



# RENEWED DEMOCRACY

## Parliament by the people

Using 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology to distribute power

---

When wealth and power are concentrated in a few hands, democracy cannot flourish. Technology can distribute power throughout our communities and enhance the democratic process. The more people participate, the healthier we make our democracy. The Greens will trial a variety of digital platforms to increase participation in democratic processes.

---

Access to technology is critical to enabling more people to actively participate in our democracy. Twenty first century technology can enhance twenty first century democracy

New technology has the potential to enhance equality in so many areas - improving public education, driving wealth redistribution, and expanding access to MPs and all decision makers to name a few.

### > POWER TO PARTICIPATE

Our democratic processes and institutions urgently need rejuvenation. Technology has made it easy for ideas to be widely circulated and debated, and for support and interest to be easily gauged. The ability to directly influence legislation and debate will strengthen participation in the political process and increase the legitimacy of the parliament.

New technology has the potential to facilitate this by distributing power and increasing transparency. From requiring all levels of government to be open and accountable to tapping into the expertise of members of the public, the possibilities are limitless.

#### **Budget setting by digital democracy**

The Greens will use interactive technology to facilitate public participation in annual government budget-setting to determine priorities for new infrastructure and services as well as revenue raising measures.

Media outlets and other governments, including local governments in Australia, are already utilising such technology. One example is the Budget Allocator<sup>1</sup>.

#### **The Australian Citizens' Initiative**

Inspired by the Finnish initiative<sup>2</sup>, the Greens will establish a similar mechanism to strengthen links between the community

and the parliament. Ideas can be raised on an online platform, and if enough support is gathered, the idea must be debated in the parliament.

#### **Foreign affairs by digital democracy**

We will encourage participation in treaty-making and decisions about going to war. These policies affect the whole country for generations and the community deserves a say. Technology has made it possible for people to have informed opinions about these complex matters, and to have their opinions heard.

#### **Putting freedom back into FOI**

Information gathering, storage and publication is becoming increasingly efficient thanks to new technology. We will move legislation that will require all government departments to proactively release information including their budgets and contracts, publishing the information in an easily searchable format.

#### **Human rights bill**

Everyone should be able to have a say on the contents of a human rights bill. Technology can facilitate crowd-sourcing ideas and debate.

Using a platform like those found in The GovLab<sup>3</sup> would give all Australians ownership over the process to draft a human rights bill. This will help to increase the legitimacy of the final bill in the eyes of the community.

One of the benefits of using new technology is the ability to leverage resources. The combined ongoing cost of these initiatives is likely to be less than \$1m per year and can be absorbed by existing relevant departmental budgets: Budget setting by the Treasury; Citizens Initiative by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; Foreign Affairs by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, FOI by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner in coordination with relevant departments; Human Rights Bill by the Attorney General.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://budgetallocator.com>

<sup>2</sup> <http://openministry.info/finnish-citizens-initiative>

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thegovlab.org>