



Better Public Consultation

Reclaim control of our future Demand better public consultation

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Meetup:

Government Consultation

South Australia's original dynamism and success as a cradle for new ideas is being lost through our government's ongoing failure to adequately engage the experience and concerns of the community.

In order to achieve better consultation, the Civic Trust is seeking your support in refining and promoting a new model for the government's formulation of policies and plans.

Time and time again new policy directions are being prepared by our government behind closed doors and then released to the public in fake consultation processes. Where this approach has failed, significant proportions of the community have demanded change.

EXAMPLES (see civictrust.net.au for further discussion):

- [Population Plan](#) – At the core of the problem is the failure of successive governments to reach a consensus on a strategy (refer the Sustainable Population Strategy Report). The views and aspirations of communities need to be discussed, identified and collated to provide appropriate future targets for population and immigration in cities and regional areas.
- [SA Strategic Plan](#) – Poor public consultation methods, lack of credible population estimates, poorly understood by most South Australians and lacking agreed strategies for addressing new technologies, social trends and climate change.
- [30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide](#) – developed without adequate consultation and itself ignored in the Mt Barker development despite major protests. Key directions in the Plan, such as the densification of development along major arterial roads, have either been either inadequately researched or have ignored findings from sources contrary to the government's pre-conceived directions.
- [Water Plan](#) – The Water for Good report was only issued after the decision to build an expensive desalination plant was taken. The report dealing with the broader issues of water sustainability in urban areas has never been published and adequate research into potentially cheaper and more sustainable options has been given resourced at very low levels.
- [Transport Plan](#) – A draft was prepared in 2007 but then shelved by the Rann government. Adelaide is the only capital city in Australia not to have a transport plan. Such a plan is fundamental to all regional and community plans.
- Other plans, such as the strategy for upper Spencer Gulf, are being taken over by private developers who then decide what public consultation will be needed.

INVITATION:

If you are sick of these fake consultation processes, please check civictrust.net.au and send an email expressing your interest to austcivictrust@gmail.com.

We are also keen to contact individuals and groups who have put in submissions to government and feel that they have not received an adequate response to their concerns. In this way the Civic Trust aims to increase its focus on actively identifying community desires and directions for improved public outcomes.

Why should the public be involved in planning?

- Governments need the comments and ideas from the people who live and work in the areas being affected by government changes, many of whom know their local area better than those developing the plans.
- An informed community leads to better planning, a greater sense of ownership of new initiatives, greater cooperation, fewer conflicts, less litigation and better quality outcomes.
- Listening to citizen preferences provides an opportunity for governments to analyse all of the available options and assess the preferred options.
- Providing more opportunities for citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities beyond the ballot box is an obvious way of overcoming widespread cynicism about the decisions of politicians and public servants.

Is the ballot box enough?

With increasing evidence of corruption in State governments, particularly in NSW and Victoria, and the secretive approach in SA, the ballot box is no longer good enough. To ensure greater accountability, the public needs to have far more information about government processes and decisions.

Public consultation beyond Adelaide

170 years ago Adelaide was a world leader in city planning but now it has fallen far behind. Today, wide consultation is essential for successful planning and there are many progressive models currently in use, such as the State of Oregon in the US (see *Putting the People in Planning A Primer on Public Participation in Planning* Citizen Advisory Committee, Oregon) and in New York:
http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/community_planning/index.shtml

What do we do?

See over

10 ACTIONS *FOR BETTER CONSULTATION*

Fully Involve the Public

1 DEVELOP DIFFERENT APPROACHES to suit a wider range of needs

The current public meeting format alone is no longer good enough. Many people don't have time for the standard approach.

- **Set up citizens' panels**
Create representative panels of citizens and submit proposals to them.
- **Create 'Drop-in' sessions**
Develop overview presentations and visual displays open to the public in key locations.
- **Send regular newsletters, mailings and emails**
With key points in digestible forms
- **Link with interactive websites and surveys**

2 INVOLVE THE PUBLIC in all stages of the planning process (as in Oregon)

- From the beginning, before any draft plans are prepared
- Explain the full process, with allowance for citizen amendments
- Mandate that citizens get appropriate responses to their submissions

3 Establish an independently funded COMMUNITY CONSULTATION UNIT

- Not dominated by government appointees
- With full information about the projects

Demand a More Professional Approach

4 Consider RANGES OF OPTIONS for action

- This is not done by the current Rann Government

5 Ensure more PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND AUDITING

- Notably missing in the State Strategic Plan, the 30-Year Plan, Water for Good and many others

6 Require HANDS-ON PARTICIPATION in planning processes

- This engages all players and encourages transparency
- More comprehensively identifies alternative options
- Creates greater trust and ownership by the public

Eliminate the Bias Against the Public

7 REMOVE IN-BUILT BIAS

- Ensure more equitable influence on government
- Disband special privilege groups such as the Development Advisory Committee
- Stop meetings with developers behind closed doors

8 PROVIDE GREATER TRANSPARENCY

- Aim for genuine participation, not just consultation

9 LEGISLATE AND REGULATE to support these initiatives

- As in Oregon, USA

10 Start *developing the legislation and regulations* **now**