

A letter to the South Australian Community, State Planning Commission and the Minister for Planning the Hon John Rau.

We believe this Community Engagement Charter is a positive first step for planning reform in South Australia and provides an opportunity to ensure that the wider community has confidence and involvement in the planning process and decisions made.

This draft Community Engagement Charter has been developed over 4 days of deliberation involving 50 randomly selected community members and many stakeholders. We found that we had more in common than we first thought. We felt privileged to have this opportunity and we acted collaboratively and in good faith.

We expect the government and the State Planning Commission to reciprocate and take our Community Engagement Charter Draft seriously and ensure that the wider community is involved in drafting new plans and legislation. If the government, the Commission and other key stakeholders take this document seriously – not as a token, then it will lead to less cynicism in the community and greater consensus.

This set of principles has been drafted to guide Community Engagement at the beginning of the development process, in policy setting. They are intended to become essential to all planning processes. We also believe that meaningful Community Engagement needs to happen at other stages of the planning process, including the Development Assessment Process.

The Charter should be a living document which is regularly reviewed in consultation with the community. Parts of it, including the Decision Making Framework requires further development. We urge the Government and Commission to continue its commitment to capturing diverse opinions from the wider community in this development and review process, including those who are sometimes left out of the process.

A Community Engagement Charter can only be legitimate if the community is genuinely engaged.

We are caretakers for future generations. We want a planning system that ensures the health and wellbeing of all South Australians, that protects our heritage and natural resources, and that acknowledges our traditional owners.

Written in Adelaide by the Planning Together Panel on the 30th July 2017.

The Draft Community Engagement Charter

Planning Together Panel Report

July 2017

Preamble

We, the members of the Planning Together Panel, have deliberated over 4 days in order to create this Community Engagement Charter for Planning and Development. We have had in-depth conversations and discussions with stakeholders and community members to create our core principles.

Our vision is that the Community Engagement Charter will aid future development and make it easier to hold those responsible accountable for making changes to planning and development. This will make the system more inclusive for people of all backgrounds and interests. In the past the planning system has not adequately engaged communities, and as part of the Planning Together Panel we hope to make it a collaborative process now and into the future.

The use of the Charter in planning and development will involve community from the very beginning through to the end. The Charter will ensure genuine engagement that is fair, equitable, transparent, and sustainable. The community will be a key part of the planning process by providing input and sharing their vision for the future and the outcomes. Improving collaboration and engagement with communities will promote healthy and sustainable living.

The Charter has been developed for the State Planning Commission. It will ensure that communities are empowered in implementing appropriate planning engagement for the future. We would like to see continuous improvement of the Charter over time and for it to be applied in more stages of the planning and development process such as development assessment.

Community Engagement Charter Principles, Outcomes and Measures

Principle 1: Genuine Inclusion and Participation

This principle means community members from all backgrounds and abilities having an equal and genuine opportunity to be involved.

This principle will result in people influencing decision making, being involved from the start of the planning process creating understanding, working together, less conflict, a sense of empowerment and community satisfaction.

To measure the effectiveness of this principle, it will be important to measure the percentage of diversity, the percentage of people involved and the level of people's satisfaction with the involvement.

The percentage of people who reported that:

- they feel that their opinion was asked and influenced the final decision
- they felt they had all the information required
- the decision makers could look them in the eye
- agreements were adhered to
- they were given all relevant information
- their opinions were listened to and used
- there was genuine interest in having the decision influenced by them
- The decision wasn't already made before engagement
- The engagement process was real

Principle 2: People have access to complete information that they can understand, they know about proposals, the engagement process and the impacts of potential outcomes.

This principle means the community will have the opportunity to get information needed freely and without cost. When applying the principle, take into account the background of any proposal which includes the history and the environment, and takes a long-term view.

This principle will lead to the community having increased confidence and trust in all decision making.

This principle will also deliver accessible, complete and timely information, in diverse community languages. Opportunities for engagement will be offered via a wide variety of consultation methods. Engagement channels will include online portals (i.e. the planning portal and local government websites), email and letters (to owners and occupiers), community meetings, newspaper notices, on-site notice boards and taking into account new and emerging technologies and other relevant mechanisms. Real time information will be provided about the progress of individual proposals.

Anyone who registers comments on a policy or proposed project will receive a response within a reasonable time before a final decision is made on any proposal that has a significant impact on the community. There will be an increase in community participation and satisfaction.

The process for engagement will be outlined in full and the community will understand how their feedback will be used in the decision making process.

To measure the effectiveness of this principle, it will be important to measure the breadth of the demographic of the population engaging with the planning process including:

- The diversity of engagement methods/channels used; take-up and response rate to different engagement methods.
- Community satisfaction with the availability and completeness of the information provided and opportunities for dialogue.
- Active use of information provided in community deliberations.
- Feedback is given to participants (about outcomes, how they influenced).

Principle 3: Engagement processes and the reasons for the outcomes and decisions are clear.

This principle requires that the process of engagement between all parties is to be transparent and give reasons behind all decisions made.

This principle will enable the Community to be better informed, and more engaged. The Community will also feel more included and be more accepting of change with less outrage at decisions made. Local Government will have a more open relationship with their communities, with fewer disputes. The State Government will have a clearer delineation of responsibilities with the potential for future policy guidance from the Community. The Planning Industry Professionals will have an increase in early consultation, with the potential for less direct and indirect costs to them and more certainty for development.

To measure the effectiveness of this principle, it will be important to determine the level of confidence and satisfaction the community and other stakeholders have about the engagement process. An assessment should occur after each engagement process is complete, and the results communicated to all participants.

Principle 4: Engagement process and performance is regularly measured and evaluated.

This principle ensures the accountability of engagements. Measuring and evaluating the process and performance regularly should happen **before, during** and **after** activities with a view to continuous improvement.

Process is considered to be the design, delivery and post engagement tasks and performance relates to how well the process plays out once it is in action and also the outcomes achieved through the process.

Measurement and evaluation should be considered from multiple perspectives, those of the community, planning professionals and the governments who have a role to play in the engagement.

Implementation of this principle will result in continuous improvement of engagement and accountability.

Continuous improvements

Improvements in engagement will occur within and between engagement activities. Planning professionals and government will have evidence of community engagement adding value to planning processes which will enhance confidence and skill in community engagement. The community also has an opportunity to evaluate engagement processes so that current and future engagement can be better designed and delivered.

Accountability

Those conducting the engagement have a clear record/evidence of their engagement processes and performance. As part of this record, community are given opportunity to respond to their experience of engagement processes. These records must be publically available.

To measure performance of this principle, we would see:

- Increasing % of target audience who are aware of a process occurring
- Increasing % of target audience who register interest in participating
- Increasing % of target audience that reached a level of satisfaction with the process
- Cost vs benefit analysis that reveals good value for the community - ensure we get best value from the engagement
- Demonstrated adherence to the Community Engagement Charter for all engagement processes.

Principle 5: Engagement approaches must be (or 'are) targeted, flexible, scalable and specific.

This principle means that engagement approaches must be fit for purpose. The Planning Together Panel has agreed that the core values of this principle are explained in the following sections.

Targeted

A targeted engagement approach seeks to address all relevant and important issues that may be appropriate to the affected community, whether directly or indirectly relevant to the project. The panel is of the opinion that engagement will prioritise what issues would impact which or what type of communities and ensure that a strategy is appropriate, affordable, and proportionate to the affected communities.

Flexible

Engagement approaches must also look into adapting to changing circumstances, while a project is being executed. Engagement approaches must be informed and not built on rigid behaviours or mindsets, as it will shut out the ability to react to potential communities previously overlooked or development of critical events that could evolve over the life of a project.

Scalable

Engagement approaches must be considered and tailored to the size of the project, the financial impact or costs to the community, the significance of the prioritised issues, the number of people that would be affected both directly and indirectly as a consequence of the actions of the project

Specific

Engagements must be specific and conducted in a way that focuses on a prioritised issues and catered to the affected communities.

In summary Engagement Approaches must include but not limited to:

- How long is the process going to take
- Costs to the project as well as to the community
- Techniques used
- Who is being engaged
- Level of engagement (IAP2 Spectrum)
- The integration of techniques
- How much engagement is required.

The Panel suggest this principle could be measured by:

- How well it drives innovation and processes
 - % of people feel they engagement has improved
 - % of people feel that the engagement reached them in more than one medium that was appropriate
- ensuring the fit-for-purpose goal is achieved
 - % of people feel the engagement was appropriate for the relevant issues.
- ensuring highly efficient community engagement
 - % of people feel that time and resources were not wasted.
- Developing a good engagement framework and approaches are taken from the earliest possible time.
 - % of people feel that they were engaged at the right time of the process.
- Developing a collaborative South Australian community
 - % of people feel that they have worked well within their specific community.
 - % of people felt that they were welcomed to contribute
 - % of people feel that they have been heard/listened to
 - % of people feel that there was structure in the engagement
 - % of people feel they have been supported and informed enabling contribution
 - % of people feel they have been given the right information
 - % of people that feel respected, valued during the engagement process
 - % of people feel that nothing important was overlooked
 - % of people feel that professional processes were followed

PRIORITY MEASURE

The community framework is in existence to the affected community
A survey that measure the collaborative process

Principle 6: People affected are meaningfully engaged and those interested have an opportunity to participate in a timely, fair and equitable way.

This principle means engagement will be timely, involve early consultation and preliminary access to information for both major and minor proposed planning changes. Engagement will be equitable and inclusive of community diversity.

This will deliver improved access to information relating to planning changes that affect communities or individuals to create a more informed public. This will lead to a greater understanding of how a proposed change will affect community members and how the proposed change can better align with their aspirations and values.

Acknowledge and respect all stakeholders through a transparent decision making process. Promote timely and evolving engagement that recognises a decision making process must provide reasons why community comments have been adopted or disregarded.

All members of our diverse community will have an opportunity to participate and barriers to engagement will be identified and overcome to promote inclusion. Those undertaking engagement processes must be proactive in their pursuit of community involvement.

To measure the effectiveness of this principle, it will be important to measure:

- Percentage of community members aware of changes that affect them;
- Percentage of community members generally aware of development within their area;
- Percentage of participants satisfied with planning outcome;
- Percentage of participants satisfied with the engagement;
- Percentage of participants satisfied with the ease of access to information;
- Percentage of participants satisfied with the quality of information (no jargon)

Principle 7: Differing views are acknowledged, respected and accommodated.

This principle highlights the importance of understanding Culture, Heritage, Natural and Built Environment, which should always be taken into account when deliberating on planning on project matters. Engagement of the community is held as a priority when discussing these issues. It may be necessary to mediate between the opposing/differing beliefs that sub-communities have. The needs of everyone are accounted for regardless of their circumstance. Although these practices are in place, they need to adapt to changing needs whilst also keeping in mind lessons from the past.

This principle will result in increased respect for cultural and heritage sites as well as acknowledging community feedback. The community are more accepting of decisions even when they do not agree because their input was recognised. Conflicts are able to be resolved efficiently because of a more equitable engagement process. The cooperation between the community, council, governments, stakeholders and planners will result in continuous involvement.

To measure the effectiveness of this principle, it will be important to measure:

- Less contention
- Reduction in appeals
- Higher percentage of diverse involvement of participants
- Higher percentage of people who think they are in a cohesive community
- Higher percentage of projects/applications get approved
- Higher percentage of quicker resolutions

Draft Decision making framework

This section describes the ‘principles in action’ from a community perspective. We expect the Charter to be reflected in the following ways for different planning activities:

When developing State Planning Policies, the State Government should:

- Clearly articulate its intentions and the specific problem they are trying to address to the public generally and to affected parties specifically.
- Provide the available information and subject matter expertise, highlighting the approach to evidence based policy.
- Engage the community broadly and early seeking input from the relevant parties and local authorities as to the local applicability.
- Provide evidence indicating engagement processes are specifically targeted to the relevant affected parties.

When developing Regional Plans it will be important that:

- Information is provided to support engagement on proposed and enacted regional plans linking back to the relevant state planning goals (translated by state planning policies) to the regional level highlighting proposed code amendments and their intended impact.
- Local authorities collaborate with their communities, between regions and with the state on the development of planning policy.

When developing Planning & Design Codes:

- Relevant information is readily available at a central location that highlights how the Code affects specific titles and people.

A Proposed Framework:

(Wording to be clarified and checks and balances to be inserted)

1. A problem or intention is identified
2. The problem or intention is defined and explained
3. Affected and interested parties are identified
4. Proposed engagement process is defined in accordance with the Charter and publicised
5. Engagement process is followed and publicised in accordance with the charter
6. Community input is received and incorporated into a proposal
7. Proposal is submitted citing community engagement outcomes and associated decisions, feeding back to the community who have participated (and how their input influenced the outcome)
8. Proposal is evaluated in accordance with good planning principles and adherence of the engagement process to the charter principles

Reviewing and Evolving the Engagement Charter

A review of the engagement charter is to be mandatorily conducted every 5 years, however the Minister and/or the State Planning Commission may, if appropriate, call for a review of the Charter before the mandated 5 years.

The Inaugural Planning Together Panel is conscious of the fact that this is a first of its kind charter and the impacts it may have on the larger community. The panel members have taken this responsibility with great sincerity and fervor. In the spirit of longevity and continuity, the panel includes a measure that will account for historical context while allowing an innovative spirit in the evolution of the charter. We recommend that the State Planning Commission conduct a deliberative process for review which includes some members who designed the inaugural Charter along with new contributors.

A proposed review approach

As a commitment to the evolution of the charter, 25 panel members from the first planning together panel and 25 new and randomly selected South Australians will be called upon to serve and review the next form and evolution of the engagement charter.

The necessity of the 25 panel members from the earlier planning session allows for knowledge and skillsets from the past panel be shared with successive panels to provide historical contexts as to the tireless deliberations in forming the last version of the engagement charter. The necessity of the 25 new and randomly selected South Australian panel members allow for fresh successive perspectives that would then bring the engagement charter to its next evolution and allows for previous principles to be reviewed critically.

At the end of a subsequent successive planning panel session, the 25 panel members from the earlier planning session will effectively passed the baton on to the next 25 panel members for them to work with future South Australians in future editions of the Planning Together Panel.

This is important to allow for fresh perspectives and critical reviews on the engagement charter while ensuring historical perspectives and knowledge are not lost to time.

