

Consultation Planning Scheme Policy

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1 Introduction

Consultation and negotiation, especially with immediate neighbours, are recommended in the formulation of any development proposal. This will minimise conflicts, including appeals to courts.

Community consultation will be requested as an integral part of preparing a Centre Concept Plan, or in providing additional information in support of a planning application where this additional information takes the form of:

- an Environmental Impact Assessment Report or Management Plan
- a Community Impact Assessment Report or Management Plan
- a Commercial Development Impact Assessment Report.

The advantages of consulting with the community are as follows:

- it helps to identify community concerns and values
- it informs the community of possible changes and actions they can take
- a well informed and involved community is less likely to object to a development if their views have been heard and responded to
- local knowledge can help improve a development proposal, e.g. by making it more marketable, providing information on local history, identifying available local resources

- it helps to establish credibility by overcoming mistrust and cynicism in the community
- it can provide data to help inform the assessment of community impacts
- it helps balance and improve decision making, delivering better outcomes for all parties
- positive relationships in the community can benefit developers and Council.

2 Consultation principles

To be effective and credible, consultation programs should be carefully planned and implemented. Poor consultation can be more damaging than no consultation. To ensure quality, a consultation program should comply with the following principles:

- people affected by a development proposal or project have the right to be informed and to have the opportunity to participate and this may include tenants affected by the development for example
- the consultation program should be interesting, equitable (in terms of physical access and access to information), inclusive (of all stakeholders, particularly ‘marginalised groups’) and adequately resourced
- consultation should commence early and form part of the development formulation and assessment process rather than being a one-off event
- the history of previous consultation programs should be taken into account
- the purpose, expected outcomes and decision making process should be clearly communicated to all parties participating
- a diversity of consultation techniques should be implemented to maximise opportunity for participation
- consultation objectives should be matched with appropriate techniques as outlined in the table in Section 3.5
- the consultation program should be constantly evaluated against its objectives and modified accordingly to meet changing needs
- participants should be informed how the issues raised through consultation have been addressed in the development proposal/outcome.

3 Format of the consultation program

The processes and results of the consultation program should be documented and form part of the above reports. It is recommended that the following steps be followed in planning and undertaking the consultation program.

3.1 Clarify the purpose

Identify what the consultation is intended to achieve and communicate this clearly to everyone involved. In planning the consultation program and determining the level of consultation needed, the following criteria should be considered:

- the significance of the impacts anticipated, e.g. economic, social and environmental
- the extent of controversy anticipated
- the nature of the community affected
- the nature and extent of the proposal
- who is responsible for decision making and how consultation will inform this
- the time frame and resources available
- the type of information that needs to be made available and/or communicated
- the reasons for the scope and type of consultation to be undertaken
- the stages of the community impact assessment process at which consultation is to be undertaken
- the techniques to be used
- how the program can be adapted to address issues and needs as they arise
- how feedback will be given to all those with an interest
- how the information gained will be documented.

3.2 Identify who to involve

Identify the communities who may need to be consulted. These may include:

- geographically based communities, e.g. neighbours, people resident in the street, the wider neighbourhood
- interest groups, e.g. workers, residents (both owner occupiers and tenants), visitors, housing agencies, people with disabilities, teenagers, cyclists, migrant groups, Aboriginal communities and service providers

- new communities, e.g. greenfield development, urban infill sites and new industrial estates. It can be difficult to involve people who are not yet resident. However, an effective alternative is to consult people who now occupy recently developed areas to learn from them what impacts need to be managed.

Affected communities often include people from a geographic area and non-geographic communities of interest. The following provides a guide to determining the affected community.

Local street impact

Developments in this category would have impacts on the adjoining properties and neighbouring properties in the block, including properties opposite the site, in which the site is located. Examples of these developments may include housing for older people and people with a disability and refugees.

Immediate neighbourhood impact

Developments in this category include all developments that have local street impact and developments that would have impacts for a larger part of the street in which the site is located. Examples of these developments may include child care facilities, welfare premises and youth centres.

Wider impact

This category includes developments in the previous two categories and developments that may have impacts beyond the immediate or local area. These developments may be of interest to Citywide interest groups, e.g. National Trust for development applications involving a heritage building. Examples of these developments may include:

- boarding house redevelopment or demolition
- crematoriums and funeral parlours
- expansion or development of educational facilities or health facilities
- new residential suburbs or housing developments that significantly change population size
- large cultural or religious centres
- licensed premises/night clubs
- nursing homes and hospices
- redevelopment of old industrial sites.

Popular interest groups

This category includes developments that may have an impact on communities of interest such as service providers, youth, cultural groups and cyclists. Examples of these developments include:

- housing for older people and people with a disability
- alterations to major centres
- new residential suburbs or housing developments that significantly change population size
- large cultural or religious centres.

3.3 Establish a time frame

Ensure that consultation events occur at appropriate times to enable the information gathered to inform the critical decision making stages.

3.4 Decide the resource requirements

Ensure that there are sufficient resources available to support the consultation program being designed.

3.5 Plan the process

Plan a program to meet the requirements defined in the preceding steps. Keep the program flexible to enable it to be adjusted to changing needs as the process unfolds. *Table 1* describes the types of techniques that could be

used to achieve different objectives. It also indicates the community type that each of these techniques are suited to.

3.6 Implement and monitor

Continually evaluate how well the consultation program is achieving its stated objectives and adjust events, techniques, timing or resources as required.

3.7 Present the results

Show how the results of the consultation have informed the final decision and communicate this to all parties involved. These results could be presented in the format shown in *Table 2* and should clearly indicate:

- who was consulted and how
- the issues they raised
- how the results of consultation informed the project outcome.

Table 1 Techniques to achieve objectives based on the community affected

Technique	Objective	Affected community			
		Local street impact	Immediate neighbourhood impact	Wider impact	Particular interest group
letters	informing the community	✓	✓		✓
brochures and information updates/leaflets		✓	✓	✓	✓
media releases				✓	
signage on land		✓	✓	✓	
display				✓	
questionnaires	informing the community and obtaining specific feedback			✓	✓
discussions with adjoining property owners	information exchange, involving the community and obtaining some feedback	✓	✓	✓	
street meetings	information exchange, involving the community and obtaining feedback	✓	✓		
community meetings					✓
personal interviews		✓			✓

Technique	Objective	Affected community			
		Local street impact	Immediate neighbourhood impact	Wider impact	Particular interest group
workshops	information exchange, educating, involving the affected community and obtaining specific and broad feedback				✓
community advisory committee	information exchange, educating and involving the community, building support and obtaining feedback on a wide range of issues				✓

Table 2 Results of consultation

Stakeholders consulted	Issues raised	Method used	Recommendation
The groups and individuals who were consulted	Issues, objections, suggestions, options raised by participants	The methods used to consult with the groups and individuals participating	The amendments, conditions, compensation and other mitigation strategies recommended

4 Reference material

Useful references that may assist in developing and implementing a community consultation process are:

- *The Community Participation Handbook—Resources for Public Involvement in the Planning Process*, edited by Donald Perlgut and Wendy Sarkissian. Available from Institute for Science and Technology Policy, Murdoch University
- *Community Participation, A Practical Guide*, Wendy Sarkissian, A. Cook & K. Walsh, 1997. Available from Institute for Science and Technology Policy, Murdoch University
- *The Consultation Guide*, Bea Rogan. Available from Local Government Association of Queensland.