

# **Community Engagement Division Directions Statement**

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## Foreword from the Premier

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The role of Government is changing. The community is seeking better Government leadership through increased public participation in decision-making.

I am willing to accept this challenge.

The Community Engagement Division has been created in my Department. The Division will ensure Queenslanders are heard. It will support the public sector in building productive and trusting relationships with business, community and industry stakeholders across the State. We will also build new connections with people who are not used to or are uncomfortable with working with government.

As well as looking outside to make new connections, we will also look to our own institutions and processes. From increased accessibility to the work of Parliament, to using new and emerging technologies - the Government will create modern and innovative approaches to engagement.

Strengthening relations with citizens is a sound investment in better policy-making by allowing government to tap new sources of relevant ideas, information and resources when making decisions.

## Foreword from the Director-General

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The Department of the Premier and Cabinet has an important role to play in providing leadership and direction for Queensland public sector agencies. Creating the Community Engagement Division is a bold move, and it is the first of its kind in Australian public sector management. It will draw from overseas experiences in consultation and embrace opportunities for genuine engagement through new opportunities including new and emerging technologies. It contains areas that already have a strong "engagement" focus, such as Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Regional Communities, the Office for Women, the Cape York Coordination area and Crime Prevention Queensland.

Growing social, economic and environmental complexity and fragmentation means we cannot any longer rely on one single set of solutions in many instances. In government this means finding new ways to work across agencies that in the past only dealt with one part of the solution. For citizens and communities it means participating in the development of solutions for a sustainable future. Government has to find better opportunities for mutual engagement to enhance policy decisions.

Trust in the processes of government is thus strongly encouraged. The belief government is out of touch with citizens and communities decreases public trust. Building trust requires the public service to be transparent and accountable in the way they do business. It also requires communities to know how government works and how to participate in ways that make a difference.

This Directions Statement sets down a vision for the Community Engagement Division, the principles for engagement, the goals, the key priorities and innovations.

## Realising the vision

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A vision is more than words. Realising the vision

### ***“involved communities—engaged government”***

is about bringing government and community together to enhance decision making that ensures tangible benefits for Queensland’s many communities, promotes diversity and creates equality of opportunity.

It comes to life through actions that encourage learning about engagement in practical ways, demonstrate sustainable solutions to complex issues and enhance integrity in engagement between government and community.

## What is community engagement?

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Community engagement refers to arrangements for citizens and communities to participate in the processes used to make good policy and to deliver on programs and services. Making the engagement *mutual* means finding new ways for communities to have a working dialogue with government.

Community–Government engagement covers a broad spectrum of interactions, ranging from one-way information sharing, to two-way consultation and active participation in decision making processes.

**Information** = Government  $\longrightarrow$  Citizens/Communities

Information is a one-way relation in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens. It covers both ‘passive’ access to information upon demand by citizens and ‘active’ measures by government to disseminate information.

**Consultation** = Government  $\longleftrightarrow$  Citizens/Communities

Consultation is a two-way relation in which citizens and communities provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens’ views are being sought and requires the provision of information.

**Active participation** = Government  $\longleftrightarrow$  Citizens/Communities

Active participation is a relationship based on working with government, in which citizens and communities actively engage in the policy-making process. It acknowledges a role for citizens in proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue – although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with the elected government.<sup>1</sup>

## Adopting principles for engagement

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Striving to achieve the following five engagement principles will help ensure there are better outcomes and a better quality of life for Queenslanders.

### 1. **Inclusiveness**—Connecting with those who are hardest to reach

Many issues facing governments and communities today are complex. Government and government agencies can make better decisions by involving a wide range of people in finding solutions that make a real difference to the well being of their communities. However, some citizens and communities are not comfortable with current consultation methods, so new and innovative ways need to be created.

### 2. **Reaching Out**—Changing the ways government and community work together for the better

Many people in government and in the community are seeking ways to improve working together to find solutions to the major issues affecting our lives. Achieving better outcomes when communities and government work together involves reaching out in new ways that focus on solutions and make a difference.

### 3. **Mutual Respect**—Listening, understanding and acting on experiences different from our own

Mutual respect grows by taking the time to listen and understand experiences that may be different to our own. The community expects government to act decisively and to explain the reasons for its decisions.

### 4. **Integrity**—Engagement as a means of promoting integrity in the democratic processes of government

When government and communities work together to find solutions to complex issues the process must have integrity. This means following ethical principles of conduct, making the process open and accountable, identifying together the rules of engagement and reporting on the outcomes.

### 5. **Affirming Diversity**—Changing the processes of government to incorporate diverse values and interests

When government and community work together there must be recognition of the diverse range of values and interests across communities. The process of engagement should go some way to ensuring processes of government maximise participation and realise outcomes for everyone in the community.

## Setting the goals for community engagement

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Realising the vision and applying principles will not be enough. The Division must achieve practical benefits within government and across Queensland's communities. There are four goals for engagement:

### 1. Working with Queensland's communities to better engage with the processes of government by:

#### **Communities**

- supporting opportunities for learning about how government works and how to become engaged and make a difference;
- working with citizens to be a part of communities that build and strengthen involvement with complex issues and sustainable solutions;
- linking communities to government policy decision making processes.

### 2. Enabling change in the way government engages with communities so that better policies, programs and services eventuate by:

#### **Government**

- building, maintaining and disseminating a body of knowledge about good engagement practices from Queensland, national and international experience and research;
- encouraging change across government agencies by working jointly on innovations in engagement practices;
- evaluating the impacts of engagement practice across government and communities.

### 3. Creating new and effective ways for community and government to engage by:

#### **Ways**

- giving priority to new and innovative approaches to engagement trials and demonstration projects within the Division's work program;
- using new and emerging technologies to enhance participation in democratic processes;
- testing the effectiveness of Policy Action Teams that bring together government, community and business to address difficult problems.

### 4. Realising the benefits of diversity across Queensland by:

#### **Diversity**

- promoting the social, environmental and economic benefits of diversity in all facets of government, community and business;
- valuing this diversity in the way government programs and policies are designed.



## **Working with others**

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Community engagement values additional types of knowledge and skills to those usually valued in government. Knowledge and ability to work within criss-crossing networks of citizens and business are essential to successful outcomes.

The Division will:

- work with others across government, the community, business and tertiary education sectors to build its capacity to lead community engagement.
- provide advice to the Premier on issues about advances in community engagement. It will do so by building strong links across government and with the community, business and tertiary sector so that this advice is well grounded.
- work with other government agencies to enhance the practice of community engagement, as well as with many community and business organisations.
- seek to learn from both international experiences in community engagement and contribute to the body of international knowledge. It will do this by learning from local, regional and state-wide initiatives across Queensland.
- Provide participatory processes where community and government can achieve outcomes to improve quality of life.

## **The role of the Division**

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The Community Engagement Division supports the Premier as the Minister responsible for community engagement issues. It ensures strong central leadership for improved government and community engagement.

The Division will take the lead by engaging citizens and communities about what they want from their government institutions over time.

The Division, in partnership with the Policy Division, has a role to help make the work of the Queensland State Parliament more accessible to Queenslanders. The

Division also works with government agencies to enhance engagement with citizens and communities so that better policies, programs and services are achieved.

The Division plays an important role in providing policy analysis and advice to the Premier and Cabinet on regional communities, women's policy, multicultural affairs policy, crime prevention and the Cape York Partnerships. This can be achieved by creating new ways for government agencies to work together so more collaborative approaches are used with communities and businesses.

The newness of this task means there is much to be learnt. The Division has an important role to play in creating an environment for learning about engagement between government, business and community.

To help build democratic processes that ensure longer term social, economic and environmental sustainability, the Community Engagement Division will work across communities and government on five innovations.

## **Working with innovations**

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### **Five ways in which the Division will lead engagement.**

There are many valuable and successful engagements between government and communities in Queensland already from which we can learn and advance.

The Division will encourage sharing the knowledge found in these good examples across both communities and government. There will be more opportunities for people in communities and government to learn together. Over time this will ensure there are more leaders skilled for the new ways in which government and community engage.

The Community Engagement Division will work across communities and government on five innovations:

#### **1. Learning together by showcasing good practices**

##### *Queensland's Modernising Democracy showcase*

Queensland has much to show in the way citizens, organisations and regions work with government.

- Community Cabinet, regional forums and working in partnership with Indigenous communities are just a few ways in which government is reaching out to work together more successfully.
- Equally there are many initiatives which reach out from community to government which we can learn from.
- We need to showcase these initiatives to other Queenslanders and to other countries that are beginning to look to Queensland as a place to learn from.

#### **2. Reaching out to citizens, reaching out to government**

*Building the new ways of engagement for informed public judgement on complex issues faced by citizens and governments*

Reaching out to citizens and reaching out to government will set out to:

- improve access to public information so a wider range of people can understand it;
- encourage more people to contribute information about important issues to add to our understanding of diverse and well considered points of view;
- build the skills of negotiation and co-ordination in communities and in government;
- improve consulting so people can see the results of their co-operation in the outcomes through proper, comprehensive and continuous feedback;
- ensure more people have the opportunity from the beginning to be a part of policy development and planning, implementing and evaluation of programs and services;
- maximise community goodwill and participation through strategic and coordinated consultation across government.

### **3. Building the capacity for local solutions**

*Building Queensland's regions so that local solutions use the unique and resilient capabilities of regional communities and government agencies*

- Until now, regional forums and other divisional initiatives have provided opportunities for direct contact between government Ministers and local communities' representatives.
- In the future the Division's regional initiatives will take further steps so that longer-term solutions are better coordinated between government, community and business.

### **4. Delivering on diversity**

*Engaging Queensland's cultural diversity for sustainable social, cultural and economic development*

Queensland's social and economic potential can be enhanced if much more is done to embrace the State's diversity in its many forms. In a globalised economy it is local uniqueness and difference that produces the many networks needed to reach markets worldwide.

This means:

- recognising and valuing diversity as a strength;
- making the most of Queensland's rich pool of cultural and linguistic talent in the global market place;
- ensuring barriers to engagement, participation and access to services are addressed for all Queenslanders;

- celebrating Queensland's diversity across the whole community.

## 5. Putting democracy on line

### *The Queensland E-Democracy Three Year Trial*

- The trial will provide access to Parliament over the Internet, the opportunity to petition Parliament using e-technologies and an e-democracy web site to encourage input to significant policy issues raised by government and citizens.

## Evaluation

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### How will we all know about what has been achieved?

The Division will carry out three types of evaluation to ensure there is administrative accountability, clearly identified outcomes and an enhanced process of learning about how to engage.

These will include:

- timely and discrete evaluations of specific programs, projects and units to ensure work programs are well designed and delivered and produce valued outcomes;
- an evaluation of the Division and its work program so the value of investment of public funds is assured;
- mechanisms established to measure the rate of progress in community engagement across government and communities.

## Glossary of terms

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The terms, 'government', 'community' and 'engagement' are used by different people in different ways so it is important to state what these mean in this document.

**Government** means the State Parliament, the elected Government and government agencies that carry out the policies of the elected government and provide services such as education, health and police among many others.

**Community** generally means a collection of citizens, groups or organisations with a common interest. For example, some communities have business interests while others have social or environmental interests. Some communities have local and regional interests and others have interests in specific issues such as education, health, children, older citizens and so forth. Many communities connect through cultural background, religion or language. Some communities are well organised with administrative structures to support them while others are loose collections of individuals. Many communities are local face-to-face groups while others may be linked more widely through common interest. Some communities now use the Internet to organise themselves.

Communities have different levels of engagement with government. The exclusion of some communities from the process of government needs to be addressed to create fairness in government and community relations. This will be a significant challenge for government to address.

**Engagement** recognises the role of the citizen and communities in the processes of government. Citizenship usually refers to the legal, political and social rights of people. The Community Engagement Division embraces a more extended idea about these accepted rights – the idea of active citizenship.

Active citizenship means the rights of citizens to participate in the democratic process and the responsibilities of government to facilitate the opportunities to participate beyond election day.

Overall, engagement then refers to the arrangements set in place for individual citizens and communities to participate in the processes used to make good policy and to deliver on programs and services. Making the engagement mutual means finding new ways for communities to have a working dialogue with government.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> PUMA Policy brief No 10, July 2001, *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*, OECD