

Water stakeholder and community engagement policy

Purpose of this policy

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (the department) is committed to effective and genuine engagement with stakeholders and the broader community. The department recognises that engaging with stakeholders and the community leads to better public policy outcomes, improved service delivery and enhanced customer satisfaction.

The purpose of this policy is to embed within the Department of Planning and Environment–Water (DPE–Water) a transparent and consistent approach for DPE–Water to engage with stakeholders and the community. This policy identifies strategic principles to underpin DPE–Water’s engagement activities and sets the spectrum of participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the model by which DPE–Water will operationalise these principles.

To whom this policy applies

This policy applies to DPE–Water within the department. It applies to all ongoing/term/casual/temporary/seconded employees and private contractors/consultants undertaking engagement activities on behalf of the department.

This policy does not apply to engagement with other government agencies, whether local, state, or federal. It does not apply to contact with media representatives, in which case the department’s media policy applies.

This policy does not apply to emergency event response situations, for example animal disease, foodborne outbreak, flood, or fire, in which cases engagement may be undertaken according to the department’s standard emergency management practices.

Policy statement

Principles

All stakeholder and community engagement conducted by DPE–Water must comply with the following principles.

1. Purposeful

Engagement activities are to deliver on NSW Government priorities and the department’s corporate goals and be undertaken with a clear understanding of what we want to achieve.

2. Inclusive

DPE–Water will identify and enable the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

3. Timely

DPE–Water will provide sufficient time for meaningful consultation, outline timeframes up front and conduct engagement activities in an efficient manner.

4. Transparent

DPE–Water will explain the engagement process, provide information to enable meaningful participation and set clear expectations around how participants’ input will inform outcomes. To ensure transparency consultation plans and schedules of stakeholder engagement activities will be published on relevant department websites.

5. Respectful

Engagement activities will acknowledge the needs, experience, perspective, and expertise of participants.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation

- a. DPE–Water will operationalise these principles through implementation of the IAP2 spectrum of participation, which is recognised as a global tool to define levels of engagement. DPE–Water will use different approaches to implement the IAP2 spectrum for engagement, as appropriate at any given time for the project or issue and for stakeholder and community needs.
- b. DPE–Water will use a targeted approach to engagement on issues which have relevance to limited audiences, or where consultation with specific groups who hold detailed knowledge will result in better public policy outcomes being developed by the department. In these cases, working with bilateral relationships, establishing short-term committees or reference panels, or undertaking roundtables or deliberative forums with groups of stakeholders are examples of appropriate approaches. These are designed to enable direct and informed two-way consultation and sharing of information between DPE–Water and key stakeholders for specific-purpose engagement and to meet a genuine need for participants.
- c. DPE–Water will use open approaches to consult with, inform, promote awareness, and access the views and knowledge of stakeholders and the community on general issues where detailed or technical knowledge is not a prerequisite for meaningful participation. Broad-scale engagement involves public communication, information, education, and consultation, for example through website and social media material and undertaking ‘town hall’ style public meetings or community forums.
- d. DPE–Water will use technology where possible and appropriate to reduce potential barriers to participation in engagement activities, such as distance, mobility, or availability at prescribed times/locations.

Safety considerations

This policy will enhance the wellbeing of staff by providing a rigorous and consistent framework by which to undertake stakeholder and community engagement activities. This serves to protect staff from possible stress resulting from the risk of perceived or actual inadvertent improper conduct or loss of reputation in the absence of this policy.

Failure to comply with this policy

If you fail to comply with this policy, corrective action may be taken in accordance with the [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#). All employees, and others covered by the code, are expected to adhere to the ethical and behaviour standards outlined in the code.

Review timeframe

The Office of the CEO NSW Water Sector will review this policy no later than three years from the date the document is approved. The document may be reviewed earlier in response to post-implementation feedback, changes to legislation, or as necessary.

Related documents

Other [policy documents](#) that should be ready in conjunction with this policy:

- Code of ethics and conduct
- External service-related complaints policy
- Fraud and corruption control policy
- Lobbying of Government Officials Policy
- Media policy
- Public interest disclosures policy

Legislation that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Lobbying of Government Officials Act 2011 No 5
- Lobbying of Government Officials (Lobbyists Code of Conduct) Regulation 2014
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

Other related documents:

- Draft DPE Engagement charter, Stakeholder engagement framework, and Engagement toolkit.
- NSW Electoral Commission Register of Third-Party Lobbyists
- NSW Government Premier's Priorities.

Policy metadata

Table 1. Policy metadata

Category	Description
Status	Final
Date of approval	18/01/2023
Approver	A/CEO NSW Water Sector

Category	Description
Group	Water
Division	Office of the CEO NSW Water Sector
Policy owner	Director, Communications, Media and Engagement, Water
Branch	Water Relationships
Document location	DPE Intranet and Internet
Next planned review date	December 2023
Associated procedure	See Appendix 3.
Any additional applicability	Not applicable
Superseded document	Not applicable
Further information	Stakeholder engagement – Water in New South Wales (nsw.gov.au) DPE–Water phone 1300 081 047 water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au
Document Reference	DSIRD414

Version control

Table 2. Version Control

Version	Date issued	Change
1	28/03/2018	Document creation
2	18/01/2023	Updated to reflect new branding and DPE governance policy template, name change, roles and responsibilities, and approvals procedure.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Definitions

Appendix 2. Roles and responsibilities

Appendix 3. Procedure

Appendix 1 – Definitions

Table 3. Definitions

Term	Definitions
Community	The general public.
Engagement	Communication and consultation for the purpose of sharing information, raising awareness, accessing knowledge, leveraging expertise, and/or gathering input. Engagement includes informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering stakeholders and the community.
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation.
Participation	Stakeholders and the community actively taking part in at least one of the five IAP2 engagement activities: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower. It is the act of people sharing their views to influence the department's decisions to ultimately shape future service delivery.
Stakeholder	An individual or group who has a direct interest in or can directly affect or be affected by the actions of the department with respect to a specific issue. The department needs to engage with a different mix of stakeholders on different issues.

Appendix 2 – Roles and responsibilities

Table 4. Roles and responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Deputy Secretary (supported by the Leadership Team)	Promote and enable a stakeholder and customer focused culture.
Policy owner (or delegate/s)	Final approval on all stakeholder and community engagement plans. Review engagement reports and ensure key findings are considered for follow up actions.
Business lines	Plan and implement engagement activities in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy and the IAP2 spectrum of participation. Record relevant information gathered during engagement activities in the department's CRM tool. Prepare and report on engagement outcomes for operational effectiveness in progressing programs, initiatives, or campaigns.
All staff	Comply with this policy.

Appendix 3 – Procedure

1. Where a business line needs to engage and consult to support an operational program, policy initiative or campaign, this will be done in accordance with the principles outlined in this policy and the IAP2 spectrum of participation.
2. Prior to consultation taking place the subject owner will ensure that a stakeholder and community engagement plan is in place and identifies: why consultation is needed, the audiences and groups to be consulted and the methods and information that will be used.
3. The subject owner will provide their draft stakeholder and community engagement plan to their line manager for their agreement and endorsement.
4. It is the business line owner's accountability to ensure that other governance and control functions, including Legal and Risk, are consulted and agreement sought where required.
5. Business lines need to ensure each draft stakeholder and community engagement plan is signed off by the Director, Communications, Media and Engagement, Water (or their delegate).
6. Business lines then engage with stakeholders and/or the community in line with the approved engagement plan.
7. Business lines capture relevant information gathered during the engagement activity in DPE–Water's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool and report on outcomes to their line management, and other areas as appropriate.
8. Communications, Media, and Engagement will evaluate and review engagement activities across DPE–Water to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.