



**STATE
PLANNING
COMMISSION**

Community Engagement Charter
Consultation Phase 1 Outcomes
November 2017



Government of South Australia

Department of Planning,
Transport and Infrastructure

The Community Engagement Charter is the first of its kind in Australia, putting consultation and participation at the forefront of our planning process in South Australia.

It establishes statutory requirements for engaging our community on proposed changes to planning policy, while allowing this engagement to be directly tailored to the needs of the community.

In the past, many people's first interaction with the planning system happened when a new house was built near them, without an understanding of the planning policy that enabled this.

Under new legislation within the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016, the draft Charter will change this by inviting community input on planning policies that will shape the places they value.

This first phase of consultation on the Community Engagement Charter ran from Saturday 1 July to Monday 9 October 2017.

1. Consultation to develop a discussion draft of the Charter

The discussion draft of the Community Engagement Charter was developed during a series of workshops with a public 'Planning Together Panel' comprising 50 randomly selected citizens working alongside 53 invited stakeholder organisations to develop draft principles, outcomes and measures.

The Panel was also guided by a Practitioner Group and a more widely represented larger stakeholder group on how the Charter could be useful in major planning scenarios.

2. Consultation on the discussion draft of the Charter

The consultation on the discussion draft of the Community Engagement Charter received 28 responses.

This included responses from 16 local Councils across South Australia, 4 from industry and professional groups, 3 from community stakeholder groups and 3 submissions from individuals.

Six questions were asked of respondents as follows:

- Question 1: Tell us what you like about the discussion draft
- Question 2: Tell us what you think needs improving? Why?
- Question 3: What are the three most important things that you think need to be considered when engaging communities on major planning processes?
- Question 4: How would you know engagement was improving in planning? What would you see changing?
- Question 5: What do you currently do which aligns with the principles in the discussion draft?
- Question 6: How do you use what you learn to improve / inform future engagement processes?

Respondents were also encouraged to provide additional comments.

Summary of consultation responses

Some respondents used the questionnaire provided to respond to the consultation questions, while other respondents sent letters or emails containing their views on the discussion paper. The summary of the consultation responses below provides an overview of the key themes resulting from all responses.

Question 1: Tell us what you like about the discussion draft.

Overall respondents said they like and generally support the purpose and structure of the Charter, and for the most part like its principles, outcomes and performance measures for engagement. The idea of an engagement toolkit was also welcomed.

There was wide general support for the purpose of the Charter with respondents saying they 'see the need for the Charter' and supporting the 'contribution to better engagement outcomes for the community'. Respondents said they recognise the Charter as 'a tool to make sure upfront engagement happens properly' and to 'encourage a more consistent community engagement approach'. Overall it was 'welcomed', as a 'positive' and 'step in the right direction' for community engagement.

The main view of respondents was that they also liked the Charter's structure as it provided a 'clear and logical' structure and 'does not go into too much detail'. Comments from respondents generally exposed the need to 'keep it really simple'.

For the most part, respondents said they thought the principles were 'generally sound' and 'provided a good coverage of relevant issues'. The principles were generally widely supported and were deemed to 'align well with our own engagement principles'.

Engagement outcomes were highlighted as 'really important' to include and respondents felt the performance measures for engagement were for the most part 'fit for purpose'. Overall respondents in the main felt measuring performance was an 'important feature' of the engagement process.

The mention of the upcoming engagement toolkit was welcomed as 'exciting and useful'.

Question 2: Tell us what you think needs improving? Why?

The key areas that respondents say need improvement are the engagement principles, performance measures and implementation. Clarity around use of the charter and statutory obligations requires improvement and the overall language and also, to some degree, the structure require improvement.

The main area where respondents felt improvements were required was on the Charter's principles. The predominant view was that they were 'somewhat wordy' and required 'consistency' around wording and terms across different principles. Clarification was also sought on how a number of the different principles would work. Suggestions were made for a number of the principles to be 'reworded' or 'combined'.

The performance measures were another area which respondents predominately said required improvements. Some respondents felt that there needed to be more 'clarity' between principles, outcomes and measures. Others felt that the measures needed 'refinement' and that there was 'duplication'. Others expressed concern about 'a focus on extensive metrics' and 'resource implications'. There was also some confusion around who would be responsible for measuring performance and whether people would set their own performance measures.

Respondents also sought clarity on the 'scope and application of the Charter', citing potential for confusion as to its purpose and suggested it was made clear what the Charter applies to and 'does not apply to'.

Some respondents felt that the section on statutory obligation was 'somewhat unclear' and 'further information and clarity was needed on who this applied to and what was covered. It was also highlighted that it was important for the Charter to be 'enforceable legally'.

Generally, there was a view by many respondents that the Charter's language could be improved, requesting 'diagrams or images' for explanations and a 'glossary of terms'. Respondents felt that the document required 'general editing' to be digestible for the general population.

Question 3: What are the three most important things that you think need to be considered when engaging communities on major planning processes?

Respondents say the most important considerations when engaging on major planning policies is making it easy for communities to understand, openness and engaging early.

There was a prevailing view from respondents that it was important that there is ‘greater explanation’ of planning and development for the public and a need for innovative ‘visualisation tools’ such as 3D modelling and ‘clear plain English’. It was widely exposed that there was a ‘general lack of understanding in the general public on planning matters’ and how to ‘get people interested’ would be an important consideration.

Respondents widely felt another important consideration was the ‘openness’, ‘honesty’, ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘authenticity’ and ‘quality’ of engagement. Respondents also fairly widely felt that engagement ‘must begin early’ and there should be more ‘effort on upfront engagement on planning policies and plans.’

Question 4: How would you know engagement was improving in planning? What would you see changing?

Respondents say they would know engagement was improving if more people were engaged, understanding of the planning system increased, there was less outrage and parties were working better together.

Overall there was a fairly low amount of direct responses to this question, however from the responses received respondents highlighted ‘understanding’ and the general mood around planning changing as elements of knowing engagement was actually improving.

Question 5: What do you currently do which aligns with the principles in the discussion draft?

Respondents say they endeavour to engage early, tailor engagement to the need, evaluate, use established guidelines for engagement and are genuine in the desire to understand community views.

Overall there was a fairly low amount of direct responses to this question, however from the responses received respondents highlighted that they currently work to ‘community engagement framework’s’ and generally align with the principles in the Charter. However it was welcomed that the Charter introduces ‘formal accountability’.

Question 6: How do you use what you learn to improve/ inform future engagement processes?

Respondents say they train staff and use evaluation methods to get feedback.

Overall there was a low amount of direct responses to this question, however from the responses received respondents highlighted that ‘feedback’ was important to improvement.

Other comments:

Respondents highlighted engagement around development assessments as a consideration. Resource implications to deliver the engagement processes in the Charter are also highlighted, along with and the ability to engage people on planning policies. Respondents also referenced other established guidelines to embed with the Charter and improvements to the structure and layout. The ability for flexibility on selecting an appropriate engagement process was also highlighted.

Engagement around development assessments was fairly widely highlighted by respondents as an important consideration in the process of developing the Charter. Some respondents requested ‘engagement based on the Charter inform development assessment public notification policy’ or that ‘coverage of the Charter should extend to include development assessment’, whereas others felt it should not. Overall respondents sought clarity on what community consultation is retained in the Development Assessment process.

As with answers to previous questions on improvements required to the Charter, respondents again highlighted that ‘resource implications’ for measuring performance should be considered and that the Charter must ensure ‘a practical approach’.

And as with answers to the previous question on what people thought were the most important things to consider when engaging people, respondents felt that the ability to engage people on planning policies was a challenge and a consideration on how best to do this. Respondents said ‘establishing methods to reach all members of the community needed to be considered further.

Government of South Australia and State Planning Commission response to consultation

The Community Engagement Charter has now been updated following feedback received from the consultation.

The key changes are:

The Charter's structure has been clarified under clearer headings

Headings have been refined and updated to include:

- Mandatory Requirements
- Principles
- Performance outcomes
- Measuring performance

The Charter's principles are more succinct

The number of Principles have been reduced and are more succinct. The new principles are:

- Engagement is genuine
- Engagement is inclusive and respectful
- Engagement is fit for purpose
- Engagement is informed and transparent
- Engagement is reviewed and improved

Engagement outcomes are clearer, to aide measurement

The new Performance outcomes are clearer and shorter, making it easier to measure and determine if principles will be met as part of an engagement process.

There is a clearer relationship between measures and the engagement processes

The section on Measuring Performance provides a table which provides more clarity about the relationship between the principles, performance outcomes and examples of types of measures for performance.

Mandatory requirements have been expanded

Under Mandatory Requirements a table has been expanded to include the length of time that the relevant consultation should occur for.

New easy to read graphics

New graphics are included to provide a clear and easy visual representation on where community engagement should be focussed.

A new user Guide has been created

A new Guide has now been created to accompany the Charter and this sets out further detail and explanations on how the Charter should be used.

3. Next steps – Consultation Phase 2

We are keen to hear your views on the newly updated ‘consultation draft’ of the Community Engagement Charter and Guide. We would like to hear views from people who have already responded and also from those who have not yet provided a response within any of the earlier consultation stages.

The consultation draft can be found on the SA Planning Portal and consultation is open until Friday 8 December. Valuable feedback helps to strengthen the development of this important Charter and we hope to hear your views.