

Environment Protection Authority

EPA Stakeholder Engagement Statement

Our engagement commitment

This statement has been developed for our stakeholders to provide clear information on how, when and in what circumstances they can participate in the EPA's activities. We frequently seek input on amendments to our legislation, major projects and issues surrounding EPA licensed sites.

This statement also guides EPA staff in ensuring stakeholder engagement is integral to our work practices.

The EPA has a commitment to involving stakeholders in achieving a healthier environment and a prosperous and sustainable future. We want to ensure that outcomes in the EPA are achieved through effective consultation with our stakeholders. We respect diversity and ensure we are sensitive to cultural issues, including acknowledging people's spiritual or traditional connection with the land.

We will be clear on why we are engaging and upfront on the level of involvement stakeholders have in the decision-making process. When we are acting in our role as a regulator, there will be times when it is not possible or appropriate for us to involve stakeholders.

We are seeking to continually improve and refine our approach and welcome your feedback and ideas.



Engagement values



When undertaking engagement the EPA will be guided by the following values:

Inclusive	We will acknowledge diversity by enabling many opinions and perspectives to be heard. We will listen and respect your feedback. All input will be valued and considered.
Outcome-focused and purpose driven	We will identify the purpose of the consultation and ensure a common understanding exists on the level of influence stakeholders have in decision-making processes under legal frameworks.
Avoid duplication	We will ensure EPA engagement activities are well coordinated and maintain awareness of other related engagement activities across Government.
Progressive	We will strive to continuously improve our engagement processes and endeavour to build stronger relationships with stakeholders.
Set clear and reasonable timeframes	We will plan carefully to ensure stakeholders are given an appropriate and fair amount of time to participate in engagement processes.
Accessible and transparent	We will provide relevant and easily accessible information to stakeholders and ensure feedback is delivered back to the community once the final decision is made.
Decisive and fair	We will be objective, listen to balanced views and make decisions based on sound evidence.

EPA engagement activities

Licensed activities

Certain types of industries and businesses need an EPA licence in order to operate. A full list of these industries in Schedule 1 of the *Environment Protection Act 1993*. The EPA licences more than 2,200 businesses under the EP Act. In

addition, the EPA administers the *Radiation Protection and Control Act 1982*, under which we license 4,500 mining operations, operators of equipment that produces radiation and radiation apparatus.

Licences, works approvals and exemptions

When a company applies for an environmental authorisation in the form of a licence, works approval or exemption, or an existing authorisation holder applies to vary its authorisation conditions, the EPA will provide the surrounding community with the opportunity to comment.

A public notice advertisement will be placed in a newspaper circulating in the affected area, and the EPA will write to adjacent landholders. Members of the public will be given a minimum period of 14 days in which to comment. Once all comments are received, the EPA provides these to the applicant – with personal details removed – and requires that the applicant responds to the EPA about any issues raised. The EPA then considers both the submissions and the response in any decisions about granting or varying a licence.

For example, the EPA consulted on the licence for the Adelaide Desalination Plant, and found very strong support for monitoring and reporting requirements to be included in the licence. The licence was developed to include requirements for monitoring of discharges to the marine environment, and these will be reported regularly on the EPA's and the operator's website.

Working with licensed premises and the community

The EPA believes that for an industry to be a good environmental performer, it won't just meet its environmental obligations, but will also consider the impact of its operations on local communities. The EPA therefore encourages its licensees to actively work with the community, particularly in relation to any off-site impacts.

We can also place specific conditions on a licensee to make sure they engage with the community; for example, we may require that they:

- Consult with the local community when they are developing an Environmental Improvement Program.
- Provide evidence of excellent community relationships before they are eligible for special EPA licences such as Sustainability Licences and Accredited Licences.

OneSteel Whyalla is an example of one company that is now working in partnership with the local community. As well as having improved its relationship with groups such as the Community Red Dust Action Group, the company holds interactive community forums, giving the community an opportunity to discuss topics from the environment to the future of the business.

Community consultative groups

Where there is a high level of community concern about a particular facility's operations, the EPA may also establish local community consultative groups and facilitate liaison between the industry and community, or may utilise existing consultative forums. Some examples of problems we can successfully resolve through this process include: minimising noise, managing dust, or reducing odour.

For example, the Linwood Quarry (Marino) Community Group has established a forum for the exchange of information between the company and local residents in relation to the quarry's operations. Continuous improvement opportunities are able to be identified and actioned through this process.

Industry engagement

The EPA works closely with specific industry sectors in order to develop, review and improve its policies and programs, and to engage with those sectors in initiatives to improve the environment. For example, the EPA has recently actively

worked with the houseboat and boating industries to improve grey water management on vessels, and has worked with the waste management industry on an industry reform project.

We also work with a range of peak bodies and industry associations who represent the broad interests of numerous stakeholders such as Business SA, the Australian Industry Group, SA Chamber of Mines and Energy Inc and the Waste Management Association (SA Branch).

Developing and implementing environmental programs

When the EPA is developing and implementing new initiatives and programs, we may engage the community in the development of those programs.

Examples of programs where we actively engage the community include:

- Our 'Healthy Waters' program, where locals are engaged through a series of public meetings and an online forum to develop environmental values for water bodies. This has let the local community determine what are acceptable levels of water quality (eg for drinking, for recreation, for industrial use) for particular rivers, creeks and streams. We have already worked with communities in the Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges and will be extending the program to the Murray Darling Basin and other key areas of South Australia.
- Our 'SmokeWatch' program, where we have worked with the community in Mount Gambier to raise awareness of the air quality problems caused by household wood heaters and to encourage more efficient use.
- Our work with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board and the Department for Water, to work with communities in the Lower Lakes region to manage the environmental impacts associated with declining water levels and the exposure of acid sulphate soils.

Legislation, regulation and policy development

Environment Protection Policies

Draft Environment Protection Policies are consulted with the general community for a period of not less than two months. These are advertised in the South Australian Government Gazette, through a notice in newspaper(s), and via a consultation section on the EPA's website. In addition, the EPA may also seek to further promote the draft policy through emails and letters to affected stakeholders, presentations, meetings and publicity.

Codes of practice and guidelines

When developing or amending existing tools such as Codes of Practice and industry guidelines, the EPA consults with a wide range of stakeholders.

Once a draft document has been produced, this is made available for consultation with stakeholders on the EPA website. The consultation period will vary depending on the complexity of the document, but is usually between two and six weeks.

The EPA may also conduct additional consultation directly with affected stakeholders. This usually occurs by contacting peak bodies and representative groups such as local government, industry associations, and community and environmental groups.

An example of this is the development of Water Quality Improvement Plans to address the risk of harm to water resources. The draft Adelaide Coastal Water Quality Improvement Plan has used an inclusive group of key stakeholders including conservation groups, industry, peak bodies and local and State government agencies to guide the development of this plan.

EPA Board consultation

Board Consultation Program

The EPA Board holds an annual round-table conference to assess the views of interested bodies and people relating to the protection, restoration or enhancement of the environment within the scope of the EPA's role. To ensure a wide range of interests and expertise are considered, people invited to attend the conference include representatives of the community, industry and relevant environmental and professional organisations.

A report of each round-table conference is published on the EPA's website <www.epa.sa.gov.au>.

The EPA Board periodically travels to regional communities to meet with local council and community representatives.

Have your say

You can provide feedback to the EPA or seek information in a number of ways:

- Customer enquiries and environmental complaints line: the community can call this number 24 hours a day, every day of the year to report pollution or make an enquiry. If the person answering the phone is not able to answer your question immediately, they will take your details and arrange for an appropriate EPA officer to call you back. The customer number is 8204 2004, or 1800 623 445.
- Visit our website, www.epa.sa.gov.au, where you will find information on any current consultations, information about EPA activities, and contact details for the EPA. You can also email questions to epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au.
- The EPA may establish special hotlines and post FAQs on our website in response to topical issues or emergencies.

Improving our performance

We have a commitment to ensuring we continually improve our engagement practices.

We have developed a community engagement toolkit for staff to ensure a consistent approach to engagement across the EPA, and have implemented a training program our staff who regularly liaise with stakeholders. A particular focus will be on ensuring our staff have the skills to create opportunities for meaningful engagement and to sensitively manage situations where the local community is anxious or upset.