how they want to be with each other, how they want to interact and their vision for now, the middle and longer term • education • benevolence • love and care • underlying value of goodwill • a balance of financial and environmental economies • values based on non dollar linked pursuits • solar and electric cars, charge points • great public transport systems • buses with bike racks • connectedness • ICT capability • storytelling • sense of place • safety • trust • uniqueness of small communities • independence • family and extended family • It takes a village to raise a child • sharing of wisdom • being involved in decision making • resilience • prepared to stand up and have a go • openness • celebration of difference • volunteerism • self-help • a sense of belonging • where your voice is heard in multiple forums • respectful interactions with government • access to health services • intergenerational interaction • community sharing e.g. Mens' Sheds • being informed • Bhutanese in Wodonga and Afghans in Albury • diverse networks • active community groups • as a citizen in a community we have a responsibility to be interested in it and to work towards enhancing and improving it • strong connections between groups • infrastructure and services • inclusiveness • education including tertiary education • presence of support groups e.g. for those with disabilities • social capital in Indi e.g. Yackandandah • public spaces • affordable housing • migrants • cultural events • ability of innovators to facilitate vibrant activities • connected around common business interests • taking action on behalf of others • supporting and respecting the views of others • human rights • safety • support systems for the elderly • awareness • involvement • communication • appreciation of individuality • cooperation • feeling welcome • friendly • genuine • a community that celebrates • Benalla Festival worked particularly well with celebration of Local Heroes • interdependency • belonging • having a vision about the future for your community e.g. Yackandandah buying its own petrol station • we all need someone to love, something to do and something to look forward to • welcoming of new people • being listened to • real equality of opportunity • cohesive voice • respect for diversity of opinions • strong local government • good aged care • good transport within towns • people supporting and caring for each other • family friendly enjoyable environments are a priority • planning and development with community first in mind • find common ground • taking control of destiny • empowered • connection • arts • strong leaders • we have a voice, we should use it • volunteering • opportunity • sociability • unity of purpose • people need to be willing to make contribution through churches, clubs etc. • a homogenous group moving towards a common goal • a strong community is a reflection of its people • sport is very important for people of all ages • if people can access education and there is employment this makes for a strong community • shopping locally supporting local economy • focus on our strengths common and also in the richness in our diversity – celebrate these things • we should aim for quality lives for all and make all people feel included

- where kids are connected to more people than their family • sharing, including shared spaces eg. parks, libraries etc. • **not afraid of innovation** • community leadership development makes a huge difference to communities • volunteering is key to a strong community • **adequate sporting/recreation facilities, health facilities, services** • the community values itself • appreciation of individuality • **cooperation** • feeling welcome • community activities – where people get together for a common purpose • inclusive across ages, cultures, socio economic groups etc. • **pulling together** - this is usually when there is a focus i.e. a crisis • shared public spaces that are used • **environmental care** • leadership opportunities • integrity and honesty in business and commerce • opportunities for satisfying work • respect for the law • adequate health, education and justice services • **fair and unbiased press** • barbeques at Bunnings, because they are usually fundraisers and you can find out what is going on, what people are doing • meeting places • fun and good humour • **inclusion – especially for vulnerable and marginalised** • ICT capability • transparency in decision-making • no elitism with schools • sense of hope through community events e.g. "Carnivale • public spaces – e.g. 'The Cube' • **strong community services** e.g. Wodonga Youth Services • **knowing the skills in your community** • people make a deliberate choice to live here • community owned enterprises • respect for a variety of cultural practices • people have pride in their local communities and groups • **community spirit** • a range of options for community participation eg. The Cinema, Hall, Landcare group • a community "hub" ie the hall and Swanpool Store • Swanpool Cinema – a community enterprise that provides entertainment and brings people into the district • really good communities vote with a view to the local situation rather than voting for political party leader or PM • local place to buy food • **opportunities to discuss/converse** • a spirit of curiosity • **a sense of pride** • helpful and co-operative people • capacity to be active in the community and to achieve results • **willingness to get involved and be active which leads to results and a feeling of satisfaction** • opportunities for young people to study, be engaged with community • lack of leadership leads to negativity • **good support structures** • a good local council who listens • strongly connected –eg. in disasters people help each other • 'Indi' itself is not 'community' – made up of a number of diverse communities • **community organisations help make the links/networks** • **supportive atmosphere** so that people feel comfortable raising concerns and inputting their opinions • **healthy neighbourhoods** • friendly people • local people often have their own infrastructure/networks – working bees at schools, kindergartens etc • **sense of purpose - sense of connectedness** • people have a sense of being valued when they can contribute • community cares for those not so well off • different public spaces available • **range of volunteering opportunities** • school projects which bring people together (young and old) • resilience • country people have different priorities to those in the city due to their **reliance on each other** • access to high standard services and facilities.

***A strong community is where people feel they belong and have a sense of purpose, connection with others, and the ability to be safe and supported as well as contribute – one where people pull together and help each other. Diversity, acceptance and tolerance are highly valued.***

***Participants also told us that a strong community looks to the future and has the services, infrastructure, education, jobs and opportunities for now as well as thinking of future generations.***



# WHAT DID WE HEAR ?

## What are the best things about living in Indi?

• the environment • the area we live in is fantastic • nature • **Spring, Autumn and Winter** • **amazing mountains and rivers** • space • no pollution • water • **quality of air** • weather • sunny North East • **“to live somewhere beautiful is good for the soul”** • peace and tranquillity • outdoor pursuits • climate • **natural beauty** • proximity to the bush • diversity of landscapes • close to mountains • Murray River • wetlands • four seasons • **stars in the sky** • less noisy than city • quaint places • fresh air • National Parks • State parks • not windy • Sumsion gardens - Botanic Gardens – delightful! • magnificent historical buildings in the small towns like Beechworth and Yackandandah • the hills that surround the small towns • **huge diversity of culture, people and enterprise** • sporting groups • access to the arts • **good libraries** • growing performing and visual arts scene • medical services • **health facilities** • festivals • wineries • North East recognised region with rich history/culture • food miles – variety of food available • agriculture • the Rail Trail • **diversity of lifestyles** • range of foods produced locally • plenty of things to do • diversity of people and cultures • parks and gardens • can mix with a larger range of people • abundance of healthy activities- cycling, skiing • **good food, bushwalking, kayaking, canoeing, camping** • social events • Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre • NAB Cup – AFL footy in Wangaratta • sporting groups • walking trails • good local businesses • Epicurean trail • Jazz Festival • folk festival • Italian cuisine and heritage • **we've got a lot of the amenities that people have in the city, and a good cafe culture** • farm gate produce • opportunities for music and sport • a Federation seat • younger voices appreciate the focus on sport and the rural environment in growing up • gliding club • freedom • safety • family generational history • local Aboriginal history • **liveability** • respect • children can have more freedom • resilience • freedom – to speak – to meet – to be out and about • **sense of pride and identity** • shared values • ability to be master of our own destiny • diverse range of support services • **high level of services** • choices of schools close by • education is a strength • a mix of industries in the area that help keep the area resilient e.g. manufacturing • good employment opportunities • productive • doctor training locally • the Whitlam initiatives • **support for families with disabilities, maybe there are gaps, but it is pretty good** • Wodonga has lots of schools, access to two universities, two TAFEs • low unemployment rate • small businesses are responsive to customers • excellent service • **we have everything that we need** • train is very important • access to a regional airport • lots of organisations to tap into • internet access helps reduce sense of isolation • Wangaratta is quite centralised in terms of services • ease of travel • hop on the train if it runs on time • no traffic problems • central Victoria access • Benalla is a hub for activities • Benalla is very stable-its size is big enough to have the facilities but its small enough to know people • the shops and the parks are all accessible by walking • not far from Canberra • lower cost of living • **affordability of land and houses make it possible for earlier retirement than would be possible otherwise** • community organisations • **full range of work activities in a relatively low cost environment** • strong sense of connection • **rural lifestyle with good community hubs produces strong leaders and thinkers** • strong sense of community • **vibrancy of communities** • choice to live in a small town • art community • interdependence between large and small communities • villages • size of smaller communities appeal to many which allows for participation • small places can come together due to things like the fire-Mudgegonga, Stanley, Wooragee, Oxley • contributions of and tolerance of the various migrant groups and the difference they have made eg. Italians in Ovens and King Valley • each community has its own characteristics and culture i.e. Benalla, Wangaratta, Wodonga • **i like that wangaratta focuses on youth a lot. Youth council, skate park, bowling, mini-golf.** • population size • community is very welcoming • diversity of life experiences • people recognize you • **when real disaster strikes, people chip in** • strong people willing to work to improve community • people know who you are and your family



connections • you know people • climate - fertility of land - good water • diversity on offer – food, wine, snow, mountains, rivers, culture • less red tape • university/TAFE close by - accessible • people moving to the area because it's cheap • tourism – Myrtleford, Rail Trail, Harvest Festival, Beechworth • tree-change people moving to area • initiative and community leadership • many towns have developed **good community groups of all kinds** • based on people working together with common vision- 'no them vs us mentality' • more equitable distribution of goods and services • **access to education** • people working together • botanical gardens • art galleries • can feel like a 'local' very quickly ie: no need to have a long family history in the area to qualify as 'local' • people are friendly in certain pockets/places e.g. distinction between Beechworth (very friendly) versus Wodonga (less so) • **good food and wine options** • close enough to Wodonga, Melbourne etc. • open space • **close proximity to facilities/services** • beauty of landscape • diversity • sense of community • everything is accessible • it's good having the train line • education facilities are good • Yr 12s • festivals • social events • community cultural events • tourist facilities • climate and seasons • natural beauty and access to National Parks • snowfields • opportunities for recreational activities i.e. bike tracks etc. • communities are large enough to support particular interest groups -helps if you are in to sport but it is getting better • natural amenities are excellent but resources must be spent on maintaining things • Federal government should look after natural environment eg. Alpine natural parks • outdoor experiences, parks, cafes, food, art gallery • wetlands • rich history and culture • **sense of community/safety/security/resilience** • ease of accessibility to community services • excellent for children - safe • ability to enjoy life with ease (snowfields, bush, rivers, lakes) • accessibility to Melbourne • rallying and support to people in hard times • access to health services • access to outdoor recreational pursuits • lack of traffic congestion and 'rat race' syndrome • four seasons • weather • far enough from major cities for positives but close enough to get there if necessary • less impersonal being in rural small town • **diversity of industries - wine, food, farming, tourism** • migration history • achievements of small groups and community organisations and social networks • medical resources • more political attention on attracting quality leaders to the region • pride in belonging to Indi • beautiful place with a sense of community • North East is known rather than Indi • Indi is so diverse that each geographic area has entirely different issues • history • access to mountains and rivers • Indi is quite diverse, sense of community for the whole region is not as strong as in individual shires • Indi is about liveability, a lifestyle choice • **outdoors and natural areas are very accessible and visible with mountains, rivers, forests** • living close large regional centres but not being in that centre • **we live in the best part of Victoria and would like to ensure a sustainable and vibrant future for communities in the north east** • music festivals.

**We love living in Indi because of the natural beauty, the four distinct seasons, the clean air and the natural environment and the sense of community. Participants told us that the proximity to Melbourne and Canberra is important, but having a rural lifestyle still rich with sporting and cultural activities, great food and wine, amenities and services that were affordable makes Indi a great place to live. Tourism and agriculture are highly valued. We also heard that Indi is not a real location in people's minds – the area is so diverse from Corryong to Marysville that it is easier to think about towns and smaller connected regions and harder to imagine the whole electorate.**

# What are the particular issues within the

natural environment we can forget everything else if we don't get this right • water use, management, recycling and protection • concerns about coal seam gas exploration • environmental fires • government departments not effective, eg DPI fruit fly; DSE bushfire control • climate change planning • short term populism should be long term vision and imagination • CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction • access to natural gas • alpine grazing environment risk • inadequate and inequitable transport for rural communities • railway line debacle lack of accountability • access to NBN • privatisation of transport, freight, power and telecommunications has reduced quality and reliability of services • reliable and frequent public transport within and between towns, and the main train line • emergency housing/homelessness • commonwealth procurement restrictive nature of tendering for local contracts • access to tertiary education • youth allowance • strategic infrastructure • sustainable growth for our region • lack of low cost housing • access to Commonwealth Government Services • devolution of government based services to not-for-profit agencies • cost shifting from Commonwealth and State to Local Government • increasing hidden poverty and living costs • social policy for the disenfranchised • duty of care towards disadvantaged people • long term inter-generational disadvantage • lack of medical bulk billing • universal access to elective surgery • maintain health funding • reduce bureaucracy • youth violence and alcohol • child health and education • support and educate young parents • inclusion of those who are isolated • community health • mental health – lack of trained professionals, emergency private places, facilities, Headspace, rehabilitation • suicide • obesity • more flexible child care • disability services for children • health services that support an ageing community and 'ageing in place' • acknowledgement and understanding of the indigenous population and heritage • centralisation and under-resourcing of federal, state and local public services • policy support for regionalisation • land zoning • connectivity across Indi • management of infrastructure on public land • expansion of rail trails • for government at all levels to truly embrace the importance of community engagement • offering places for asylum seekers, encouraging diversity • sustainable infrastructure, transport, industry • community participation in solar power and renewable resources • equitable fuel prices for Indi • is our region ready for structural change? • no vision for Indi, no sense of where we could be, no ambition for us as a community! • support for growth and creating employment in industry, manufacturing, agriculture, tourism facilities and ventures • losing agricultural land - need to provide good policy for food growing for Australia • legislation for land use/ management to protect the natural environment • subsidise sustainable agriculture • border issues - cost of duplication of services and inconsistent regulations • Wodonga marginalisation because it is on the border • public versus private school education debate - funding creating two-tier system • more youth involvement in the community • better educational pathways young people leave for study and don't come back • we need a strong, viable public education system that is available for all • employment relative to competitiveness and the Australian dollar • federal support for local industry and employment such as Brucks, Country Spinners and smaller centres • job opportunities for young people • funding cuts across TAFE/Universities/health/community sectors having serious effect • redistribute public money for equitable education opportunities for rural people • disrespectful behaviour of elected representatives and not listening • Indi MP is avoiding discussion about climate change – should be engaging community about to lessening our emissions and preparing for the future • the present incumbent should not try to divide and conquer • lack of candidates to choose from • the urban rural divide – inequitable provision and access to services for rural people • protection of national parks • pockets of isolation • communities inside Indi vary in tolerance of difference e.g. GPs of different races are not staying due to lack of community support, lack of cultural facilities for worship etc. • need drug and alcohol support and resources • tolerance • that all community members have a voice and are cared for • Benalla is very fragmented • Benalla Ensign has a lot to do with what is communicated in the community • leadership • ability to be a strong community • employment • ability to attract industry • cooperation • housing affordability • absentee and corporate property owners • lack of investment • cost of living and utility prices • substandard older rural housing stock • safety and feeling safe are important increasing effect of crime • traditional vs modern division • culture of small towns and acceptance of difference e.g. gay/lesbian

# Indi electorate that concern you?

• young people moving to metro areas • public housing policy, lack of transport and the increasing economic gap is creating marginalised fringe dwellers • politics makes for a divided community • conservatism • cost of schools • size is a challenge for larger communities • regional development strategies to keep local small business alive and government support for industry • impacts of a devalued Australian dollar • proper science before CSG exploration proceeds • work for something positive not just feel disempowered by lack of political choice in Indi • for Indi to be the best at energy efficiency – building codes, power sources, power use, recycling • retention of remnant vegetation • fund, strengthen Landcare • review the preferential treatment/subsidies to big polluters and high energy users, make them pay • further develop renewable energy • stop exporting coal to China - Australia needs to look at the world picture and take some responsibility as a citizen of the world • support non-polluting industries • support carbon tax • smart/sustainable urban planning • renewable energy – incentives and research, less reliance on coal • upholding environmental impact assessments and approvals e.g. alpine national park • mining tax needed but too many loopholes in existing legislation • buy locally and Australian to be more environmental and support the manufacturing sector • a new model of capitalism focussed on slow sustainable growth • healthy, visionary planning with sustainable, well considered outcomes • feed ourselves and reduce food miles • urban expansion cutting into agricultural land • employment for people moving into Indi • Committee for Hume/North East Victoria • progressive business and employment plans for the future • consultation with specific local industries imperative to good trade – our elected representative must make sure this knowledge gets to Canberra • take politics out of the talk – govern for the good of the nation, make hard decisions and ensure they cannot be rescinded by the next party to govern • inspiring leadership on both sides rather than the relentless negativity of the opposition • intelligent representation • bi-partisan discussion, consensus model of government on key issues such as climate change, greater public involvement, away from adversarial model • better values in politics, more compassion, otherwise how will we attract suitable candidates? • election campaign focused on health and education at a local scale • change the electoral cycle to fixed term 4 years – current system encourages lack of commitment and not enough policy integrity measures • long term bi-partisan commitment needed e.g. Murray Darling, renewable energy • make Indi a marginal seat • re-focus on democracy voting must remain compulsory and young people need to be reminded of how precious ‘right to vote’ is • regular public addresses by elected member • choice in selection of candidate • calibre of candidates • need a better politically educated, pro active electorate • meet the candidates sessions pre-election • replace state and local governments with regional councils • referendum to recognise Aboriginal people and local government in the preamble to the constitution • changes to apprenticeship schemes so older people can afford trades training • address key recommendations of Gonski Report • engagement of all ages in our communities • seek local area approaches to find and deliver solutions to local issues • keep funding key institutions (e.g. TAFE) • ongoing funding of social welfare initiatives • bi-partisan support for National Disability Insurance Scheme • stronger financial accountability in government institutions • strengthen small communities with maintenance of facilities • refugees need an across parties solution • we are a rich country - increase the foreign aid budget.

**There are many issues that concern us locally the most frequently raised issues were transport and connectivity – roads and rail infrastructure, rail services, and access to broadband and better mobile phone reception; health services especially affordability and availability with an ageing population, and mental health services; education including public schools and access to tertiary education in the electorate; the future of agriculture; supply, use and reuse of water; climate change and the potential impacts on food production, increased fires, and the state of the natural environment; access to the NBN; employment opportunities, youth employment and the competitiveness of industries; treatment of refugees; and the availability of Federal, State and local funding**



# WHAT DID WE HEAR ?

## Broader issues of concern

climate change, global warming and sustainability – need a bi-partisan non-political approach with both sides showing leadership and a shared policy • resource management • water/storm water – water management • money/research into renewable/thermo-solar instead of coal • economy in 15 years time will not be important –will just be trying to survive from day to day (Tim Flannery) • stop exporting/using coal • finite resources of the planet • Murray Darling Basin – properly not politically • river health • water use • more research and development & a creative Australia • short termism –‘planning rather than reacting’ • encourage sustainable agricultural practices • agribusiness • foreign ownership of agricultural land • longer term policy direction • food labelling laws – local and imported • food security/primary producers • intelligent representation • bi-partisan approach to the big issues - environment, education • continuity in policy - less political game playing • implementing the major reviews - Gonski, Henry and Murray Darling and NDIS - respectful debate on policy not personal attacks • educational reform • new flag - no Union Jack • transport - national problem with significant environmental implications • high speed rail • poor transport and telecommunications are serious disadvantage for rural communities • health – access to a full range of services including GPs, dentistry, podiatry • close the gap for Aboriginal health • support gay marriage • National Broadband Network - the NBN is the antidote to isolation ‘the NBN, keep it going’ • superannuation • middle class welfare • future of the mining tax - needs to be fixed • disproportionate distribution of tax resources • international investment – ensure contribution to Australia through tax and regulatory systems • country issues should be treated on their merits • basic human rights – remove urban filter and population based benchmarks • lack of mature debate by politicians • lack of leadership – sense of the common good being lost • media ownership – diversity of media ownership – stop press beat-ups • power and influence of the press, media that is all form and no content is a problem – there is no reporting of legislation and policy • the power of the shock jocks - their lack of honesty and respect • keep the public owned media – ABC and SBS • negative gearing preventing young people purchasing homes • ageing population • more research funding • the language and behaviour in Parliament is appalling - we demand a better standard of behaviour from our elected representatives • polls and media driven government • more compassion and an humanitarian approach to refugees • racist refugee policy • ensure development of rural and regional industry to attract migrants to the region • inconsistent policies • poor infrastructure development • size of the electorate • regional issues – more needs to be done to develop ties to the region – defence, refugees, trade etc. • foreign ownership of utilities and upkeep of infrastructure in decentralised rural electorates • fuel costs • demise of retail choice – duopoly of supermarket chains

**On the broader scale, the issues that concerns us are wanting respectful debate, leadership and long term solutions (bi-partisan where possible) to major issues such as global warming, NDIS, education reforms, Murray Darling Basin management, future-thinking infrastructure development, food security and working with primary producers, the power and influence of the media, the duopoly in supermarket chains, superannuation, humanitarian matters and the compassionate treatment of refugees.**

# What is good political representation?

visible, available and listens • demonstrates respect to everyone • engages in reasoned, rational debate • accountable to voters • influential within government on behalf of their electorate • all levels of government and all political parties should be bipartisan about transport and climate change • politicians should be our 'future builders' – visionary not driven by the latest poll • vision around climate change, poverty, health and education • in a 20 year time frame it doesn't really matter which party is in government – it's the policies that are important • interest in working for community, rather than political advancement • asks the community what it needs and is willing to listen • values – 'walking the talk' • leadership • positive vision • true representation of views of the community • engagement with electorate • innovative ideas • honest and respectful • talk to schools and community • communicates with community (youth and older generations) • approachability in our representation - expect to be treated with respect, dignity and be heard • listens to people of all political persuasions - open mindedness • initiating rather than reacting • trustworthy • know their region and what people want – not just party policy • local knowledge and actually be seen in the community eg. saleyards, nursing homes • respectful of differences • find common ground • take an active interest in the people • good manners – dignified behaviour • doesn't interfere in local and state government matters • willing to debate on policy and local issues, not at a personal level • strong leadership – having the strength of your convictions - not afraid to make unpopular decisions • attending parliament and maintaining a high standard of behaviour • accept climate change is a reality • if hiring expert advice (Gonsky & Henry reports) take the advice don't just pick out the bits that are most attractive politically • out and about – listening, taking an interest, participating and not driven by ideology alone • competition between candidates in an electorate • competent e.g. ability to analyse and solve problems • ability to listen without bias and communicate to the voters • politicians too bogged down in red tape, no time to be a good representative • good listener, honest, empathetic, tolerant, available, respectful, non-discriminatory • humanity • leadership in rural areas to assist community to embrace diverse groups and changes in setting a vision for the area • less adversarial and competitive • be ethical and transparent • focus on respect and encourage open pathways for feedback • address the influence of the media • support process for a democratically active community • lead /facilitate awkward, courageous conversations • what happened to common sense in decision making • broader base of candidates • a 'real' person who has a strong, articulate perspective and who will jump in and lead • honest • Indi being a safe seat, there seems to be less focus on the needs of the electorate • open to diverse views • someone who is a champion of ideas and possibility, and not a squasher of ideas • Independents seen as a good model • accountability • altruism • connected (really connected) to the community • a rural person who understands the vision for Indi and works towards that • treat other politicians with respect • a good role model for our young people • do not automatically oppose • credibility within the community • experience • emotional intelligence • be in swinging electorate – so people listen to you/power • knows the electorate well • disseminate information re: government program rollout, (e.g. NBN), health policy issues- what will mean locally? • not too compromised by party politics- will stand up for the electorate even if that's contrary to what the party wants • humble • an understanding and appreciation of different cultures and lifestyle choices • displays vision for the future – not just a combination of status quo or a return to former policies • not taking the electorate for granted • will 'cross the floor' for local advantage • gives reasons for decision making • dignity and altruism • independence • good office staff to support local people • able to explain logically what is being done and why in an informed way • good ethics • a representative we can respect • represents national issues • truly consultative; eg. engages with community groups that don't share representatives persuasion • across

issues and able to discern and objectively prioritise the key facts and the implications of decisions made

- aware of the opinions of the modern public • who holds themselves in parliament - doesn't get kicked out for behaving inappropriately • someone we can be proud of • **that people on both sides of politics respect and are prepared to listen to** • courage • medium and long term thinking • authentic leadership • **hard core deliverables** • works with other levels of Government • **open to ideas that do not necessarily reflect their own ideology** • it is not about reaching consensus but about accepting multiple realities • is guided by a set of principles, e.g. a People's Charter • able to frame and articulate the complexity of an issue to provide an analysis that is understandable by the majority of the electorate whilst retaining complexity • acknowledge different points of view and values rather than use rhetoric, e.g. style and approach of Tony Windsor • able to work towards/contribute to a cultural shift in Australian politics • **good understanding of what people want, linked to good process** • conviction and belief, be true to one's belief • **motivation - service orientation - for the good of all** • advocacy skills • strong leadership skills with clear set of values and personal integrity, personal courage to hold true to a moral compass • awareness of economic 'governance' eg be able to make a decision on economic grounds • **relevant to the people and their interests, their circumstances, and their environment** • a sense of humour • an actual/real person, not a person portrayed as part of a marketing plan • follows a community relationship model and not personal political agenda • **strong but also accessible** • **a good orator** • civil, respectful, logical, use evidence to support ideas, to always retain a sense of the 'bigger' picture and wisdom that acknowledges the complexity of issues • **thinks long term, rather than focusing on the short term** • **good communicator – tells us what they have been doing** • common touch • **takes an interest and is seen at local activities and functions** • interaction between the MP and the voters needs to be more effective both ways: i.e voters need to be specific and have done their homework; MP needs to genuinely listen and follow up on good ideas • MP needs to be wise enough to acknowledge the importance of symbolic gestures by Parliament, such as the apology to the stolen generation • **follow up identified priorities and concerns** • attend community events and participate – not just photo opportunities • connect with young people – in meaningful ways – listen to them • **provides accurate information which encourages informed discussions** • engages in in-depth discussions - compared with the current propensity to glide over issues in a superficial, and sometimes, dramatic fashion • **consultative** • **lives in the Indi area and someone who uses all of the local facilities like education and health in the region so they have seen first hand what is required to improve facilities** • regularly bringing in new members for fresh ideas would be a good idea
- **embraces all age groups**

**We want a local political representative who truly represents the electorate, is strongly connected to the community, is accessible, visible, responsive and pro-active and is our voice in the political process. Participants said “effective representation is about relationships and building relationships – there is give and take - there is feedback - there is consultation -there is growth - there is interaction and there is respect.” Respect for the people of the electorate, and being worthy of respect were strong themes as well as listening, honesty, integrity, and politeness. Participants said they want someone who has a strong set of values and a moral compass and is prepared to ‘walk the talk’. They also said they expected a local representative who lives and works in the electorate and is connected with the constituents through regular communication.**

# Do you feel you have an adequate voice in the way that you are represented?

people don't seem to voice their concerns because they do not know where to go • **feeling that because it's a safe seat, votes don't count** • sense that our representative is happy to send out newsletters prior to an election but not willing to ask for the constituents' opinions • current representative has not responded to emails that have been sent • current representative is perceived to be pro-development at all costs • **NO** • **no avenues for authentic communication** • feel disempowered • Tony Windsor for Indi please – 'a man of values' • no, not really • never seen in the community • all that is seen in the community is negative • youth council is a good opportunity to be heard through our youth representatives • **frustration that we don't have a choice and voice** • current situation seems to be a foregone conclusion -vote makes no difference to outcome -this is not satisfactory • where is our voice representing and supporting local milk industry and producers and our fruit producers - in absence of strong voice, we are sacrificing our industries • where is our voice on coal seam gas and the NBN? • where is our voice on the state of public transport? • aside from voting, not much of a voice • yes, through letter writing, however, limited by partisan views of current representative • **voices heard – people can be involved as much as they want to be**, however, bickering and behaviour in parliament is not helpful • rural and regional votes are not seen as important as metropolitan votes • current representative is a strong character and holds her own • do have a vote • urban filter to rural issues – metrocentric thinking • **gulf between rural and urban understanding** – agriculture gets a bad rap and goes unanswered • **feeling disenfranchised** • representative has eye on career not on the good of the electorate • apathy – people don't write to politicians • I don't go and see politicians • often get ideological responses to issues raised i.e. renewable energy survey taken to current representative - stated would not apply for funding through Clean Energy Finance Council for Indi as it was against own party's policy • we personally could do more -do we write the letter or send the email? • **we often take things for granted - whinge amongst ourselves -this is not good** • media misconstrues facts -public are not fully informed about many issues • parliamentarians forget they are public employees • people disenchanted with local Federal member • has to be a groundswell to change attitudes in Indi • move away from party politics in favour of more 'conscience voting' • current member doesn't represent our voice and we need to take responsibility for this • political leaders are not rock stars, they are representatives and should approach their task with humility • most of us haven't tried to get something done or changed by approaching our MP so unaware of effectiveness • only visible in the national scene-not visible locally • reputation of current representative is very negative- nationally, regionally and locally • needs to be swinging electorate – **disadvantaged by being a very safe seat** • yes – current representative was supportive during recent community action re Woolworths Service Station • **need to hear the good stories** – CSU/agriculture/medical training services • are our electorates too large? • a media that is all form and no content is a problem – there is no reporting of legislation and policy • no - current representative keeps being ejected from parliament • there is no medium that is easy for busy people to communicate with our representative • in general 'No' • incumbent doesn't represent our views • **safe seat means that its harder to be heard** • incumbent gets kicked out of parliament regularly • we don't like current representative's stance on the indigenous apology • current representative does not represent me - is actively obnoxious -doesn't co-operate to get things done • current Indi representative is someone that people are actively and nationally ashamed of • represents us at the national level – represents our national shame • no strong candidates put up by other parties- **feel like there's no choice** • perspective of why they are there in the first place – to represent the people of the electorate • Kerford Oration – an example of a lack of engagement from local member • no one felt they were being represented by the current member for Indi - in fact one comment was "I don't want her saying she represents me, my values are much better than that" • weakening of democracy with 24 hour news which trivialises issues – sound bites but no in-depth debate • personal attacks distract from policy making and explanation • local member ousted from Parliament too many times and did not attend apology to indigenous people • current politics are not in line with ours (this was unanimous amongst the 8 of us) - the answer lies in the ballot box, but the system lets us down

frustrating when voting for someone new who has no chance against the incumbent • people power had an impact with the Safeway shopping/service station issue • some people prefer a different voting system – first past the post • ‘we don’t have a real voice in a blue ribbon seat’ • **lack of communication** • lack of governance• no say in pre-selection – would like to see that opened up – this would lead to a real impact for individuals as they can then own the process• **key part of leadership is respect** • until the constituents of Indi have a say, we will get what we’ve got • having a say in pre-selection and how the process works and how our voice is heard • **the community gets what it deserves -responsibility, accountability, speaking up** • recognise what makes democracy – speaking up – choice • not cool to talk about politics – laziness of the community – disengagement • pre-selection – Liberal/National – lack of options • “democracy is not well served by there being no choice”• we the people need to take some responsibility for ensuring our voice is heard • **MP should focus on concerns of the electorate as well as party matters** • most people felt they didn’t have an adequate voice, although quite a number acknowledged they hadn’t attempted to communicate with their MP • **community apathy is another issue** – people cannot be bothered getting involved unless they face a crisis in their lives • can our MP take seriously the views of those voters who are not of the same party? • can our MP begin to ‘grow’ a sense of deep integrity and honesty? • can our MP speak to issues and concerns rather than becoming personal, even insulting • is too much time spent working towards re-election? • no, don’t know local member • vested interest running agenda rather than true consultation and thorough investigation e.g push for bigger dams • people should be responsible for the consequences of their decisions eg. **the choice to live in the rural sector comes with its own joys and problems/inconveniences** • current Federal representation renders Indi invisible • being a ‘safe’ seat (State and Federal) is a disadvantage -could we become ‘marginal’ and thereby change the dynamics in favour of Indi? **-could Indi field an independent?**• could we develop a ‘report card’ - an evidence based system of measuring State and Federal representative impact? • no need for three tiers of government -Local and Federal would suffice • **currently there is a loss of trust in the current political system** -there is a sense of “what can we do” about the current political landscape – a sense of hopelessness • **expression of support for an Independent candidate for Indi as the initial process of ‘change’** • electronic communication in the Indi electorate needs to be accessible for residents/visitors in all areas • the current member for Indi needs to keep out of influencing ‘self motivated and self interest’ state and local government issues.

### **There are concerns about current federal representation in Indi.**

*Participants expressed concerns about wanting a representative in parliament to serve the electorate first rather the political party, feeling disenfranchised as voters in a safe seat - “does not allow our voices to be heard”, and a general public apathy about political voice and taking responsibility for who we elect “we get what we deserve”. Participants wanted to hear positive stories about the electorate and have good two way, respectful communication with the local member. They also wanted long term planning and local political representatives, without party politics coming between the representative and the wants and needs of the constituents. There was an expressed concern about the way in which the media is used, and allows itself to be used.*



# What makes a stronger relationship between people and elected representatives?

representative being available and accessible • conversations with young people • attendance at events and community settings • being upfront • visits to schools on how we can have a voice and be heard through our elected representatives • public forums to identify issues of concern to local people - this is non-existent at the moment • **community forums and conversations** • regular visible and respectful representation • expect to be treated with respect, dignity and be heard • more balanced debate about issues • solution based thinking • engagement through other groups eg Landcare, CWA • better understanding of region • less slander and personal attacks • look at bigger picture • party system and power within parties is not helpful • **more opportunities for people to connect with/speak to elected representative** • deliberate consultation/engagement processes on a regular basis – go out to hear what people have to say, don't just wait for them to come to you • who is the current representative actually representing? seems her views are extreme right so not representative • no viable alternative • conservative seat so people tend to vote for incumbent – no National Party choice • change system so 2 elected representatives per electorate – maybe 2 would support each other to actually represent the voters in the electorate • public appearances without the stage management – door knock grocery shops, cities and towns of electorate regularly • competition between candidates • previous member had a caravan - this worked well – needs to be on a regular basis and well publicised - one off won't work • local member needs strong back up - it's often the people in the office that are approached • more proactive people • organisations in towns could be more inviting towards politicians. e.g. U3A • **electorate needs to have goals and objectives to take to politicians** • use the Women's Electoral Lobby practice of asking each candidate specific questions and then publicising their response • political talkback forums are good • **surveys on major issues** – democracy doesn't end when the ballot closes • **strong communication (open, honest, regular)** • thinking outside the square about engagement • **showing that community needs are being part of change** • community forums which result in change the community can see • make forum findings/decisions public on social media • **methods of engagement that provide access for the community to express their views and to be heard by the representative** • leadership to start at the top • **question time in Parliament and the behaviour of politicians must improve - we demand a better standard of behaviour** • establishment of a 'Committee for North East Victoria' created to help lobby and implement our ideas for a connected and vibrant region • more informed political awareness in the community, and in schools, **engage young people more in political debate** – eg. speaker's corner, or groups coming together to discuss ideas - diversity in groups important • cultural attitude working against discussions 'don't talk politics or religion' – group challenged this idea and even people who don't normally talk about politics felt this discussion was really good • examples of community development explored, ie. Barack Obama's work in Chicago in poor neighbourhoods, Australian responses to disasters, some criticism of this in regards to "building capacity" - top down solutions –eg. Marysville example of within their communities, local people building capacity • use of internet and social media in political activity, eg Avaaz, Get-up, change.org • **working the community by working the electorate** • clear mechanisms for community engagement • representative should have a routine presence in the community, not just when politically advantageous • **reviewed code of conduct for our politicians** • informed political debate – like old town hall meetings – once a quarter • federal policy accessible to local constituents • educating local people about national issues • public forum (Q&A – Albury version!) – town hall meeting style • US style public debates - feed back through the media, write up in local press - see where people stand/what they stand for • do people know what they're voting for? Basic issues that go unchecked/get manipulated by politics - e.g. voting for interest rates, when the RBA sets interest rates (that is: people don't necessarily understand which institutions are responsible e.g. politicians can't change interest rates). • **educating electorate on how the electoral system/Australian political system works** • **actively engaged people** – people who are actively interested in politics - removing stigma • wider range of communication methods with electorate, especially younger constituents • scepticism with politicians is widespread-

this trend needs to be reversed • **representatives need to listen to local concerns** and prove to the electorate (**transparent processes**) that they are working for the community's benefit • available to all – many in the electorate working in isolation – farmers/small business • community needs to hear from representative about legislation being presented to Parliament that could affect community – **feedback on legislation in ongoing way** • need to have the electorate get practice at speaking up • **needs to listen, cooperate, compromise** – be part of processes • respect for opponents • an electorate that crosses the border to promote the discussion of border anomalies – while no one politician is in this position it won't be a priority • stop polarising issues • local public forums • **listen to elector's comments** • don't ask pointed questions – already binned that letter • representative's newsletter is informative instead of simply promotional material; eg. what federal funding is available to community organisations • minimum standard for all elected representatives • **keep electorate informed and apprised of issues that are relevant to the local community** • want to hear the local rep talking about important national issues such as refugees - I want to know what they think • we need a marginal seat • **politicians need to listen** • pre-selection – being involved locally • **clear, transparent, electorate based process** • two way communication • decisiveness • advocacy • MP could use standard survey to gather accurate information • **engaging with the diversity of the electorate** • more community conversations • people should feel confident enough to approach their MP with the knowledge that it wouldn't be a waste of time • if MPs came to events like kitchen table conversations and made regular time to meet with 'real people' in the electorate eg visiting nursing homes • foster small public meetings, well facilitated by a neutral chairperson • **seen to be raising Indi issues** in Parliament • elected representatives should be home grown – not planted • use local public hospitals, schools etc. - the children of elected representatives should be educated within the electorate • media coverage of events only scratches surface of issues - greater depth needed in reporting • strong communities get things done • **open to diverse opinions** • communities benefit from core groups willing to stand up on issues • politicking needs to be taken out of the system • population should remain stable while the key issues of the community are addressed • **when a community knows what it wants then this can be communicated to effective leaders** • **people don't voice their concerns because they don't know where to go** • distinct lack of policies articulated by all parties in readiness for the election this year • **this group appreciated the process of 'interested and concerned' persons being able to meet, discuss and have their opinions considered**

**The relationship between community members and political representatives could be enhanced by methods of engagement that allow for a diversity of views and respectful participation including regular community forums and feedback sessions throughout the electorate and accessible by all. Participants were concerned about the behaviour of representatives in Parliament and expected a higher standard of behaviour that better reflects what we seek in our own families, workplaces and communities. The involvement of young people in political debate and understanding democracy is seen as important, as is the need for a more informed, politically aware broader population.**



# WHAT'S NEXT?

## How to be involved ?

- Help organise forums in different areas of the electorate inviting all the candidates to discuss the issues of V4i
- Keep the conversations going and discuss with friends and family – conversation kits available on V4i website
- Keep in touch with V4i website – information on community forums and local conversations will be available
- Visit other websites which promote community democracy
- Talk to all the candidates about the issues raised in this document
- Work with your preferred candidate
- Join with others around issues of concern and instigate your own activities
- Retain the view that 'it's my democracy, and as a citizen, it's my responsibility to participate in it'
- Share this document with friends

Find out more about the V4i committee at <http://www.voiceforindi.com>

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*"A functioning, robust democracy requires a healthy educated, participatory followership, and an educated, morally grounded leadership (Chinua Achebe)".*

*'Listen up leaders,  
have integrity...live your morals...  
don't push morals aside due  
to the pressures of political life.'*  
-Quote from Kitchen Table Conversation

# Indi

