

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY
South Australia

**PARTNERSHIP AND
ENGAGEMENT
FRAMEWORK 2016–18**



EPA Partnerships and Engagement Framework

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December 2016

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Purpose of the Framework

The first Communications and Engagement Framework was developed in 2013 and represented our public commitment to engagement across our diverse partner base.

The new Partnerships and Engagement Framework builds on that commitment and will guide how the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) does its work. It sets out the principles by which we will engage, what we hold as important, how our stakeholders can expect us to engage with them, and the types of activities which will deliver on our commitment.

It also sets out priority actions to ensure we take every opportunity to inform, consult and engage. We will embed these principles and actions across our business and we will seek feedback from our stakeholders on the strength and confidence they have in our relationships, and identify areas that need further focus.

We define a stakeholder as any member of the community, industry or government that we have a partnering relationship with and where two-way communication is essential to the success of that relationship.

This framework is one of our key strategic documents which guide the way in which we go about our business.

About the EPA

The EPA is proud of its partnering activities with industry, the community and government. It is in this role that the EPA sees its main focus to protect, restore and improve the environment in which we live through the risk-based regulation of pollution, waste, noise and radiation. In a world where we have seen the role of a regulator change over recent years and where engaging across a diverse range of environmental pressures is a fundamental challenge for all environment protection agencies, it is these collaborations with our partners that help us to achieve good outcomes.

The development of this Partnerships and Engagement Framework is a revised version of our communications framework of 2013 taking into account our growing emphasis on effective engagement. It will also help meet the Premier's [Seven Strategic Priorities](#) specifically *Safe Communities*, *Healthy Neighbourhoods* by providing our stakeholders with an open, transparent, early and accessible process for how we will engage with them.

The framework works towards this outcome by strengthening our partnerships with other areas of government, industry and the community, ensuring our decisions are robust, inclusive and targeted at protecting our unique and cherished natural environment while fulfilling our objective of supporting wellbeing and prosperity, and creating a place where current and future generations can thrive.

Effective, timely and genuine engagement supports the strategic objectives of our [Strategic Directions 2015–18](#):

- Support wellbeing and prosperity – creating a place where current and future generations can thrive.
- Keep people informed and engaged – providing opportunities for early and meaningful engagement.
- Be an effective and trusted regulator – building trust and confidence, and maximising the potential of our people.

The objectives of this framework are:

- Improve the way we communicate and engage with our stakeholders.
- Clearly articulate who we are, what we stand for and what we deliver for South Australia.
- Facilitate our ability to understand and respond to stakeholder concerns and interests, and incorporate them into our decision-making processes.
- Build greater cohesion with our stakeholders and encourage a partnering relationship and two way communication.
- Identify and explore opportunities to engage with new stakeholders.
- Continue to build trust and confidence in the EPA, its regulatory approach and outcomes.

Why engagement is important

The EPA has an important role to play as South Australia's independent environment protection authority.

Our unique and vibrant environment is a vital part of our economy—from mining and resources to tourism and the production of premium food and wine—our clean, green environment supports jobs, innovation, our wellbeing and quality of life.

Working closely with industry, the community and government, we protect our unique natural environment while providing for economic, social and physical wellbeing.

To help achieve these strategy outcomes, the EPA engages the services and expertise of multiple stakeholders.

For business and industry it is that we are working with them to achieve good environmental outcomes while taking into account their need to innovate and achieve business and economic success.

For the community it is delivering on their expectations that we are seeking environmentally and socially responsible practices from business and industry and that we are listening to their concerns.

Getting this balance right requires ongoing, strong and genuine engagement between the EPA, the community and industry, and a commitment to continue to refine our role and seek their feedback of how we can improve and deliver better outcomes.

We recently asked an influential communicator in South Australia to undertake some research on our behalf on what people think of the South Australia environment. Here are some of the descriptions:

- South Australia's environment is incredibly precious and valued by South Australians.
- It sustains us physically, it supports us economically and it enables us to thrive in one of the most liveable places in the world.

It follows that our environment needs to be carefully monitored, managed and protected, not just for our current wellbeing and prosperity but as an investment in our future.

The EPA works on behalf of, and with individuals, communities and government to safeguard, restore and improve our environment for all South Australians.

Our principles

We have adopted a principles-based approach to engage with our stakeholders and this forms part of our planning process for projects and initiatives.

Some principles will relate more specifically to certain stakeholders than others, however each of the principles is viewed as being reciprocal. That is, we would expect that our stakeholders will also be guided by the same principles.

Principle 1 Communication

The EPA is committed to listening to our stakeholders, understanding their needs and developing communication tools and programs that meet those needs. We will review and adapt our communication activities based on feedback and consultation where appropriate.

- When residential communities are affected by an issue we will ensure, where possible, that residents are the first to be informed and that we communicate directly with the residents.
- We recognise that each engagement and partnership is different so we will take into consideration the needs of all of our stakeholders to ensure the method of engagement is chosen to best suit the needs of the audience.
- We will provide information in a timely way and ensure that our stakeholders have sufficient time to have input into the engagement and consultation processes.

Principle 2 Transparency

The EPA will be open and honest in its undertakings with its stakeholders. This will include exploring opportunities to improve transparency based on feedback.

- We will be transparent and honest in our communications.
- We will be clear about our decisions and how they were made.
- We will write clearly in plain English and use diagrams and other visual aids where appropriate to make information easy to understand.
- We will design our engagement around our stakeholders and be willing to change our approach if needed.

Principle 3 Accountability

The EPA will review its engagement activities on regular basis to ensure understanding, commitment and accountability are maintained.

- We will deliver what we promise.
- We will tell our stakeholders why and how we make decisions.
- When our stakeholders provide us with feedback or input we will tell them how their feedback was used in our decision making.
- We will respect cultural diversity.
- We will be professional, honest, service orientated and respectful.

How we will partner and engage with you

Levels of engagement

Engagement activities can vary from an information exchange to a fully collaborative process which sees a decision made on a preferred solution to deal with a particular issue. Not all issues will affect everyone and not all issues will affect everyone equally. That is why it is important for us to know who we are engaging with and why we are engaging, what is the history and the background, what is the outcome we are trying to achieve and what is the most appropriate tool to achieve that result. It may be possible that the level of engagement may change throughout the life of an issue, depending on the progress and impact of potential outcomes.

Public participation spectrum¹

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, 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 aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	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 influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Examples of how we work	Annual report, public register, website and social media, fact sheets and guidelines, media and advertising, newsletters.	Community forums, statement of agreements, legislative and project consultations, EPA Board engagement program, 24-hour customer call centre.	Stakeholder reference groups, events and sponsorships, workshops, phone hotline.	Field trips, focus groups, participatory decision-making partnerships.	Stakeholder reference groups and decision making. The community deciding on the governance and operations.

¹ Adapted from IAP2 who developed the spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

What our stakeholders can expect from us

Stakeholder	How we will engage
The South Australian public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide open, transparent and accessible information via publications, website, social media, the EPA public register, customer call centre, and traditional media (print, radio and television). • Engage with people who are affected by environmental issues such as site contamination, through direct mail, email, face-to-face individually or in small groups. • Provide opportunities for direct engagement at community events and forums. • Advising the public of new licence applications and groundwater contamination notifications through local newspaper advertisements.
Community groups and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual program of EPA Board engagement activities. • Attending community group meetings. • Assisting with and forming community reference groups. • Partnering with community organisations on projects. • Roadshows and meetings to consult on legislative changes. • Inviting and considering written public submissions on legislative changes.
Industry – EPA licensed and unlicensed industries and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support the Statement of Agreement, a partnering agreement between business, industry and the EPA on a collective commitment to work together to promote better environmental outcomes . • Annual engagement meetings with industry and business. • Industry/business award program. • Consultation on projects. • Active participation in industry forums. • SMEs – direct communication via email, targeted online information and case studies. • Targeted consultation on the development and revision of guidelines. • EPA staff visits to licensed facilities. • Helping to form and work with industry clusters.
Associations, professional organisations and peak bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual EPA Board consultation meeting with industry. • Consultation with prescribed bodies, under the <i>Environment Protection Act 1993</i>. • Regular meetings between EPA and peak bodies.
Federal and state government departments and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-agency working groups. • Memoranda of understanding.

Stakeholder	How we will engage
Local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Conference. • Annual EPA Board consultation meeting with local government. • Regular meetings between the EPA and local government compliance staff. • Regular meetings with the LGA as the peak representative body. • Disseminating information via the Local Government Communicators' Network
Communities in SA regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program of visits to regional South Australian communities by the EPA Board and staff. • Engagement program to specifically target the Le Fevre Peninsula area due to the unique circumstances posed by a large number of industrial premises close to residential areas. • Three staff located in Mount Gambier.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep media informed through media releases and direct contact. • Provide 24/7 service to respond to enquiries from the media. • Proactive approach to initiating stories in mainstream and trade media.

Conclusion

Using this framework, the EPA will develop an annual program of engagement and communication activities. This program will support the annual [Corporate Plan](#) and [Compliance Plan](#) and will be flexible to ensure we anticipate, and respond to, emerging stakeholder requirements.

We have identified a number of priority areas for the next few years. The EPA will review this framework in line with its strategic objectives to see how effectively we have demonstrated these principles. Informal monitoring of the effectiveness of the framework will be ongoing and based upon feedback from both internal and external stakeholders.

Appendix A Prescribed bodies

Under the *Environment Protection Act 1993* the following bodies are required to be consulted when regulations are made which declare something to be a pollutant or to constitute environmental harm.

- 1 Australia Industry Group (SA Branch)
- 2 Australian Conservation Foundation
- 3 Australian Institute of Environmental Health
- 4 Beverage Industry Environment Council (BIEC)
- 5 Conservation Council of South Australia
- 6 Environmental Defenders' Office (SA)
- 7 Environment Business Australia
- 8 Local Government Association of South Australia
- 9 National Environmental Law Association Limited (SA Branch)
- 10 Royal Australian Chemical Institute
- 11 South Australian Chamber of Mines and Energy
- 12 South Australian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Business SA)
- 13 South Australian Farmers' Federation Incorporated
- 14 South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission (established under Part 2 Division 1 of the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005)
- 15 The Nature Conservation Society of South Australia
- 16 United Trades and Labor Council (SA Unions)
- 17 Waste Management Association of Australia