Engagement principles in law and in council policy

What legislation requires, and how Australian councils state their own principles

What the legislation says

South Australia

Local Government Community Engagement Charter 2025 · *Local Government Act 1999* s50(2)

- Reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities to get information and take part
- Plain-language, accessible information that supports participation
- Methods that encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and debate
- Methods suited to the significance and likely impact of the decision
- Communities told how their views were taken into account, and the reasons for decisions

Victoria

Council community engagement policies · *Local Government Act 2020* s56

- A clearly defined objective and scope
- Objective, relevant and timely information for participants
- Participants representative of the people and groups affected
- Reasonable support to engage meaningfully and in an informed way
- Participants told how the process will influence the council's decision
- Deliberative engagement for the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan

New Zealand

Principles of consultation · *Local Government Act 2002* s82

- Relevant information in a manner and format that suits the people affected
- Affected and interested people encouraged to give their views
- Clear information on the purpose and scope of the consultation
- A reasonable opportunity to present views in an appropriate way
- Views received with an open mind and given due consideration
- Access to a clear record of decisions and the reasons for them

Large metropolitan councils

Principle headings as written in each council's policy

LARGE METRO · WA

City of Stirling

Community Engagement Policy · adopted 2019, reviewed October 2024

1. We manage expectations with clear purpose and negotiables
2. We use best practice tools and methodology
3. We build trust and credibility
4. We lead with respect and understanding of what we already know
5. We identify our stakeholders and start where people are at
6. We close the loop with the community
7. We monitor and evaluate our engagement efforts and identify opportunities for improvement.

LARGE METRO · QLD

Brisbane City Council

CED002 Community Engagement Policy · reviewed November 2025

1. Integrity and transparency
2. Respectfulness
3. Inclusivity
4. Informative
5. Working together
6. Well Planned
7. Politically engaged
8. Meaningful
9. Feedback
10. Efficiency and value for money
11. Privacy

LARGE METRO · VIC

Knox City Council

Community Engagement Policy · approved July 2024

1. Meaningful
2. Transparent
3. Respectful
4. Inclusive
5. Informed

References

South Australia Community Engagement Charter, SA Government Gazette, 11 December 2025: dhud.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1433850/Community-Engagement-Charter-11-December-2025.pdf

Victoria *Local Government Act 2020* ss55–56: legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020

New Zealand *Local Government Act 2002* s82: legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2002/0084/latest

City of Stirling stirling.wa.gov.au/awcontent/Web/Documents/City and Council/Governance and transparency/Policies/Community-Engagement-Policy.pdf

Brisbane City Council brisbane.qld.gov.au/content/dam/brisbanecitycouncil/corpwebsite/Community-support-and-safety/documents/CED002-community-engagement-policy.pdf

Knox City Council knox.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-08/Community Engagement Policy_0.PDF

Legislative principles are condensed from each Act or Charter. Council principle headings are reproduced as written; each policy gives a fuller description of each principle. Council type labels are indicative.

Small metro, regional, remote and small rural councils

Principle headings as written in each council's engagement policy or strategy

Small metropolitan and large regional councils

SMALL METRO · WA

City of Vincent

Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy · adopted 2021, reviewed June 2026

1. Engage early and clearly
2. Match the method to the impact
3. Be inclusive and targeted
4. Value all forms of expertise
5. Close the loop
6. Respect privacy

SMALL METRO · NSW

North Sydney Council

Community Engagement Policy · re-adopted November 2019

1. Focus and Commitment
2. Resourcing
3. Timing
4. Inclusiveness, Accessibility and Diversity
5. Provision of Information
6. Responsiveness and Feedback
7. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

LARGE REGIONAL · VIC

City of Greater Geelong

Community Engagement Policy 2026–2030 · adopted May 2026

1. Plan proactively
2. Be inclusive and accessible and support participation
3. Be transparent about influence
4. Choose the right engagement methods
5. Provide feedback and keep improving

LARGE REGIONAL · NSW

Central Coast Council

Community Engagement Strategy · March 2025

1. Respect and transparency
2. Access and inclusion
3. Clarity
4. Accountability and improvement
5. Capacity

Remote and small rural councils

REMOTE · WA

Shire of East Pilbara

4.1 Community Engagement Policy · adopted April 2024

1. Place-based
2. Culturally appropriate
3. Fair & Accessible
4. Transparent
5. Collaborative
6. Well-Planned

SMALL RURAL · WA

Shire of Quairading

Community Engagement Policy · adopted March 2024

1. Integrity
2. Inclusivity
3. Informed
4. Accountability
5. Excellence
6. Innovation

SMALL RURAL · WA

Shire of Bruce Rock

Policy 7.2 Community Engagement · adopted September 2012

1. Focus and commitment
2. Transparency and openness
3. Responsiveness and feedback
4. Inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity
5. Accountability
6. Information
7. Timing
8. Resources
9. Evaluation

References

City of Vincent vincent.wa.gov.au/documents/576/community-and-stakeholder-engagement-policy

North Sydney Council northsydney.nsw.gov.au/downloads/file/389/community-engagement-policy

City of Greater Geelong geelongcity.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026-06/community_engagement_policy_2026_2030_final_from_docassembler2.pdf

Central Coast Council centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-05/community-engagement-strategy.pdf

Shire of East Pilbara eastpilbara.wa.gov.au/documents/1337/community-engagement-policy-(adopted-26-april-2024)

Shire of Quairading quairading.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Community-Engagement-Policy-v0324.pdf

Shire of Bruce Rock brucerock.wa.gov.au/documents/1388/community-engagement-policy

Principle headings are reproduced as written; each policy gives a fuller description of each principle. Dates are the adoption, approval or review dates stated in each document. Council type labels are indicative.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORKS

Community engagement standards

IAP2, OECD, AccountAbility, the Brisbane Declaration and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement

International Association for Public Participation · approved by the IAP2 International Board, June 2015 · launched at the IAP2 Australasia Conference, Perth

Eleven stages that any engagement process can be planned and audited against

1. Problem definition
The problem, who it affects, the outcome sought

2. Agreement of purpose/context and identification of negotiables and non-negotiables
Shared context; what can and cannot change

3. Level of participation
The depth of public involvement, guided by the IAP2 Spectrum

4. Stakeholder identification and relationship development
Who has a stake, including those often left out; building trust

5. Project requirements
Deadlines, budget, legal and other constraints

6. Development and approval of engagement plan
Purpose, schedule, budget, roles and risks, agreed and endorsed

7. Execution of engagement plan
Deliver the plan with resources, timelines and compliance in place

8. Feedback
Gather participants' views and report back how input is used

9. Evaluation and review
Were objectives met, and what difference did it make

10. Monitoring
Track implementation and longer-term effects

11. Documentation of evidence
Record process, feedback and evaluation; supports audit

Free, Prior and Informed Consent

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples · adopted 2007; Australia endorsed 2009; not legally binding

- **Free:** no coercion, intimidation or manipulation
- **Prior:** sought well before authorisation or activity, allowing time for Indigenous decision-making
- **Informed:** full information on the proposal, its impacts, risks and benefits
- **Consent:** good-faith consultation through peoples' own representatives and institutions; consent may be withheld
- Key articles: 10, 11, 19, 28 and 32

OECD Good Practice Principles for Deliberative Processes

OECD, 2020 · for citizens' juries, panels and assemblies

1. Purpose
2. Accountability
3. Transparency
4. Representativeness
5. Inclusiveness
6. Information
7. Group deliberation
8. Time
9. Integrity
10. Privacy
11. Evaluation

Brisbane Declaration on Community Engagement

2005 · International Conference on Engaging Communities, hosted by the Queensland Government and the United Nations

- Calls for engagement with **integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence**
- **Transparency:** real objectives and methods are open to all
- **Broad representation:** reflects the views of the wider population affected
- **Facilitated dialogue:** people explore options and reach shared understanding
- **Participant influence:** participants shape the process and how outcomes are implemented

AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard

AccountAbility, 2015 · widely used in corporate and resources-sector engagement

- **Inclusivity:** people affected by decisions have a voice in them
- **Materiality:** identify and be clear about the issues that matter most
- **Responsiveness:** respond openly to material issues through decisions, actions and communication

References

IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard © International Association for Public Participation: iap2.org.au/?p=2530 · stage summary: organizingengagement.org/models/quality-assurance-standard-for-community-and-stakeholder-engagement

UNDRIP and FPIC un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html · un-redd.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/KHite_FPIC_Overview.pdf

OECD oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-issue-focus/innovative-citizen-participation/good-practice-principles-for-deliberative-processes-for-public-decision-making.pdf

Brisbane Declaration cpd.org.au/?p=40375

AA1000 AccountAbility: accountability.org/standards/aa1000-accountability-principles

Content is summarised from each source, not reproduced. IAP2 stage names are as titled in the Standard; descriptions are summaries.

Community Engagement Charter: what is required, and when

Mandatory minimum actions for each engagement category. In force from 11 December 2025.

Requirement	Minimum action	Significant: ABP & rating	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform
Website	Publish information about the matter that is easy to find on the council website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
News publication	Publish in a local news publication not produced by the council (print where available, otherwise digital)	✓	✓			
Consult with the whole council area	Consider suitable notification across the area, and extra information to draw attention and support participation	✓	✓	✓		
Invite submissions	Explain how to make a submission, including the timeframe	✓	✓			
Explain the decision-making process	Say what the council proposes, why, what it seeks to achieve, and how feedback will inform the decision	✓	✓			
Seek and consider feedback: significant matters	At least **21 days** for feedback. Give the council a summary of feedback before the decision.	✓	✓			
Public meeting	Hold a public meeting for written or verbal submissions (can be part of a council meeting)	✓				
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who made a written submission to speak at a council meeting before the decision		✓			
Seek and consider feedback	Explain how feedback will inform the decision, and allow an appropriate period to respond			✓	✓	
Consult with the local community	Consider suitable notification in the affected area, and extra information to support participation				✓	
Information to the whole council area	Inform the whole community if it may be directly affected					✓
Information to the local community	Inform the local community that may be directly affected					✓

These actions are **minimums**. The Charter states councils should do more for matters of greater significance, community interest or impact, and should seek broad, diverse and representative views. Page 2 lists the five categories and which matters fall in each.

Source: Minister for Local Government, Community Engagement Charter, *South Australian Government Gazette* No. 71, 11 December 2025, pp. 4898–4901. Wording condensed from the Gazette. dhud.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1433850/Community-Engagement-Charter-11-December-2025.pdf

The five categories, and which matters fall in each

Sections of the *Local Government Act 1999* unless noted. Page 1 sets out the minimum actions for each category.

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Significant: ABP & rating

Adopting the annual business plan, or changing the basis of council rates

- Annual business plan (s123(3)(b))
- Basis of rating, including differential, separate or service rates and charges, and the basis of land valuation (s151(5)(e))

Significant

Significant impact on most or all ratepayers and residents, or the wider community or area

- Representation reviews (s12(7))
- Strategic management plans (s122(6))
- Differential rating and special adjustments (s156(14a)(b))
- Revoking community land classification (s194(2)(b))
- Community land management plans: adoption (s197(1))
- Community land management plans: significant amendments (s198(3))
- Leasing or licensing community land (s202(2))

Standard

Decisions that benefit from community input across the council area

- Substantial changes to office opening hours or places (s45(3))
- Community engagement policy (s50A(6)(b))
- Council behavioural support policies (s75F(6))
- Access to meetings and documents (s92(5))
- Policies on the power to make orders (s259(2)(b))

Local

Decisions that affect an identifiable smaller group of residents or ratepayers, or a local area

- Road works permits where traffic is impeded for more than 48 hours, or no detour is available (s223(1))
- Planting vegetation on roads that may significantly affect residents, businesses or advertisers (s232(b))

Inform

Council provides information to a community affected by a decision

- Minor changes to office opening hours or places (s45(3))
- Road works permits where traffic is impeded for less than 48 hours with a detour in place (s223(1))
- Election information, education and publicity (*Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* s13A(2))

Source: Minister for Local Government, Community Engagement Charter, *South Australian Government Gazette* No. 71, 11 December 2025, pp. 4898–4901. Wording condensed from the Gazette. dhud.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1433850/Community-Engagement-Charter-11-December-2025.pdf

Are these expectations correct?

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“The SA Charter sets the right minimum expectations for community engagement.”

Place one tick or dot in the column that best matches your view. Add comments on the next poster: **What would you change?**

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

Refers to the Minister for Local Government's Community Engagement Charter, *South Australian Government Gazette* No. 71, 11 December 2025. Read with the SA Charter posters.

FOR COUNCILS

Aha! CONSULTING

What does quality engagement deliver for councils?

Write one idea per sticky note and place it below.

FOR COMMUNITIES

Aha! CONSULTING

What does quality engagement deliver for communities?

Write one idea per sticky note and place it below.

PRINCIPLES

Aha! CONSULTING

Are there ‘principles’ that can be applied across all local governments?

Write one idea per sticky note and place it below.

SA CHARTER · COMMENTS

Aha! CONSULTING

Are these expectations correct? What would you change?

Write one idea per sticky note and place it below. Use with the scorecard.