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Kitchen Table Conversations

INFORMATION FOR HOSTS

The relationship between the one hundred and fifty Federal MPs and by extension their communities is the foundation block of our national system of democracy - not tabloid owners or other powerful interest groups or individuals. But for this relationship to work properly, MPs and their constituents need to engage with one another constructively and respectively (A Switch in Time, Mary Crooks, 2012, p.53).

Welcome to Voice for Indi

Many people across the Indi electorate are disappointed with the current political process and what it says about our democracy.

Rather than sliding into despair, we believe that each one of us can play a constructive part in lifting standards of behaviour, focusing on ideas and policies and strengthening the way we are represented.

The Voice for Indi (V4 I) committee was set up by 12 people in Indi to provide a

simple and effective process by which people across the electorate can give voice – where their interests, concerns and ideas are heard, respected and taken up by candidates presenting for election.

Such a process will help to create an electorate with a range of strong and competitive candidates; and develop leadership with vision that truly represents and delivers for the people of Indi.

Key values guiding this process

We are committed to being honest and respectful, to being well-informed, and to referring to reputable sources when making statements.

We are also motivated by what we see as some really important values and commitments. We want to see:

- An enriched political conversation in our electorate;
- Simple and effective activities which encourage and support others to participate in our democracy;
- A diversity of voices and opinion and participation in electoral processes;
- An electorate where people's voices are heard, respected and represented at national level and regional levels.

Find out more about the committee on the V4 *i* website: <http://www.voiceforindi.com>

Cathy McGowan (Chair), Rowan O'Hagan, Alana Johnson, Tony Lane, Anne Shaw, Diane Shephard, Denis Ginnivan, Ben McGowan, Phil Haines, John Mahony, Susan Benedyka

You can become part of this refreshing initiative...

'Democracy is the conversation amongst equals to determine what constitutes good life and the good society' (J. Rutherford and H. Shah, The Good Society 2006).

During March and April 2013, across the Indi electorate from Marysville to the Tallangatta valley, groups of people will meet for 'kitchen table conversations. The responses from all of these conversations will be compiled into a document called *The Voice for Indi*.

The idea is simple and powerful.

Everyone is welcome to participate. But the key to this happening is for a number of people to step forward and agree to host a 'kitchen table conversation'. These people then bring together small groups of up to nine others. These might be friends, neighbours, family, workmates, or people they know from community networks. They meet around the kitchen table or their workplace or wherever is easiest for them.

The hosts facilitate a conversation for a couple of hours focused on the three themes include in this pack. Participants' ideas and thoughts will be collated by the hosts and

forwarded to the V4 *i* team for processing and integrating with all other kitchen table conversations across the Indi electorate.

The task of being a Host

As one of the enthusiastic hosts enabling and leading a 'kitchen table conversation,' you would be expected to:

- set a meeting date
- invite up to nine friends / family/ colleagues/ neighbours / community members to your home **or** other suitable venue for a couple hours of discussion
- collect contact details for the group (on the form provided in this pack)
- facilitate the discussion
- ensure there is a summary of the opinions and ideas of your group and that it is

forwarded to the V4 *i* committee at voiceforindi@voiceforindi.com or **P.O. Box**

851 Wangaratta 3676 by April 19th

- invite participants to register on the **V4 *i*** website if they are interested in becoming even further involved
- *create a positive ripple* – suggest that participants talk about their discussions and the ideas that emerged with other people at work or home or in their community.

Handy tips for hosting the ‘kitchen table conversation

- explain **V4 *i***, the community conversation process and the reporting back to **V4 *i***
- ask participants to introduce themselves and say briefly why they have come to be part of the conversation
- appoint a scribe – someone from the group who is able to track the discussion and capture it in as much detail as is practically and reasonably possible
- It is important that your scribe accepts the need to try and represent the conversation fairly and in as much detail as possible and not be selective
- The group does not have to reach consensus! What is important is that people feel as though they have been able to contribute their ideas and opinions – and for these to be recorded faithfully
- make sure you allocate enough time for each of the suggested conversation starters
- sit down with your scribe straight after the meeting and flesh out the meeting’s content as much as you can while you both have it foremost in your minds – and then develop the written summary by referring to the Discussion Starters that are listed in the next section. Naturally, if there happened to be additional discussion beyond these Discussion Starters, it is important that this is captured as well

Some simple but effective ground rules for running the meeting

Meetings full of people with good intent can still come unstuck. A simple and balanced set of ground rules will go a long way to achieving a productive meeting.

It is important the Host establishes the ground rules as soon as introductions are over. The following five such rules are tried and well-tested:

- We accept that everyone is entitled to have a say
- We will make the effort to listen to one another
- We respect people’s right to their opinions even if we disagree
- We will try at all times to be constructive

- We will try to stay on track

It is important that people at the meeting are provided with the chance to hear these suggested ground rules; and that they indicate their willingness to adhere to them during the course of the discussion. If necessary, the Host can draw people's attention back to them all or some in particular.

Kitchen Table Conversation: Discussion Starters

Any discussion requires something to kick start it!

Voice for Indi is about establishing a reliable and accurate view of what people think and feel about their electorate, their political representation and what they see as issues and concerns that can be addressed through the political process.

The following discussion starters will help to keep this focus, guide the meeting; and provide the basis for capturing and writing up the meetings so they can be all compiled and integrated with some real coherence.

1. Theme: 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 or concerns that you feel should be brought to the attention of your elected representatives?

2. Theme: Political representation

- What do 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?

3. Theme: Issues and concerns

- Are there particular issues or concerns 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?

The V4i Committee acknowledge the contribution of the Victorian Women's Trust in preparation of this information.

Contact and clarifications

If you would like to talk over any aspect of the Host role in more detail, feel free to contact any of the members of the V4 *i* committee at <http://www.voiceforindi.com>

Participant profile: to be returned to voiceforindi@voiceforindi.com or PO Box 851 Wangaratta 3676 with the discussion summary

Host name

Location of the meeting

Each Participant to complete:

GENDER		AGE							
M/F	Post code	<18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
