Democracy Developers Ltd

U6/8 Bromham Place
RICHMOND VIC 3121

info@democracydevelopers.org.au
democracydevelopers.org.au
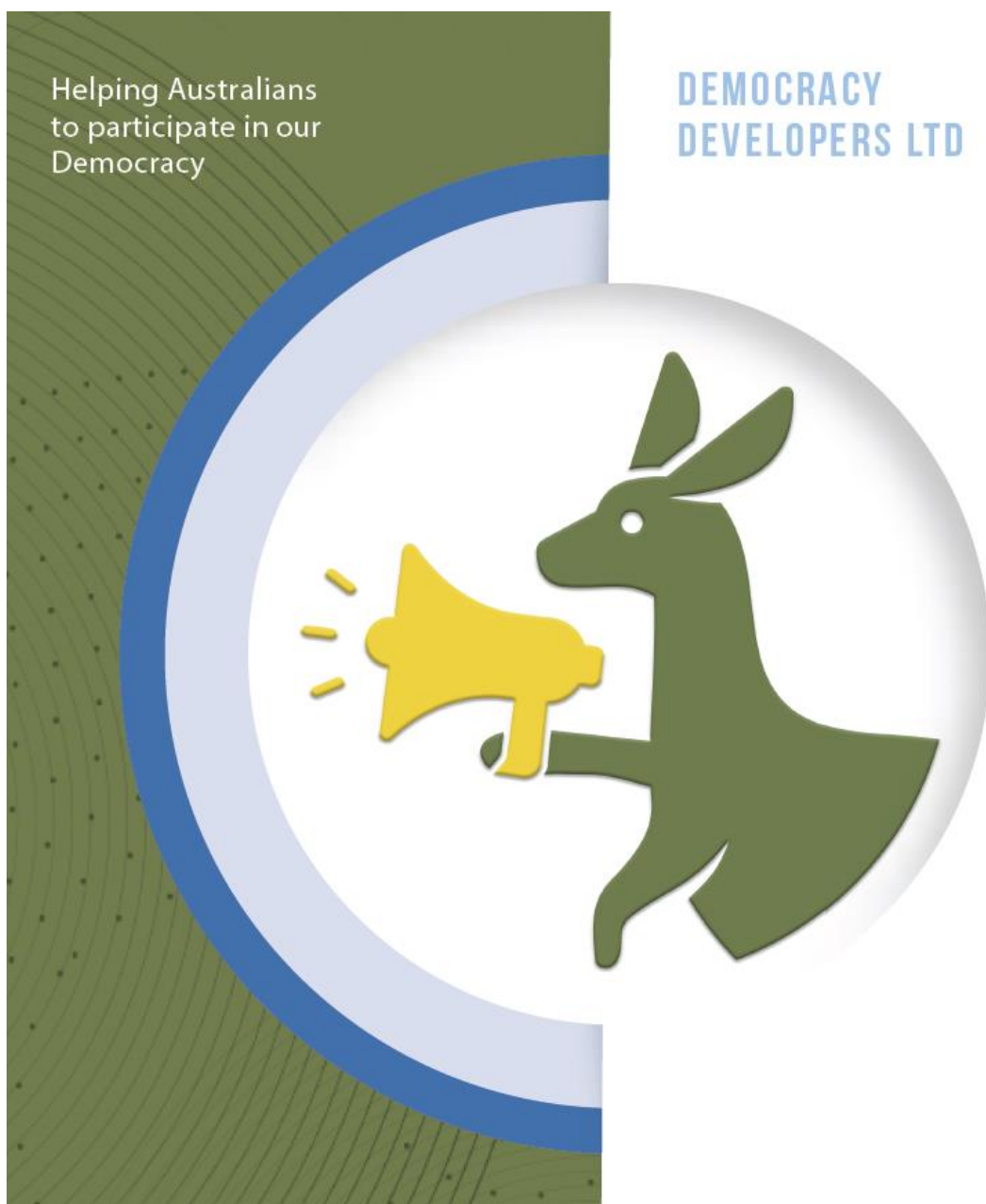
ABN 80 656 928 415

COMPANY ANNUAL REPORT 2024:

Helping Australians
to participate in our
Democracy

DEMOCRACY
DEVELOPERS LTD

Democracy Developers Ltd was established in January 2022 in Victoria by a group of Australians passionate about the future of our democracy.

Our mission is to make political participation accessible to all, guided by our core values of engagement, openness, privacy, and inclusiveness.

We are committed to developing transparent and trustworthy digital technology that genuinely promotes democracy.

We are currently developing an app: *Ask Parliament,* which provides an easy way for Australians to suggest questions to be asked during inquiries and parliamentary question time. *Ask Parliament* also allows MPs to better understand and respond to their constituents' concerns within parliament, and to harness their constituent's expertise and lived experience.

In addition, we have been providing expert election auditing and verification consultancy services. This involves the development of open-source software and education materials.

OUR VISION:
A free and open democracy for the benefit of all Australians.

OUR MISSION:
To support all Australians to engage and participant in democratic processes.

ABOUT US:

The Board are a team of Australians who care about the future of Australian democracy. We have been frustrated by how hard it can be to get the right questions raised and answered in Australia's parliaments. We want to strengthen accountability of public authorities and elected representatives to the public.

We want to inform the parliament's powerful processes, such as Senate Estimates, to make sure the most effective questions are raised and answered. We want our MPs to represent us better, instead of the various interest groups that consume their time.

ASK PARLIAMENT (APP):

Ask Parliament is an app we've built to make parliamentary democracy and participation easier for everyone. We aim to open a clear channel of communication between parliamentarians and the electorate so they can more effectively represent the people.

All the software used in Right To Ask is open source so you can take a look at the code and understand how it works. We will be using privacy-preserving vote aggregation software from the Microsoft ElectionGuard library which uses homomorphic encryption to allow up and down-votes to be added together so that totals can be calculated without ever decrypting individual votes. This will preserve privacy by ensuring that even our server doesn't know whether a person's response is an up-vote or a down-vote.

Please see our website for the Ask Parliament app Code of Conduct and Privacy Policy.

DEMOCRACY DEVELOPERS - THE BOARD:

A/Prof Vanessa Teague
CHAIRPERSON & FOUNDER

Vanessa is an Adjunct Associate Professor at ANU specialising in cryptographic protocols that support a free and democratic society. She works on openly available research and software for supporting democratic decision making and empowering ordinary people to make choices about their own data. Vanessa has researched security problems in e-voting and e-counting systems and has developed new tools and techniques for auditing complex elections (photo: Kristina D.C. Hoeppner, CC BY-SA 2.0).

Rosey Conway
BOARD MEMBER & COMMUNICATIONS

Rosey has 30 years' experience as an educator, specialising in executive sales, marketing, branding, strategy, management and communications. Her BA in the humanities & social sciences has inspired a career that thrives on building creative solutions to achieve great outcomes. Rosey is passionate about improving democratic involvement and communication, and she hopes to inspire more Australians to become politically engaged and have their voices heard.

Lillian McCann
BOARD MEMBER & TECHNOLOGIST

Lilli grew up in Gippsland in regional Victoria and completed a BA in politics & international studies and a Diploma in Computing. She now works as a software engineer in identity and access management. Passionate about the potential for e-democracy to improve democratic processes and representation, and concerned about poor cybersecurity and digital privacy, Lilli is committed to advancing democracy through her role in Democracy Developers.

TECHNICAL EXPERTISE & MANAGEMENT TEAM:

Dr Michelle Blom
RAIRE TECHNICAL SPECIALIST

Michelle is a Senior Research Fellow in the AI and Autonomy Lab of the School of Computing and Information Systems at the University of Melbourne. Michelle completed her PhD in Computer Science at the University of Melbourne in 2011. She has diverse research interests that include election integrity (with a focus on post-election audits), combinatorial optimization (with a focus on algorithms for solving large problems through decomposition, local search, and the use of mathematical programming), applications of reinforcement learning, and Explainable AI.

Geraldine Allen FCPA FGIA
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER & COMPANY SECRETARY

Geraldine brings over two decades of experience in not-for-profit financial management, business operations and corporate governance, within the education, health and research sectors. She has an extensive background partnering with numerous not-for-profits and climate action organisations. Geraldine is currently Company Secretary for a women's domestic violence service in Brisbane. She is also Treasurer for a climate-action NFP, Comms Declare, guiding their financial accountability, transparency and good governance principles to drive their purpose.

Dan Cameron
VOLUNTEER

Dan grew up in the NSW Riverina (Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area) and has years of experience in systems testing locally and in the USA; and in managing systems training facilitation. Dan has also recently been involved with Democracy Developers by proof reading some of the website and in testing the mobile phone app.

CONSULTANCY SERVICES:

Democracy Developers is a non-partisan, not-for-profit charity registered with the ACNC, consisting of a team of dedicated Australians striving to enhance the nation's democracy. Associate Prof Vanessa Teague serves as the Chairperson of Democracy Developers and she manages and leads the consultancy and research services. All of our consultancy work is openly available (in the case of research), open source (in the case of code) and designed to support democratic goals.

We have expertise in several areas and provide consultancy services in the following areas:

- research into e-voting and e-counting systems, including the analysis of their security and privacy properties, and research and prototyping of new ideas,
- developing new tools and techniques for auditing complex elections, and
- developing open-source software.

We believe that by providing high-quality research and tools, we can help build stronger, more resilient democracies that serve the needs and interests of the public.

These activities are consistent under section *3. Principal Purpose and Powers* of the Democracy Developer's company constitution. The relevant subsections of the constitution state:

(b). The Principal Purpose for which the Company is established is to protect human rights and advance education, including by:

(v). providing objective technical analysis for government and the public of electronic forms of democratic participation including risks, potential benefits, security and effectiveness;

(vi). conducting and supporting high quality openly available research into electronic forms of democratic participation, their security and effectiveness;

(viii). building privacy-respecting open-source well-documented software as an educational resource to teach the public how to develop, adapt and reuse secure free software.

A/Prof Teague is responsible for leading and managing consultancy projects. A/Prof Teague holds a PhD in Computer Science (cryptography specialisation) from Stanford University and is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Australian National University. She has consulted extensively on various issues related to security, privacy and election verification, including for the Swiss Federal Chancellery on their e-voting project, the Australian Department of Treasury on the security of the protocols for protecting consumer data, the Victorian Information Commissioner on data identifiability, and many others.

Although we are engaged in the realm of elections, it is important to note that Democracy Developers do not administer elections or build software for running elections, only for auditing and verifying their results.

We develop open-source auditing software to allow election administrators and other stakeholders to test election outcomes and gain confidence when they are accurate, particularly for complex elections in which we have special expertise. We also conduct research into electronic voting and counting methods, including identifying vulnerabilities in existing systems and prototyping ideas for new systems. The research prototypes are not for use in real elections.

Our research and consultancy services are available to entities in Australia and overseas, serving as an important component of our income-generating activities for our charitable objectives.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Most of this year's work focused on extending Colorado's Risk Limiting Audit system to preferential elections (which Americans call "Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)"). We visited Colorado in August 2023 and delivered detailed explanatory and educational materials to set up the collaboration. Over the year, we successfully completed the main implementation task, delivering a fully-functional prototype in December 2023 and putting the full implementation on track for delivery in August 2024.

All of our materials, including both documentation and code, are openly available at www.democracydevelopers.org.au.

Our ANU consulting contract is also almost complete, with a finished protocol design under submission for formal publication. Other collaborators in the project have completed a prototype implementation of both the cryptographic protocol and the user interface. This project will significantly advance the research agenda on practical ways to facilitate voting from remote polling centres while incorporating rigorous audits to maintain the integrity of the process.

CHAIRPERSON REPORT:

With the bulk of the work for our two consulting contracts done in late 2024, we're looking forward to refocusing closer to home, on open-source software for supporting Australian democracy. Some user testing of the early versions of Ask Parliament has shown us how important the educational aspects are. We believe that a simpler app that focuses on explaining the processes and helping people to find the right representative might be a good way forward.

There is also a great opportunity to translate our improved understanding of practical election auditing into a project to build a general, usable, open-source risk-limiting audit engine for potential use around the world.

A big thank you to our volunteers Dan Cameron, Chuanyuan Liu and Andrew Conway, our excellent employees Michelle Blom and Geraldine Allen, our valued consultants Chris Culnane and Ben Harnett, and to Board members Rosey Conway and Lillian McCann for their ever-valuable questions and advice.

A/Prof Vanessa Teague, Chair

FINANCIAL REPORT:

An income and expenditure summary follows below and provides a true and fair view of our financial position for the financial year ending 30 June 2024. Democracy Developers has been in operation for the full financial year and recorded an operational surplus of $24,642. It is expected that the consultancy contracts signed in the previous financial year will generate approximately $560,000 by the end of FY2025.

Profit & Loss for the year ending 30 June 2024

Revenue	2024	2023
Grant Income/Sales	$188,430	$90,000
Donations	$0	$15,000
In-kind Donations	$91	$2,503
Total Revenue	**$188,521**	**$107,503**
Expenditure		
Project Expenditure	$2,000	$31,732
Admin Expenses	$531	$3
Employment Expenses	$158,735	$28,900
Insurance Expenses	$2,411	$7,074
IT Expenses	$202	$2,926
Legal Expenses	$0	$6,000
Total Operating Expenses	**$163,879**	**$76,635**
Profit/Surplus	**$24,642**	**$30,868**

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2024

Assets		2024	2023
	Cash and Cash Equivalents	$106,553	$79,667
	Receivables	$78	$0
	Prepayments	$6,277	$0
Total Assets		**$112,908**	**$79,667**
Liabilities			
	Accrued Expenses	$1,926	$0
	Provisions	$5,808	$0
	Other Creditors	$7,690	$6,825
Total Liabilities		**$15,424**	**$6,825**
Net Assets		**$97,484**	**$72,842**
Equity			
	Current Year Earnings	$24,642	$30,868
	Retained Earnings	$72,842	$41,974
Total Equity		**$97,484**	**$72,842**

Responsible persons' declaration: The responsible persons declare that in the responsible persons' opinion: (1). there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and (2). the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. Signed in accordance with subsection 60.15(2) of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013.

A/Prof Vanessa Teague, Chairperson   Date: 04 December 2024