

Hon Joe Szakacs MP
Minister for Local Government
Office of Local Government
Department of Infrastructure and Transport
GPO Box 1475
Adelaide SA 5001

12 June 2025

By email: DHUD.OfficeofLocalGovernment@sa.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Submission on Community Engagement Charter

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Community Engagement Charter.

The City of Adelaide provided feedback on the Community Engagement Charter as part of the Local Government Participation and Elections Review and welcomes the opportunity to further contribute to its finalisation.

The Council endorsed its submission on the draft Community Engagement Charter at its City, Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on 17 June 2025 (Enclosure 1).

The City of Adelaide's submission is structured to address the key sections of the draft Charter, including the principles, categories and mandatory requirements. A summary of the submission is outlined below:

- **Principles** – The City of Adelaide supports the principles outlined in the Charter. However, further clarification is required on how the Charter interacts with the *Local Government Act 1999* (SA) and individual councils' Public Participation Policies.
- **Categories** – The City of Adelaide acknowledges that the proposed categories provide a useful framework however, recommends further refinements to improve structure and clarity.
- **Mandatory Requirements** – The City of Adelaide proposes further revisions to the mandatory requirements, noting that the current approach continues to prioritise traditional engagement methods over more contemporary and flexible practices.

The full submission from the City of Adelaide is enclosed. For further information, please contact Rebecca Hayes, Associate Director Governance and Strategy, via email at r.hayes@cityofadelaide.com.au or by telephone on +61882037882.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jane Lomax-Smith AM

Enc.

1 City of Adelaide submission to the draft Community Engagement Charter.

Enclosure 1. City of Adelaide submission to the draft Community Engagement Charter

| Community Engagement Charter Section | City of Adelaide Administrative Comment | Recommendations and Opportunities |
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| Principles | <p>The City of Adelaide supports the principles, particularly the emphasis on timely, meaningful, and accessible engagement. The inclusion of plain language and the requirement to explain how community input informs decisions is welcomed.</p> <p>However, the Charter could further strengthen these principles by recognising the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation in engagement approaches • Transparency around when consultation is not appropriate or required <p>It is unclear whether the Charter is intended to replace existing public consultation provisions under the Local Government Act 1999 (SA) and how the Charter and Act interact</p> <p>There is no reference to the role of individual councils' Public Consultation Policy in implementing the Charter.</p> | <p>Expand principles to explicitly encourage digital engagement and other innovative and inclusive methods.</p> <p>Introduce a principle clarifying when engagement is not appropriate (e.g. where decisions are governed by legislation or funding constraints), and where informing the community is sufficient.</p> <p>Confirm whether the Community Engagement Charter is intended to replace or update current provisions in the Local Government Act 1999 (SA).</p> <p>Reference the ongoing role of individual council's Public Consultation Policies.</p> |
| Categories | <p>The engagement categories Significant, Standard, Local, and Inform provide a useful structure for scaling engagement. However, separating the Annual Business Plan (ABP) and Rating Policy into a separate 'Significant' category adds unnecessary complexity.</p> <p>In addition, categorising 'Inform' as an engagement level is inconsistent with the intent and</p> | <p>Combine Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy with the broader Significant category.</p> <p>Remove the 'Inform' category as a standalone engagement level and instead integrate informing as a component of all engagement activities.</p> <p>Reorder the mandatory actions table by engagement level:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Significant |

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| | principles of community engagement, as informing is not engagement. | <p>2. Standard</p> <p>3. Local</p> |
| Mandatory requirements definitions | <p>The current definition of 'community' as residents, ratepayers, businesses, children and young people, local communities, groups, and associations, does not adequately reflect the diversity of populations within a capital city context.</p> <p>It omits key cohorts who are significantly impacted by council decisions and who actively participate in city life, including city workers, students, and visitors.</p> <p>Without an inclusive and context-sensitive definition of 'community', there is a risk that engagement efforts may unintentionally exclude or overlook the needs and experiences of these groups.</p> | Align the definition with the engagement intent of the Charter, to be inclusive, equitable, and relevant across a wide range of community members and users of place. |
| Mandatory requirement | <p>While minimum engagement requirements are useful for consistency, several actions are overly prescriptive and are not reflective of contemporary engagement practice.</p> <p>The Charter prioritises traditional engagement techniques such as newspaper advertisements and public meetings, with limited emphasis on digital or interactive methods.</p> <p>The requirement to publish in a locally produced news outlet for Standard and Local engagements imposes significant costs and does not reflect current information access trends.</p> <p>Further, this method may limit the ability of certain groups in the community, such as young adults and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, to access information.</p> | <p>News Publication:</p> <p>Remove 'news publication' as a mandatory requirement, or at a minimum, exclude it for local and standard.</p> <p>Allow councils to demonstrate how awareness has been achieved through more relevant methods (e.g. website, social media, signage).</p> <p>Public Meetings:</p> <p>Remove as a standalone mandatory requirement.</p> <p>Combine with the opportunity for submission makers to address Council meetings.</p> <p>Explain Decision-Making:</p> <p>Include this as a mandatory requirement across all categories.</p> |

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| | <p>Additionally, public meetings and submissions may not be suitable for all projects and audiences.</p> | <p>Information to Whole Council Area:</p> <p>Reconsider the need for blanket notification</p> <p>Provide flexibility for councils to determine appropriate notification methods.</p> |
| Glossary | <p>Some terms used in the Community Engagement Charter require clarification.</p> | <p>Include a glossary defining: community engagement, consultation, news publication, public notice, significant amendments, significant impact, etc</p> |