



Community Engagement Policy

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1 Introduction

Consultation with the community is one of the primary functions of the Northern Territory Planning Commission (NTPC). The *Planning Act (The Act)* states that the NTPC must carry out community consultation before preparing strategic plans, guidelines and assessment criteria for inclusion in the NT Planning Scheme. The *Act* also states the Commission must decide the appropriate method and extent of the consultation, taking into account the proposed integrated strategic plan, guidelines or assessment criteria being considered.

In this regard, NTPC acknowledges the importance of engaging effectively with the community, to ensure that all views and concerns are allowed due representation when making decisions that will affect the community. The values of NTPC (as listed on the NTPC Strategic Plan) are to be, *inter alia*, proactive and consultative.

The Community Engagement Policy (CEP) has been prepared to provide the community with a clear understanding of the NTPC commitment to effective engagement, by clearly outlining when, and at what level, engagement will occur. The Policy will also guide NTPC members and staff in the procedures for developing and managing engagement strategies for individual NTPC projects.

2 Community Engagement Policy Objectives

The CEP outlines the way in which NTPC will engage the community in the development and/or assessment of integrated strategic plans, planning proposals, projects or policies:

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- establish guidelines and standard practices for engagement with the community
- ensure the standard engagement practices are implemented by NTPC staff and representatives, while also ensuring the type and level of engagement undertaken is suitable and appropriate
- ensure the consultation process allows the community access to relevant information about the project
- indicate levels of engagement offered; ie how NTPC will listen, involve and seek feedback from the community in engagement processes
- ensure NTPC accurately records feedback from consultation and considers the feedback in any deliberations, decisions and/or recommendations;
- establish criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the consultation

3 Definitions

3.1 Community

The community is defined as people who, or wish to, live, work and invest in the Northern Territory. The community includes residents, government agencies, private sector and non-government agencies.

3.2 Stakeholder

A Stakeholder is a person or a group who may be affected by or have a specific interest in the plan or project under consideration.

3.3 Engagement

Engagement refers to the process of involving stakeholders and the community in the development of strategic plans, policies and projects undertaken by NTPC. It is an active exchange of information that will help inform recommendations made by NTPC.

3.4 Feedback

The process of communication whereby a stakeholder or member of the public that has been consulted is given the opportunity to agree or disagree, ask a question, or otherwise provide information to the NTPC in the communication process. Feedback may be in oral or written form.

3.5 Evaluation

The process of assessing consultation and engagement activities against set standards. Evaluations can assess the actual processes used to obtain ideas, opinions, beliefs and decisions for quality such as inclusiveness, informed decision-making, accuracy, and representativeness.

4 Planning for Community Engagement

A Community Engagement Strategy (CES) will be developed at the beginning of each engagement process. The template attached as **Appendix A** should be used as a guide, using the following sub-sections as references.

4.1 When to engage

NTPC will engage with the community when developing or preparing the following plans or documents, as considered appropriate by the Commission:

- Integrated Strategic Plans, including, but not limited to:
 - Land Use Plans
 - Sub Regional Plans
 - Area Plans
- Planning policies, guidelines and proposals
- Any other matter determined by the NTPC
- Any other matter for which the NT Minister for Lands and Planning requests the NTPC consult with the community.

Community Engagement will occur as early in the planning process as possible to ensure the community has ample time to consider the information and provide feedback to NTPC. This will ensure the feedback is considered in the decision making process.

4.2 When to Use a Consultant

NTPC will determine if the engagement process will be delivered using internal resources or external consultants at the beginning of the planning process. The Manager NTPC Secretariat will be responsible for deciding if an external consultant will be engaged, in consultation with the Director Corporate Communications and the Director Lands Planning, or other suitably qualified senior staff.

The following criteria will be considered when deciding if an external consultant will be engaged by NTPC:

- The complexity of the engagement process being undertaken
- The availability and experience of internal resources
- The available budget for the project

External consultants will be provided with a copy of the CES to ensure the engagement process is conducted in accordance with the endorsed Policy.

4.3 Who to engage with

A list of key stakeholders (other than residents) is retained and updated regularly by NTPC Secretariat. Key stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Residents
- Local Government
- MLA's
- Industry Associations
- Community Groups
- Environmental Groups
- Land Councils
- Traditional owners
- Non-Government Agencies
- Government Agencies (Territory & Federal)
- Consultants
- Media

Other stakeholders will be identified in the planning stages of the engagement process, and will include members of the public who will be affected by the plan, project or policy being undertaken by NTPC.

A stakeholder communication plan (refer Appendix A) is to be completed at part of a CES which clearly lists key stakeholders, likely issues to arise during consultation, communication methods and level of engagement.

<i>Key Points to Identifying Stakeholders</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Use a consistent method for the identification of stakeholders to ensure inclusive, credible and equitable representation in community engagement processes.✓ Develop a list of potential stakeholders✓ Meet with key stakeholders as early as possible in the process✓ Develop effective working relationships with stakeholders✓ Consider ways to identify potential "hard to reach" stakeholders and barriers to accessing community engagement processes, and maximise opportunities to engaging those stakeholders

4.4 Level of engagement

The level of engagement undertaken is to be determined for each individual project, as a number of internal and external factors will require consideration for each project. Factors include, but are not limited to:

- immediate or long term impact on the community
- level of interest from the community, as perceived by internal stakeholders
- level of interest being shown by the community
- degree of potential community impact
- underlying values and views of external stakeholders
- degree of complexity
- degree of political sensitivity
- availability of resources
- media interest

NTPC's approach to community engagement is informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation. The IAP2 Spectrum identifies and defines nationally recognised levels of community engagement. When planning for community engagement the most appropriate level of participation should be determined in conjunction with the Spectrum, and the abovementioned factors. The IAP2 Spectrum is included as Appendix B.

5 Delivering the Engagement

5.1 Providing the Information

It is imperative to ensure the stakeholders and community have access to the documents and plans under consideration, so they can consider their position and provide effective feedback to the NTPC.

Copies of the draft plan and/or documents will be made available in the following ways:

- A webpage will be developed (where appropriate) on the NTPC website to summarise the project, and provide the following documents for viewing and/or download:
 - Media Release
 - Relevant draft plans and/or documents
 - Question & Answer/Fact Sheet
 - On-line feedback form for immediate response
- All key stakeholders will be contacted in writing, preferably by email, providing a brief summary of the project, and providing a link to the NTPC website to obtain the draft plans and/or documents.
- Copies of the draft plans and/or documents will be provided to those stakeholders who request a copy.
- Copies of the draft plans and/or documents will be held by NTPC Secretariat for use at information sessions, briefings and workshops, or as required.

Other methods of providing the information will be determined by the level of consultation being undertaken, but may include:

- Letter drop to residents
- Open days
- Information stalls in shopping centres/agricultural shows, etc, workshops and public information sessions

5.2 Length of engagement period

The length of any engagement period will be determined by the Manager, NTPC Secretariat in consultation with the Project Lead Officer.

Consideration should be given to the following criteria:

- Size and complexity of the project
- Political sensitivity of the project
- Previous consultation undertaken for the project
- Proximity to festive season (see 5.3)

Generally, the consultation period should be a minimum of four weeks, and provide adequate time for the community and stakeholders to access and review consultation documents, and provide a considered response.

5.3 Timing of the engagement period

The Project Lead officer must consider the timing of the engagement period, to ensure it does not occur during, or close to, the festive season. If the engagement period is to occur during, or close to, other significant events or public holiday/s; consideration should be given to extending the length of the consultation period to compensate for the event or public holiday/s.

5.4 Collating the feedback

The NTPC values all feedback obtained during an engagement process, and the importance of noting all feedback, both oral and written is paramount.

All feedback, including oral feedback summaries, on-line feedback forms and written submissions will be included in a “summary of feedback” document prepared by NTPC or their consultant. The summary format will provide results that are easy to interpret and make sense to stakeholders and decision makers.

5.5 Preparing a Consultation Report

A consultation report will be prepared by NTPC or its consultant at the conclusion of the engagement process. The report will include the summary of feedback, and outline key messages obtained from the consultation.

Where appropriate, the consultation report will be made available on the NTPC website for viewing.

5.6 Providing feedback to participants

NTPC acknowledges the importance of providing feedback to participants once the consultation period has concluded.

Notification of the conclusion of the consultation period will be provided to each participant, preferably by email, and will acknowledge the contribution made by all participants in the project. Ideally, outcomes from the engagement process, as well as an indication of the next steps in the progression of the project should be advised to all participants. Where this is not possible, updates on the project will be provided to participants and the community.

6 Evaluation

An evaluation may be undertaken at the conclusion of the project to measure the effectiveness of the engagement process undertaken for each project. The Manager NTPC Secretariat will determine, in consultation with the Project Lead Officer, whether an evaluation will be undertaken.

When compiling the evaluation, the following tasks may be included:

- Evaluation questions on feedback forms distributed during the community engagement process.
- Convene evaluation/summary meetings with the decision makers and key stakeholders.

The following table outlines performance measures for evaluating the engagement process:

<i>Stage of Engagement</i>	<i>Performance Measures</i>
Planning	Adequate resources and expertise have been provided to implement consultation outlined in the community engagement strategy
Consultation	Participants have a clear understanding of the objectives of engagement and their level of involvement in decision making.
	There is a variety of means by which a community can have a say
Analysis	The mix of methods used in consultation have engaged stakeholders
	Participation of stakeholders reflects the demographic profile of the community being engaged
Results	Stakeholders have been informed about the results of consultation and can observe how their input has been considered.

Results of the evaluation will be used by NTPC to improve future engagement strategies and processes.

Appendix A – Community Engagement Strategy Template

- 1. Background Information
- 2. Engagement Objectives
- 3. Key Messages
- 4. Key Communication Tools
- 5. Stakeholder Communication Plan (table below)

<i>Stakeholder group</i>	<i>Likely issues, concerns</i>	<i>Communication Method</i>	<i>Level of engagement</i>
NT Government Agencies			
Other Government Agencies			
Community, Industry and Interest Groups			
Residents			
Media			
Other			

Appendix B – IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation					
Increasing Impact on the Decision 					
	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 consultation tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Websites • Open days • Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Information sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Forums • Stakeholder consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory decision-making • Advisory committees • Expert panels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegated decisions

*NB: The top level (empower) is rarely used and essentially means handing over decision-making and implementing what the community decides.