

YARRA VALLEY WATER

ENCLAVE DELIBERATION FOLLOWED BY A MIXED GROUP DELIBERATION

Context: A series of engagement activities to support Yarra Valley Water's (YVW) price submission to the State Government (part of the process of regulating the price customers pay for water).

Timeframe: September 2021 – April 2022

Topic (remit)

How can water and the environment be protected and respected for and by present and future generations?

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

STAGE 1 – DEFINING THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES TO SOLVE

- 1.1 Wider engagement** with stakeholders and community groups – five workshops
- 1.2 Enclave or minority group deliberations** – Six mini deliberative panels meeting for 2.5 days each. The purpose was to capture perspectives from customers that are not usually represented in engagement (may not say yes to being on a mixed deliberation). The panels were as follows and in total comprised 60 people:
 - (1) youth – 11 people
 - (2) people from the edge of the service delivery area – 10 people
 - (3) culturally and linguistically diverse – 13 people
 - (4) deaf/hard of hearing – 9 people
 - (5) blind/low vision – 4 people
 - (6) mixed group (stratified random sample) – 13 people.
- 1.3 Combined customer panel** – representatives of the mini panels came together for one day to consolidate the outputs into one final report – 18 people
- 1.4 Closing the loop** – reporting process

STAGE 2 – FINDING SOLUTIONS

- 2.1 Wider engagement** with stakeholders – reporting back to stakeholders and community groups on stage 1 and input for stage 2 – 6 workshops
- 2.2 Citizen jury** – 40 people - 16 from the mini panels and 24 new members randomly stratified to match the demographics of the area
- 2.3 Closing the loop** – reporting process



WHAT THE FACILITATORS NOTICED ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND THE PROBLEMS OF ENCLAVES



BENEFITS OF ENCLAVES

Benefits

What we noticed

Clarity of their own position – opportunity to develop their own unique perspectives and arguments

The enclaves spent a lot of time identifying and refining their unique problems (and related reasons). This was a core part of the design for the enclave.

Creativity – wider range of ideas likely to emerge

A wide range of issues/problems were raised in the groups and these issues had weight e.g. hard for us on the fringe as we have private pipes that are not connected to the overall system, or we can't read our bills.

So, a wider range of issues emerged than might have been the case in a random group where these issues might have been seen as minor and been ignored. These issues were not lost and continued through the whole discussion.

Support for each other

There was a sense that they understood each other – empathised with each other and considerate of their accessibility/participatory needs. They waited when people needed more time e.g. for interpreters (including Auslan) to speak/sign or the reading of instructions for blind people or understanding that the facilitators had to specifically invite certain people to speak.

More weight given to accessibility needs lead to accessibility problems being identified in the output/recommendations of the group.

Greater sense of inclusion

Huge sense of inclusion that we have not seen in other mixed deliberations even when a minority person is present.

Auslan interpreters told us that they had never seen deaf people included like this before and especially in an online setting.

Even in the bigger mixed group the overall group seemed more confident in how they included people. They could see how the others were included and the ways this done was normalised eg saying who is speaking, calling in blind people (less likely to raise their hand), waiting for interpreters. These norms carried through from the enclave into the bigger mixed group.

PROBLEMS OF ENCLAVES



Problems

More polarisation and extremism of views and the group being less likely to compromise

What we noticed

Most of the group were interested and curious about each other's views and did not seem to hold on to specific ideas except for two men who would not give up on their argument – they never yielded.

We find this in many mixed groups (that there are one or two people who are unwilling to compromise) and is not specific to the enclaves.

Less diversity of views – group think – caused by the unity of the group, that is, attachment to the group loyalty/ identity is more important than diverse ideas

We didn't see less diversity of ideas or group think (attachment to the original group). This may be due to it being a different task in the two parts of the deliberation (from problem to solution). Also, the groups were mixed a lot.

OTHER THINGS WE NOTICED IN THIS DELIBERATION



Other things

Even in an enclave there will be people who are silenced

What we noticed

We noticed that the men in the CALD group were participating at a much higher level than the women. This led to us mix the groups at times (not all the time) so that women and men were in separate small groups.

Bias based on type of enclave

The chosen enclave will create a bias from the beginning – that may lead to a stream of thinking– lean into issues based on who is chosen.

In this case the organisation wanted to choose a range of vulnerable people. This led to the identification of a range of 'smaller' issues such as blind people being unable to read bills rather than the bigger picture issues e.g. price of water.

WHAT DID WE DO IN EITHER THE DESIGN OR FACILITATION IN THE ROOM TO INCREASE THE BENEFITS OF ENCLAVES OR REDUCE THE PROBLEMS

BENEFIT ENHANCING ACTIONS (DESIGN OR FACILITATION)



Benefit

Creating more diverse views

What we did to enhance the value

Lots of mixing groups within both the enclaves and the larger mixed group – broadening and diversity of views.

Remit

The enclaves came together to write the remit. Hard to write as a group. We wonder about a better process as the remit was not as good as it could be – but wanted to give the group control - so a trade-off.

Tactics to include people

Translators, display people on screen, readable documents for blind/low vision participants, enabled inclusion to work well.

PROBLEMS REDUCING ACTIONS (DESIGN OR FACILITATION)



Problem/Topic

What we did to reduce a problem

Polarisation

Having a different topic for the enclaves (problem identification) and the bigger mixed group (finding solutions) helped. We did not get into identifying solutions until all together in the bigger group. We wonder if solutions are more prone to being held on to?

Mixing of groups – constant mixing in both the enclaves and large group so that people understand the views held by the variety of people.

Working in small groups with people who had diverse needs meant the overall group became skilled at accepting and accommodating different needs.

Working with strongly held opinions – testing these opinion using Ideas Rating Sheets is very useful as people see that their individual view is not held by the group.

Encouraging the silent people – active inclusion

Ask people to speak for themselves. Ask for alternative positions. Be mindful of consensus bias i.e. 'I speak for everyone'.

Actively going to quieter voices in the plenary, ones not heard from e.g. randomly choose three people to hear from.