

Councils Connected to their Communities

Key Issues Raised

- A stronger focus on engagement, particularly in deciding and communicating the council's priorities and activities, is desired. Engagement should inform the strategic plan and what services councils will provide.
- Provide more flexible options for councils to communicate with their community, allowing for technological and social changes into the future. Engagement via online methods as well as traditional methods.
- Greater access to council information on financial matters, planning and development, performance data and decisions that affect the community.
- More effective methods of capturing community feedback about issues at both a local and regional level.
- Meaningful community consultation on the services councils should provide (particularly newer, less traditional services). Services should be based on community needs identified through engagement and consultation.
- Replace requirements for annual general meetings with alternative engagement methods that are more contemporary and accessible.
- Greater opportunity for community input into major council strategic and financial decisions that affect the community. The community want a say in how the financial resources of council, including rates, are managed to enable services to be delivered.
- Reduce unnecessary reporting requirements and overly prescriptive public notification requirements. Remove the specific requirement for public notices to be published in daily newspapers.
- A flexible approach to engagement is required as every council and community is different.
- Councils should consider opportunities for significant change to involve the community in the consultation process and give feedback on how their input influenced council's decision.
- Elector polls are too costly, resource intensive and time-consuming for a non-binding outcome.
- Introduce satisfaction surveys from the community on council performance.



See over for **Proposed Reform Directions** >

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Proposed Reform Directions

- All councils will develop and adopt a community engagement strategy that outlines how councils will engage, involve, consult and inform their communities on plans, projects and policies. The strategy will be developed by councils in conjunction with their communities after each election.
- Minimum requirements will be set for developing the Community Engagement Strategy and would include:
 - a genuine intent to engage the community;
 - a defined reason for consulting;
 - clearly defined timeframes;
 - use of plain English; and
 - clear advice for how the community will be informed of the outcome
- A council's final strategy should include:
 - what matters the councils will engage the community on;
 - how it will engage with the community;
 - how it used the input from the community; and
 - when the community will be advised of outcomes.
- Prescriptive and outdated consultation requirements such as for Annual General Meetings and public notices will be removed, and instead councils will engage with their communities in accordance with their strategy.
- Requirements for elector polls and public meetings will be removed. Consistent with their community engagement strategy, a council will still be able to choose to initiate and hold an elector poll.

