



Communications and Engagement Framework

2013–15

ABOUT US



The EPA is committed to involving our stakeholders in achieving a healthier environment and a prosperous and sustainable future. We want to ensure that outcomes are achieved through effective communication and engagement.

We respect cultural and linguistic diversity and acknowledge the traditional owners' natural heritage and connection with the land.

We are South Australia's independent environmental watchdog – regulating in a fair and transparent manner.

We protect, restore and enhance the environment for all South Australians.

We seek to be firm and fair – we encourage and reward the willing – and act with the full force of the law, penalising those who intentionally or recklessly cause environmental harm.

We base our decisions and actions on sound environmental science and evidence.

We are committed to genuine, respectful and accessible consultation and engagement with our stakeholders.

We are committed to working with our stakeholders for a healthier environment and a sustainable future.



INTRODUCTION

As South Australia's independent environmental regulator, the mission of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is to protect, restore and enhance the environment for all South Australians. The EPA 2012–2015 Strategic Plan sets out our work priorities, operational challenges and environmental protection goals in fulfilling this mission over the three-year timeframe.

This Communications and Engagement Framework is our public statement of the role communications and engagement play in supporting the delivery of our articulated strategic priorities:

- Robust regulation
- Sound science
- Strategic influence and partnerships
- Genuine engagement
- Adaptive organisation.

The Framework aligns these strategic priorities with its own three priority objectives: Awareness and understanding, Active relationships, and Organisational capability.

The Framework identifies a range of specific commitments in relation to the delivery of communications and engagement across our diverse stakeholder base and within the agency, which are designed to collectively foster a positive and proactive corporate culture in this area of EPA operations. It will guide how we interact with diverse communities and specific stakeholders, embed best practice communications and engagement as 'business as usual' across the EPA and develop the internal capabilities to deliver our various commitments.

In summary, this Communications and Engagement Framework:

- establishes how we will articulate who we are and what we do
- aligns our communications and engagement activities with best practice standards
- supports a positive corporate culture and capability with respect to communications and engagement across the organisation.

In preparing this document we have consulted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including: industry representatives, community groups, and government agencies (Round-table Communications and Engagement Workshop, October 2012) and the EPA Executive, managers and staff at the EPA.

The Framework has also been informed by market research on community perceptions of EPA site contamination communications (Harrison Research, April 2012) and EPA stakeholder perceptions of EPA service delivery (Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, University of SA, May 2012); and EPA customer service desk statistics and feedback.

WHAT WE MEAN BY COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

The cornerstone of good engagement is the ability to communicate well to a range of audiences and to adopt a flexible approach when required. Integrating communications and engagement work will build a strong foundation for productive relationships with all EPA stakeholders.

This Framework therefore draws from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

(see Figure 1 below and Appendix A on page 15) that is widely used across the South Australian public sector to assist with the selection of the level of engagement for stakeholders on issues. The level of engagement used depends on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made or the purpose of the engagement.

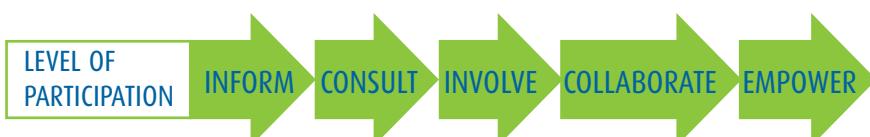


Fig. 1: The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model

This spectrum forms the basis of the South Australian Government's policy statement Better Together: Principles of Engagement (March 2013), with the following six principles providing the foundation for better and more effective engagement:

- We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly
- We know who to engage
- We know the background and history

Communication is the sending and receiving of information and messages from one party to another. Whilst it usually involves informing and telling, it may also be a two-way exchange that involves listening and responding.

Engagement is actively bringing community and stakeholder voices into the decisions that affect or interest them. It involves dialogue, listening, responding and the building of relationships. Importantly, communication is used to engage.

- We begin early
- We are genuine
- We are creative, relevant and engaging.

Table 1: The purpose of IAP2 levels of participation

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Empower | To place final decision making in the hands of stakeholders |
| Collaborate | To partner with stakeholders on each aspect of the decision including the preferred solution |
| Involve | To work directly with stakeholders ensuring that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered |
| Consult | To provide avenues for feedback on issues |
| Inform | To provide information that assists stakeholders to understand the issue |



The premise of the IAP2 spectrum is to guide the application of the appropriate level of engagement to each particular situation.

From a strategic perspective, the EPA is committed to an integrated approach that considers the most appropriate form of communications and level of engagement for each specific situation. At the first step in the spectrum – Inform – the objective is to provide information to raise awareness and enhance understanding. This type of engagement is one-way communication but, done well, is still a valid and genuine way to engage if the objective is to ‘tell’.

As the level of involvement increases, the stakeholder is encouraged to participate more fully and the communication becomes more interactive, providing greater opportunity for stakeholders to play a role in influencing or informing decision making and project implementation.

Applying the IAP2 spectrum requires the EPA to think more broadly about engagement opportunities and to expand its communications efforts beyond website information, public notices, advertising and media releases.

A TWO-WAY PROCESS

We also seek a reciprocal commitment from our stakeholders to provide open, timely and constructive input and feedback that recognises and enhances understanding of respective needs, aspirations and circumstances.

In the past, the EPA has operated predominantly at the *Inform* and *Consult* levels. Whilst recognising our regulatory function, we will increase our efforts to *Involve* stakeholders more often and more effectively, with their views used to inform our thinking and decision making, and to *Collaborate* by developing important partnerships that further our strategic priorities. There are however, limitations on how a regulatory body performing statutory functions can *Empower* stakeholders.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS



The EPA's key stakeholders are diverse and complex but broadly fall into the groups listed in Table 2. Our stakeholders play an important role in contributing to policy and programs, informing decisions and promoting the work of the EPA. For diverse communities and specific stakeholders, the benefits of engagement include the opportunity to contribute to policy and program development as experts in their field, make valuable connections and participate in decision making processes.

TABLE 2 : EPA STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

| WHO | COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES |
|--|---|
| The general public – all South Australians for whom the EPA protects, restores and enhances the environment. They may not be part of an organised or structured group but may be impacted by pollution events, for example residents and beach-goers. | The EPA is committed to providing all South Australians with open, transparent and accessible information. Traditional media (print, radio and television), social media and the EPA website (with the online Public Register Directory) will be the main communications channels. |
| Community groups and organisations – environmental action groups, community reference groups, and members of the public who are interested in environmental management. | Effective and multi-dimensional communications and engagement activities across this broad group are critical to increase awareness and promote understanding of current and emerging issues and enable the community to have informed input into EPA decisions. Ways to involve the communities in EPA processes and projects include EPA participation in community group meetings to contribute to discussions; partnering with community organisations on projects; inviting direct participation in environmental management; and an interactive EPA website. |



| WHO | COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES |
|---|---|
| Industry – both EPA licensed and unlicensed industries and businesses. This group includes both large and small enterprises. | Innovative communications and engagement is recognised as a regulatory tool that not only enables the regulated community to better understand their environmental obligations, but also supports and enables industries in moving beyond compliance. |
| Associations, professional organisations and peak bodies – examples of this group include the Conservation Council of South Australia; the South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy, Waste Management Association of Australia; and South Australian Wine Industry Association. | Working with these organisations and their extensive networks will enable greater collaboration, increased impact in relation to key messages and mutual benefit. For example joint workshops enable the EPA to provide information, answer questions and seek feedback on issues that may impact on constituents of these organisations. |
| Federal and State Government departments and agencies | Opportunities exist to increase across-government planning and policy outcomes through partnering and sharing of resources with some Federal and State departments and agencies in relation to areas of EPA business. Options include: alignment of priorities; presentation of information; dovetailing EPA planning with the planning processes of others; and seeking direct participation. |
| Local government – collectively, represented by the Local Government Association (LGA), and at individual councils level – mayors and elected members, chief executives and council staff. | Given the co-regulatory role that exists between the EPA and local government, EPA communications and engagement should focus on liaison and relationship building with all levels of local government, particularly in areas where the EPA has a high level of co-regulatory activity or where a large licensed site is located. The EPA can seek to regularly present to and partner with this group through events such as the LGA's Annual Conference and Showcase and LGA News. |

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

These objectives are aligned with each of the strategic priorities of the EPA Strategic Plan 2012-15, to clearly demonstrate how the associated commitments (actions and key initiatives) support and contribute to the EPA achieving its corporate strategic priorities and delivering sustainable environmental outcomes.

Awareness and understanding clearly articulates who we are and what we do and builds stakeholder awareness and understanding of the EPA's role as an independent regulator and advisor, our work, achievements and environmental challenges. This usually operates at the IAP2 levels of Inform and Consult. Effort is required to ensure communications and engagement activities at these levels are of a high quality, relevant, accessible and presented in an appealing manner.

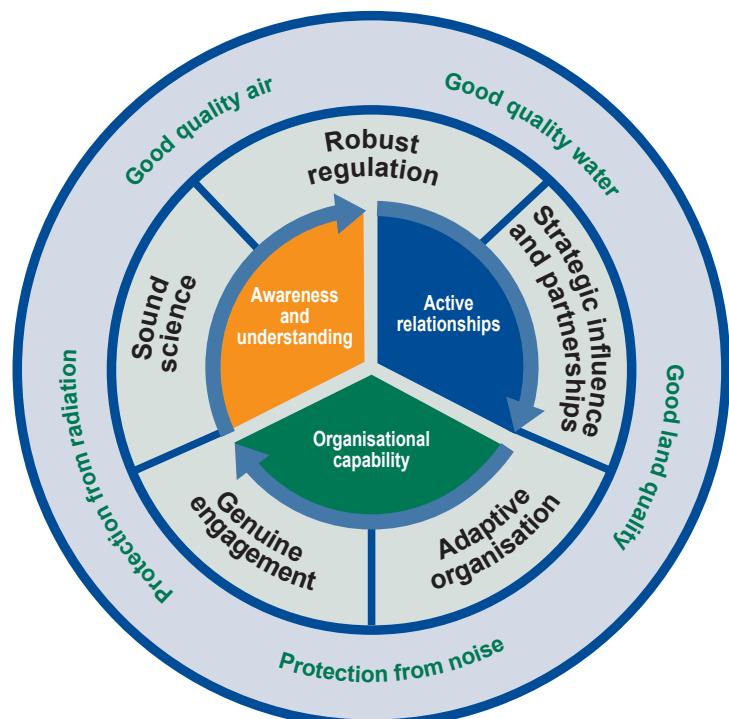
Three priority objectives have been identified as essential for best practice communications and engagement:

- Awareness and understanding
- Active relationships
- Organisational capability.

Active relationships entails building relationships and encouraging two-way communication. By involving and collaborating, our stakeholders are able to play a role in influencing or informing our decision making and project implementation.

Organisational capability is the set of essential skills, knowledge and systems within an organisation that supports and enables effective communications and genuine engagement.

Figure 2: EPA Strategic Plan priorities and three priority communication objectives:



ROBUST REGULATION

OUR COMMITMENTS

As a respected and effective advisor and regulator, the EPA will employ best practice regulatory principles and tools, and robust processes to:

- support and enable the willing
- tackle the important issues through taking a proportionate, risk and evidence based approach
- withstand challenge
- be decisive and timely in taking strong enforcement action when needed.

Awareness and understanding

- Showcase our activities and achievements to stakeholders through events, sponsorship and advertising to raise awareness and understanding of:
 - our environmental regulation and Annual Compliance Plan, including a focus on our 'firm and fair' approach
 - our environmental monitoring
- Provide timely and regular information about EPA compliance actions and outcomes via industry publications
- Provide timely and regular information about EPA achievements and decisions via the EPA website (including the online Public Register Directory) and EPA newsletters
- Develop a suite of appealing and accessible communications materials that explain our regulatory approach.

Active relationships

- Partner with peak bodies for targeted industry sector specific engagement to improve industry knowledge and awareness around compliance conditions, codes of practice and tools available to assist their business/operations
- Regular EPA participation in meetings of environmental community groups associated with specific licensed sites and/or specific environmental issues
- Partnering with stakeholders to develop innovative communications and engagement regulatory options that support and enable industries in moving beyond compliance.

Organisational capability

- Ensure staff training and development for best practice regulation (eg in partnership with the Australian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network) includes communications and engagement modules
- Provide staff training and development in risk communications.



SOUND SCIENCE

OUR COMMITMENTS

To ensure the EPA's actions and decision are appropriate and evidence-based, sound science will be applied to:

- monitor and evaluate the condition of the environment
- assess potential environmental impacts to inform development assessment, licensing and compliance
- support legislation, policy, planning and management measures to mitigate environmental impacts.

Awareness and understanding

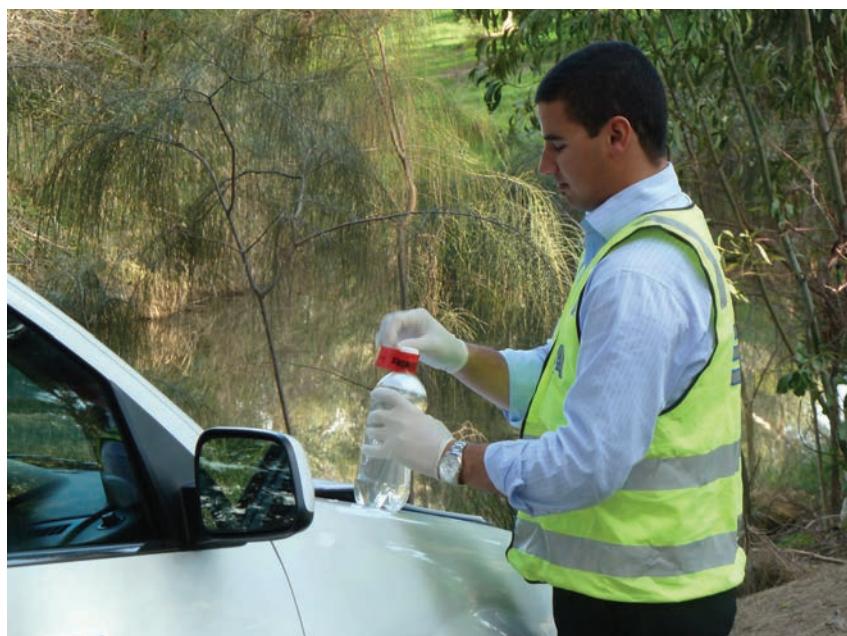
- Promote the 2013 State of the Environment Report as a valuable reference for decision-making and management of South Australian environmental pressures and impacts
- Incorporate easy-to-understand scientific information and evidence into EPA risk communications materials relating to site contamination and serious pollution incidents
- Showcase examples of improved environmental outcomes of EPA scientific analysis, collaboration and partnerships
- Present easy to understand and accessible scientific information and data via the EPA website
- Ensure all EPA communications materials translate scientific information into understandable language that is accessible for the general public.

Active relationships

- Partner with stakeholders through events, including seminars, workshops and speaking opportunities, to raise awareness and understanding of the EPA's scientific research and monitoring
- Explore and assess opportunities for citizen science to be incorporated into EPA monitoring programs, for example, partnerships with peak environmental organisations.

Organisational capability

- Provide staff training in science communications
- Develop a suite of appealing and accessible communications materials that explain key science challenges and pressures.



STRATEGIC INFLUENCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

The EPA will create effective partnerships and influence good environmental outcomes for all South Australians by:

- influencing planning and government strategy at an early stage
- strategically partnering with other organisations, industry and community
- promoting South Australia's environment at local, state, national and international levels.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Awareness and understanding

- Use an increased regional presence to improve regional communities' and stakeholders' access to information about the EPA
- Provide all our stakeholders with targeted communications about:
 - environmental regulation and key regulatory reform issues
 - site contamination
 - waste
 - urban planning to better manage conflicting land use issues.

Active relationships

- Work with sector associations, peak bodies and other government agencies to engage with a wider range of external audiences via their constituents and networks.

Organisational capability

- Investigate available business systems for improved stakeholder relationships.
- Ensure improved EPA project management identifies opportunities for harnessing external support, partnerships and collaboration.



GENUINE ENGAGEMENT

OUR COMMITMENTS

The EPA will listen, acknowledge, consider and respond to the voices of those who have an interest in our actions by:

- expanding opportunities for engagement across industry, community and government
- making environmental information more accessible and easier to understand
- demonstrating good processes and clear rationale for our decisions
- delivering excellent service.

Awareness and understanding

- Provide targeted information for communities impacted by regulatory issues such as site contamination and conflicting land use issues
- Provide accessible, transparent and engaging online environmental information and services
- Enhance our public information on emergency response situations by providing an EPA presence on the ALERT SA website.

Active relationships

- Conduct a Board engagement program that enables broad community, industry, government and environmental groups to focus on the EPA's strategic priorities, environmental challenges and change program
- Be an active voice on digital communications platforms (eg, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) to ensure relevance and widespread reach of our communications and engagement efforts.

Organisational capability

- Deliver a program of best practice engagement learning and development opportunities for staff
- Identify ongoing capability reforms through regular market research surveys to ensure relevance and stakeholder satisfaction with EPA services, communications and engagement.



ADAPTIVE ORGANISATION

Being a well run and high performing organisation is achieved through making best use of available resources and by:

- recruiting, supporting and retaining focused, effective staff
- deploying strong leadership and building management capacity
- developing systems capability and maximising benefits from integrated functioning.

OUR COMMITMENTS

The preceding commitments outlined under "Organisational capability" all contribute to this strategic priority.



THE MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The Framework is operational for a three year time frame and its commitments will be incorporated into the EPA's annual Corporate Plan and associated business plans for implementation, monitoring and reporting on progress.



We will monitor our progress via a range of feedback mechanisms, including market research focus groups and surveys, consultation opportunities; and informal, spontaneous and ad hoc comments from interested parties. This feedback will inform further modification and fine-tuning to our communications and engagement to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction and continued EPA openness and transparency.

A review of actions outlined in the Framework will be undertaken in 2015 to renew the EPA's commitment to continuous improvement of EPA communications and engagement.

Ultimately, the real measure of success will be a better informed public, engaged communities and sustainable environmental outcomes for South Australia.

APPENDIX A : INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IAP2)

| INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
| Public participation goal | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision-making in the hands of the public. |
| Promise to the public | We will keep you informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influences the decision. | We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide. |
| Example techniques to consider | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fact sheets ■ Web site ■ Open houses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public comment ■ Focus groups ■ Surveys ■ Public meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops ■ Deliberate polling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen advisory ■ Committees ■ Consensus building ■ Participatory decision-making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen juries ■ Ballots ■ Delegated decisions |

FURTHER INFORMATION

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: www.legislation.sa.gov.au

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet
Adelaide Service SA Centre
108 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909
Website: shop.service.sa.gov.au

For general information please contact:

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