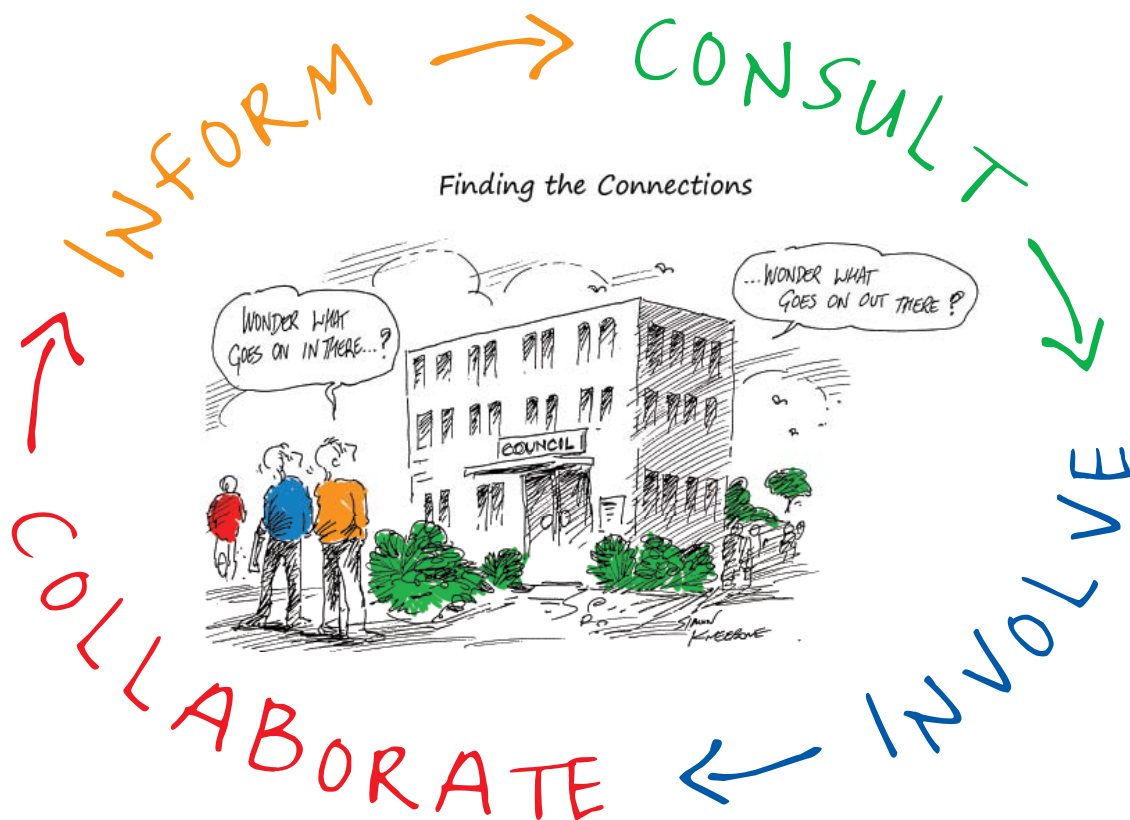


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOWCASE

Leading practice examples in
Local Government in South Australia



FOREWORD

The Government of South Australia and the Local Government Association of South Australia (LGA) recognise that community engagement is an area of ongoing development for both spheres of government.

Community engagement is increasingly acknowledged as a valuable tool, not only for ensuring people can participate in decisions that affect them, but also to strengthen and enhance communities. Essentially the concept is about facilitating participation and extending the democratic process at the local level.

In South Australia, Councils formally consult with their communities on strategic plans, development plans, annual programs, budgets and a broad range of other activities.

This work relies on the level of understanding communities have about how the democratic process and their governments work.

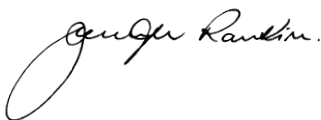
As with all levels of government Councils seek to understand the diverse range of community views that may exist on various issues from time to time. There is no single best way to consult busy communities. State and Local Governments sometimes struggle with how best to seek people's views on governance and other matters as individuals juggle their personal, family and work responsibilities.

The LGA and the State Government have collaborated on a project to highlight examples, identify leading practice and provide guidance to Councils on practical ways of engaging their communities. The State Government through the Office for State/Local Government Relations has provided support to the LGA to manage the Community Engagement project.

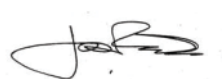
This showcase is the first outcome of that project. It highlights examples of activities undertaken by Councils across South Australia and is the starting point for future development. Many of the activities which are the subject of case studies in this showcase demonstrate clear linkages between Council objectives and those of the SA Strategic Plan.

We acknowledge and appreciate the support of the Councils and their officers that provided information for the case studies in this publication, and are encouraged by their commitment and effort in community engagement.

We hope Councils and their communities will find the examples informative and useful as we work toward better government, community development and participation.



Hon Jennifer Rankine MP
Minister for State/Local
Government Relations



Cr John Rich
President, Local Government
Association of South Australia



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WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOWCASE

This publication has been prepared as part of a broader Community Engagement Project, a joint initiative of the Local Government Association of SA (LGA), and the SA Government through the Office for State/Local Government Relations. The publication showcases examples of community engagement initiatives in Local Government in South Australia. It highlights many creative approaches to democracy and participation at the local level and is consistent with State government approaches to community engagement.

It does not pretend to be a complete record, although all Councils were invited to contribute. Rather, the showcase aims to capture the interest of readers and motivate innovative thinking about community engagement efforts.

The LGA introduced the Community Engagement Project to Councils in mid March 2007, via “Circular 11.12 – Citizen/Community Engagement”. Councils were invited to participate by responding to a short questionnaire focusing on current practices, and to nominate case study examples. 26 responses were received to the invitation, representing a cross section of metropolitan and country Councils in South Australia.

The responses provide a snapshot of current policies and practices, and the impressive range of community engagement initiatives adopted by Councils at the local and regional level. A summary report of the response results, “Community Engagement - Snapshot of Councils” is available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/engage

What do we mean by “community engagement”?

Community engagement is based on principles of democracy, social inclusion and responsible government. It assumes that citizen involvement inspires confidence and collaboration in the governing process, informs decision-making and enables public dialogue and the interplay of ideas to shape public policy. As such, community engagement is considered to be more than the practice of consultation.

It is about a stronger move towards participative deliberative democracy.¹

“Effective community engagement will assist Councils and communities learning by:

- hearing a broad range of perspectives
- gaining access to more data about a particular issue, problem or opportunity
- being exposed to more potential solutions
- hearing more about what is important to the community, what drives people, and their values.”²

Community engagement can also³

- enhance Council’s reputation as open, accountable and willing to listen
- strengthen Council’s partnership with its communities
- enhance community understanding of the role of Local Government
- create opportunities to engage with difficult-to reach sections of the community
- build leadership skills and community capacity
- foster a sense of belonging in the community
- make service delivery more efficient and effective
- assist Councils to manage conflict and resolve tensions
- provide an early sign of emerging issues, allowing councils to deal with them proactively.

The definition of “community engagement” used for the showcase follows.

“Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decision in government, the private sector and the community.”³

¹ Adapted from “A Voice for All” Western Australia Citizenship Strategy 2004-2009.

² Twyford V, Waters S, Hardy M, DDengate J, & Vaartjes V, Beyond 2006 Public Meetings, Connecting Community Engagement with Decision Making, Chapter 5, page 57. Twyford Consulting, Sydney NSW

³ Adapted from www.dpi.wa.gov.au/communityengagement/717.asp

WELCOME TO THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SHOWCASE

Two dimensions of “community” are referred to in the showcase.

- Communities of place: People (also referred to as residents and ratepayers) in a defined geographic location. For example, the topic under consideration may relate to “the community north of the river”.
- Communities of interest (may also be referred to as key stakeholders): Those who may have a specific interest in a topic under consideration, for example, local community members, service providers, specific interest groups, or community groups.

Other definitions and terminology

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) terminology has been adapted for the showcase, as follows .⁴

INFORM

One way communications – providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.

CONSULT

Two way communications – obtaining public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.

INVOLVE

Participatory processes - inviting involvement to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making

COLLABORATE

Working together to develop understanding of all aspects of issues, work out alternatives and identifying preferred solutions.

It is to be noted that the IAP2 spectrum includes “empower” as a method of community engagement, whereby final decision making is in the hands of the public. Within the Local Government context only the elected body of Council is empowered to make decisions and implement actions within the terms of the Local Government Act 1999 (SA), except in very limited circumstances.

However, the terms “empower” and “empowering communities” are often used when referring to community development and community capacity building initiatives. Many Councils engage with local communities in this way, and it is within this context that reference is made to the terms of “empower”, “empowered”, and/or “empowering communities” in this publication. The following terminology has been adapted for the showcase.

EMPOWER

Providing opportunities and resources for communities to be part of solutions by valuing local talents and skills and acknowledging their capacity to be decision makers in their own lives.

Returning to the IAP2 spectrum, a greater insight into the model and concepts can be gained through the diagram below which sets out a goal, promise and example of techniques for each stage along the spectrum.

⁴ Refer <http://www.iap2.org.au> for more information.

← ← ← IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM → → →

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<p>Public Participation Goal: To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</p> <p>Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed</p> <p>Example techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets • Web sites • Open Days 	<p>Public Participation Goal: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</p> <p>Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision</p> <p>Example techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus Groups • Surveys 	<p>Public Participation Goal: To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions</p> <p>Promise to the Public: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision</p> <p>Example techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop • Deliberate polling 	<p>Public Participation Goal: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution</p> <p>Promise to the Public: We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</p> <p>Example techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<p>Public Participation Goal: To place final decision making in the hands of the public</p> <p>Promise to the Public: We will implement what you decide</p> <p>Example techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions • Open days

Throughout the process of community engagement, there is likely to be movement back and forth along the spectrum as the initiative progresses or a final decision is made by Council.

COUNCILS' COMMITMENT TO ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Section 50 of the *Local Government Act (1999 SA)* requires Councils to prepare and adopt a public consultation policy⁶. Public consultation is not defined, but minimum standards are prescribed as:

- publication of a notice in a newspaper circulating within the Council area, inviting submissions within a stated period being at least 21 days; and
- the consideration by the Council of submissions made in response to the invitation.

In some circumstances a Council must consult with its community in accordance with its public consultation policy, and in other circumstances specific consultation requirements are prescribed.

⁵ Source: Developed by IAP2 – refer website: <http://www.iap2.org.au/spectrum.pdf>

⁶ “Community consultation” is also a term widely used by Councils. However, when using the IAP2 model referred to previously “consultation” is only one method in a comprehensive community engagement approach.

COUNCILS COMMITMENT TO ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

The key activities for which public consultation is prescribed include strategic and financial management plans, changing the basis of rating, and community land classification and management (for further details refer to LGA Public Consultation Discussion Paper 2007, via www.lga.sa.gov.au “Codes and Guidelines” link.

Councils also have responsibilities under the Development Act 1993 (SA), which sets out public consultation requirements for Category 2 and 3 Development applications, and Plan Amendment Reports and Section 30 reviews.

“Community consultation” is also a term widely used by Councils. However, using the IAP2 model referred to previously “consultation” is only one element of a comprehensive community engagement approach.

From Policy to Practice

The “Community Engagement - Snapshot of Councils” report, which can be found on www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/engage “WELCOME” demonstrates Councils’ commitment to involving their communities effectively in planning and decision making. While most Councils state they have developed a “stand alone” policy, many comment that a positive approach to a community engagement culture is embedded across the organisation.

Of note, several larger Councils have embraced and adopted the IAP2 principles and are moving towards an integrated community engagement framework across their organisations. This includes allocation of resources at a corporate level to underpin this approach, and the preparation of handbooks, toolkits and guidelines to support all staff involved in designing and implementing community

engagement strategies.

In some cases, larger Councils are beginning to offer mentoring arrangements or advice and assistance to smaller metropolitan and rural Councils.

The City of Onkaparinga community engagement framework is highlighted as a leading practice example, which is accessible via www.onkaparingacity.com/web/page?pg=1917&stypen=html

It is also true that Councils learn from “not so good” public consultation experiences. There are abundant signs at all levels of Government across Australia, and indeed in liberal democracies around the world, that citizens are increasingly dissatisfied with representative democracy, the “just cast a vote” every few years scenario, and are seeking a deeper level of engagement in political and decision making processes. The City of Whyalla case study which follows captures the essence of this trend.

“A LESSON LEARNED – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKS” CITY OF WHYALLA

Like most Councils at some time, our Council Members and staff have suffered through a bruising series of public meetings. Most recently, these have been over issues such as the upgrade to the City’s foreshore area and a proposal for a new library. Prior to the public meetings, all too familiar expressions of frustration were echoed in the corridors, such as:

“We only hear from the vocal minority.”

“People are simply not interested – they just want us to get on with things.”

“It’s too complex for the community to grasp issues anyway”

On the other side of the fence, community members were expressing distrust and frustration also.

“Why are you saying you are consulting and asking for input when the location of the new library is a done deal?”

It was timely to do something about this impasse. Opportunities to learn a better way forward were discussed with other Councils and professional consultants who had experience and expertise in community engagement pathways.

As a result, key City of Whyalla staff attended an IPA2 training program. Senior staff and a Council Member attended the Local Government Managers Association Congress in Perth in May 2006, and were motivated by a presentation titled “Gaining Quality Community Input into Council Decision-making”. These professional development initiatives have borne fruit and Council is now progressing down the path of working out ways to effectively engage with residents and ratepayers with the aim of achieving positive outcomes for all involved.

The City of Whyalla is in the process of revising its Strategic Plan and developing a Community Plan which will involve a comprehensive community engagement process over a 12 – 18 month period.

Someone said community involvement “is like riding the tiger” but despite the risks, we believe that through proper planning and by using appropriate techniques, the process will facilitate Council and community working together to achieve Our Vision for the future.

For further information contact:
carmel.westbrook@whyalla.sa.gov.au

WHAT IS IN THE SHOWCASE FOR YOU?

Clearly the extent to which Councils are able to develop an integrated community engagement framework will depend on the level of in house expertise and resources available. However, some of the examples in this publication highlight easily achieved, cost effective and resource efficient options.

Progressing through the showcase examples you will also discover the ways in which Councils take steps beyond the legislative requirements to effectively engage with their communities. The “Community Engagement – Snapshot of Councils” Report highlights common practices by Councils committed to engaging with their communities in ways which exceed the prescribed requirements.

For some readers there may be new ideas - for others there may be useful reminders or different techniques to try in future community engagement initiatives.

Under topics familiar to Councils, the text is designed to provide enough information for readers to decide whether finding out more information might enhance local approaches. Contact details are then provided for each example.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Building “community capacity” is about enabling individuals, organisations and communities to work collectively to foster and sustain positive change and to enhance quality of life. Through engaging with their communities in this way, Councils foster a greater understanding of local democracy and the role of Local Government, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for citizens to participate in the life of the community.

IMAGINE PEACHEY

“COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER CAN MAKE THINGS HAPPEN” CITY OF PLAYFORD

The Peachey Belt area covers Davoren Park, Smithfield and Smithfield Plains suburbs, just north of Elizabeth, within the City of Playford which has a population of 72,304.

The City of Playford is an area that has for many years been identified as disadvantaged and marginalised with high levels of unemployment, low income, and a transient community. However, this profile overshadowed the positive sense of neighbourhood, and the talented, passionate and active residents who share a commitment to investing time through active volunteering to enhance the area and support others.

In response, the City of Playford initiated a project in late 2005 with the aim of enhancing community connections and engaging residents in the Peachey Belt area to work together to address local issues.

Imagine Peachey evolved through various community conversations and a two day facilitated forum. Through those conversations, the strengths of the area were identified as well as the issues that the community were not happy about.

This collection of information and ideas created an opportunity to work on the local priorities with community participants which were agreed as

- access to information;
- access to public transport;
- making parks family friendly;
- enhancement of the Peachey Belt amenity; and
- safety issues.

As a result, 14 community based projects have been initiated by the community. Imagine Peachey is driven by the local community, supported by the Neighbourhood Development Officer employed by the City of Playford in partnership with the South Australian Housing Trust. Community participants have been empowered to work out solutions to local issues and use their talents in creative ways to enhance their neighbourhood environment, strengthening social and support networks, acquiring knowledge, and learning new skills.

The achievements to date include a Peachey Community Calendar of events and services, the Imagine Peachey website showcasing and promoting local activities, and the launch of the Imagine Peachey Information Trailer (a joint initiative of the Playford Partnership as part of the Playford North Renewal Project). The trailer visits public spaces within the Peachey Belt area, community events, schools and shopping centres.

Imagine Peachey is a way of life for a dedicated bunch of local residents in the Peachey Belt Area. There are 20 people listed on the volunteer register who drive the projects, which connect with hundreds of people locally. This group is committed to building on the strengths of the area in collaboration with the Council and the SA Housing Trust.

For more information
visit: www.imaginepeachey.org.au



“GRANTS PROJECT - ENGAGING RURAL COMMUNITIES” DISTRICT COUNCIL OF MOUNT REMARKABLE

The District Council of Mount Remarkable is a small rural Council, located in the Flinders Ranges with a population of 2,828. Its administration centre is the township of Melrose, at the foot of Mount Remarkable – one of the oldest towns in the Flinders Ranges.

There has been a perception shared by Council and the community for some time that the area may be missing out on opportunities to attract grant funding into the district. In response the District Council of Mount Remarkable sought to engage communities across the Council area through a 12 month community capacity building project. The potential community interests included environmental groups, schools, welfare and business organisations, where the membership may not have the skills or knowledge to find out about and/or apply for grant funding for local community improvement projects.

A consultant assisted Council to develop grants information and a resource kit for community use, and to facilitate a series of Grants Workshops in five townships. The workshop objectives were to improve community understanding of the “workings of government” and philanthropic grants programs, and to build community capacity to prepare targeted project and grant applications.

“It is too soon to say whether this strategy has been effective as grant applications are still being prepared. What we do know is there has been a spin off with greater awareness of the role of Local Government, and improved communication links with a range of community groups in the Council area.”

For further information
contact: ceo@mtr.sa.gov.au,

“MARION HISTORIC VILLAGE” CITY OF MARION



The City of Marion is a metropolitan Council in the inner southern region of Adelaide with a population of 81,581. Marion Historic Village is a pilot project under the umbrella of Council’s new “Community Capacity Building” approach. The model proposes the value of identifying and building on community strengths, rather than focusing on community ‘deficits’ and attempting to fill them.

The Marion Historic Village lies at the heart of Marion’s European heritage. At first glance the area appears to be a typical Adelaide post-war predominantly middle-income suburb, with a mix of small business and retirement homes, however its history runs much deeper than this.

The original Village of Marion was laid out in 1838 by Colonel William Light himself, just two years after the colony of South Australia was founded. Its rich built heritage includes treasures such as Annie Doolan’s Cottage, Finnis St Bridge, Light Square, Laurel Cottage, Oliphant and George Street Reserve. A strong oral tradition lives on amongst the older residents who remember the spectacular almond blossom displays in the days when ‘the Marion’ was the almond production centre for the state.

A significant Aboriginal cultural heritage is also present along the banks of the Sturt River, which provided abundant hunting and a travel route for Kaurna people from the hills to the sea.

It was identified that these cultural heritage assets have the potential to develop a much higher profile and greater acknowledgement than they now enjoy, and the capacity to educate and be cherished within and beyond the local neighbourhood. Local people also believe that these community strengths could support the development of a shared sense of identity and greater connection for present and future residents.

The Marion Historic Village project's agreed aims, which were developed over time and through ongoing conversations with community members, are to enhance streetscape amenity in the area, to foster a greater sense of belonging, a more active, caring and inclusive community and better relationships between community and Council.

Project planning commenced in mid 2006, with local participants and Council working in partnership towards project completion over a two year period. The community engagement process began in November 2006 with staff seeking out conversations with local residents, community groups and businesses in the Marion Village area. A "Council-Officer-in Residence" was regularly in attendance at a local café and encouraged a more informal and 'on the ground approach' to community consultation.

The highlight of the process was a gathering at a local café where more than 30 enthusiastic residents and Council staff came together. Memories and ideas flowed freely, and themes of common interest began to emerge. Not all of the ideas suggested by participants can be achieved through the resources of the project, but may be achieved by the community working with Council in the future - an added incentive for continued community engagement.

As an outcome of the process to date, a Marion Historic Village Project Group comprising residents, Council Members and staff, has been formed to prioritise ideas and progress the project through a collaborative approach supported by Council staff.

For further information
contact: suzy.stiles@marion.sa.gov.au

“SOUTH WEST COMMUNITY NETWORK” CITY OF ADELAIDE

The South West Community Network was established at a public meeting in April 2003, covering the south west quadrant of the City of Adelaide which has a total population of 15,299.

The Network was a response to growing tensions in the area between residents, businesses, social services and Council, and represents a unique model of collaborative decision making through a partnership between Council and the community.

The Network aims to make the South West a safe community that cares for its broad mix of people, protects its heritage and improves the environment. Anyone is welcome to join the Network, which encourages communication and networking through bringing together various groups who have an interest in the area to pursue local opportunities and address local issues in a collaborative way with Council.

Council provides ongoing support to the Network, through facilitating the network process, covering the cost of printing and mail out of minutes and agendas, and hosting meetings in the Adelaide South West Community Centre.



Agendas are set by the Chairperson together with the Council’s facilitator to reflect information from the local community. Agendas, minutes and other relevant information is emailed or posted to those registered on the Network mailing list.

The Network uses a “working group” approach. Issues are addressed via ongoing specialised or temporary issues-based working groups with participation by a broad range of community interests relevant to the neighbourhood issue.

Since its inception, the Network has made significant inroads to building positive relationships between community stakeholders. In addition, there have been real tangible outcomes, the list below naming just a few.

- An Artists’ Fair held annually in Whitmore Square
- A Demonstration Native Garden established and maintained by community volunteers
- A “Historic South West Corner” booklet compiled by the community with assistance from a historian
- Establishment of Adelaide South West Community Centre which serves as a hub for community activities
- Collective community action representing concerns about Duke of Brunswick Hotel extended trading hours, CMI Toyota proposed car park development, and seeking modification of the proposed Westcare development in the area.

“There has been so many positives achieved by the South West Community Network through effective community engagement. The one line précis in this short case study will never do it justice.”

For further information
contact: I.Pattison@adelaidecitycouncil.com

LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Councils have a key role to play in fostering positive relationships and engaging with local Aboriginal communities in culturally appropriate ways, with the aim of enhancing involvement in planning and decision making processes.

In some cases Councils have worked towards **agreements and partnerships** such as the Kurna Tappa Iri Reconciliation Agreement 2005 -2008 (involving the Councils of Onkaparinga, Marion, Holdfast Bay and Yankalilla within southern Kurna country) and the City of Salisbury Martirendi Partnership Agreement signed in 1999.

A further example is The District Council of Coorong and the Raukkan Aboriginal Community Alliance, showcased in “The Story of our Journey” Case Study and Guide, available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/indigenous. The publication also summarises other examples of community engagement initiatives in metropolitan and country South Australia, including the Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the Narungga People on Yorke Peninsula.

Other Councils have established consultative or advisory structures such as the City of Port Adelaide Enfield Aboriginal Advisory Panel, the City of Pt Augusta Aboriginal Consultative Forum, and the Adelaide City Council Reconciliation Committee. Further steps taken by Councils include reconciliation initiatives, cultural celebrations such as during NAIDOC Week, flying the Aboriginal Flag, and acknowledgement of traditional owners protocols at public meetings.

The case studies below showcase other initiatives which aim to engage with Aboriginal communities through locally based projects.

“CELEBRATINGLARTELARE” CITY OF PORT ADELAIDE ENFIELD

Lartelare is a park proposed in the Port Waterfront Development within the City of Port Adelaide Enfield to the north-west of Adelaide which has a population of 105,386.

Lartelare Park is located on Campsite 2, a significant Kurna site recognised as the birthplace of Lartelare in 1851. Lartelare was a Kurna woman and great-grandmother of Kurna Elder, the late Veronica Brodie (Aunty Veronica).

The significance and sensitivity of the site for all local Kurna people is recognised by Council, the Land Management Corporation (LMC) and the corporate developers. There was a shared understanding that any design for a park on the site would need to be undertaken with full involvement and consideration of Aunty Veronica and the local Kurna community.

The City of Port Adelaide Enfield Aboriginal Advisory Panel, of which Aunty Veronica was a member, were asked to nominate a group of people from the community who would work with the Council, the Land Management Corporation, the Newport Quays development consortium and their appointed landscape architect to recommend an appropriate design for the park.



Eight local community members were involved in the process, meeting on a regular basis over a six month period, working through ideas which would allow the design of the site to reflect its historical and cultural significance. The approach involved visits to other parks and design models to show how the group's ideas would look.

A very strong relationship was established between the project partners, Council and the community group, and there was genuine consideration of the specific needs of the group through the consultation process. This included meeting with Aunty Veronica at times and places which enabled her involvement, and acknowledging the personal nature and sensitivity of the design process for each individual involved as well as the need to reflect the wider Kurna and Aboriginal community.

The final result is a unique and exciting design which is a reflection and translation of the aspirations of and ideas proposed by the community group. Lartelare - the name for the park selected by the community group - will be a key feature within the Waterfront development. It will combine public art, space for performance and meeting, appropriate plantings, and interpretative information relating to the site.

Allowing adequate time for the consultation process (over six months) was a key to the positive outcome, as was the genuine desire to establish relationships with the community members, the recognition of the personal and community sensitivities, and the commitment of all partners to ensuring public recognition of the significance of the site.

For further information
contact: janet.taylor@portenf.sa.gov.au

It is with respect that we acknowledge that Aunty Veronica passed away prior to this publication being released. Aunty Veronica was instrumental in facilitating positive relationships between Kurna people and Councils and will be sadly missed by the Local Government community.

“MARNI WAEINDI – TOWARDS A FUTURE” CITY OF PLAYFORD

Recipient of the Department of Transport and Regional Services 2006 National Awards for Local Government Award – Strengthening Indigenous Communities

The City of Playford is situated in the northern metropolitan region of Adelaide with a population of 72,304 including fifty percent (5,500) of Adelaide's total Aboriginal Australian population.

The Playford Indigenous Transition Pathways Centre (Marni Waeindi) was planned and established in conjunction with the local Aboriginal community and local agencies. Partners are the Department of Education and Childrens' Services Aboriginal Education Unit, training bodies and industry. The centre is a whole of Government model for achieving sustained well-being, learning and employment outcomes for Aboriginal young people. The ultimate aim is to help bring an end to intergenerational poverty.

It is well documented that the wellbeing and socio economic status of Aboriginal people in general is significantly lower than the wider population, and unemployment is three times the regional average.

The Centre is the cornerstone to a comprehensive Aboriginal Lifelong Learning Strategy integrating culture, health, housing, learning, employment and governance by and for the local Aboriginal community. The 'wholeness' of this approach has been identified as critical by the local community.

Marni Waeindi is best described as a learning node connecting a network of stakeholders to provide a comprehensive range of education, training and other support services.

Young people are engaged in seamless, action based learning pathways leading to employment, social inclusion and cultural participation.

Marni Waeindi engages Aboriginal young people through a range of activities tailored to meaningful experiences. This gives the young people involved a real opportunity to participate in the social and economic life of the community, and at the same time fully embrace their cultural heritage.

To date an unprecedented 200 young people have been engaged in learning pathways with 20 young people taking up employment opportunities. The local Kurna Plains School has been reinvigorated and schools across the region are participating. The Centre has gained the support and involvement of the local Aboriginal leadership and the broader community.

An Aboriginal-based governing Council has been established to manage the work of the Centre and to advocate to all levels of government. Marni Waeindi is currently working with other agencies to build an Indigenous Early health and learning centre and a community centre at Kurna Plains School.

For further information contact: kdaniel@playford.sa.gov.au



CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Councils seek to ensure that resources are used fairly and that access to services, facilities and programs are provided in a socially just and equitable manner. This involves taking account of the unique experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and fostering a sense of belonging to the new place they call “home”. Engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities is also an opportunity to facilitate a better understanding of cultural differences, and the role of Local Government.

This case study highlights how cultural differences might emerge as a result of an influx of newly arrived immigrants and how the Council engaged positively with a group of people potentially difficult to reach to solve a local problem.

“FROM SIEGE TO SOJOURN” CITY OF WEST TORRENS

Recipient of the Jim Crawford Award for Innovation in Libraries - 2006

The City of West Torrens with a population of 53,100 is situated to the west of, and adjacent to the boundary of the City of Adelaide.

“From Siege to Sojourn” is just one in a suite of initiatives undertaken by the City of West Torrens over the past three years (broadly described as the “New Arrivals Program”) aimed at engaging culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The initiatives grew out of an influx and settlement of newly arrived migrants and refugees from North Africa, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan in the City of West Torrens.

The new Hamra Centre was opened in 2004, and it wasn't long before the area "Sojourn" (winning entry from a naming competition) became a hang-out place for a large number of local youth – a free place to come where there is an Xbox!

A range of behavioural issues arose, most of which were based in language and literacy difficulties, and the social isolation and "culture shock" experienced by new arrivals. There were multiple weekly incidents (individuals and gangs) including threatening actions towards staff, fights, obscene language and damage to furniture. Staff tried to deal with these problems but communication was difficult. At the same time the management challenge was to avoid excluding them.

Three workshops with library staff and a small group of youth leaders were held to talk about the problems. Some basic rules of behaviour were agreed and a "code of conduct" was prepared in a simple and pictorial presentation. Other partnerships were formed to support the implementation of the "Code of Conduct" and to maintain the momentum of positive engagement with the young newly arrived migrants.

- The Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC) was approached for advice and out of these discussions, the MRC agreed to base an African youth worker in the library on a regular basis for three months to assist in overcoming some basic misunderstandings caused by communication difficulties. The youth worker also supported young people to stage a "Family Evening" in the library – a "united nations" gathering with proud performances by young people.

- The Library hosted a program for Police Cadets to run a weekly games night, during which the Cadets interacted positively with young people and reinforced the code of conduct as required. This program is continuing.
- The Australian Refugee Association (ARA) implemented a specialist Homework Help program in the library for newly arrived students.

Other spin offs as a result of "Sojourn" connections are increased participation of newly arrived young people in library and personal development activities, and local sporting events.

"There are definite indicators that the strategies are working.

- Complaints and behavioural issues are down from regular multiple weekly to irregular single incidents.
- There is a greater acceptance and understanding all around; and a steady flow of proud soccer players are returning to show library staff their medals and trophies.
- Young people actively seek help and advice from library staff about reading, research and tasks such as writing a CV.
- One young participant had only been to school once during 2006, and never to a library. He is now a regular borrower."

For more information
contact: scathcar@wtcc.sa.gov.au





LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Voting in Local Government elections occurs through a voluntary ballot postal system. To exercise the right to vote, those eligible must be on the State Electoral Roll or the Council Voters Roll before the prescribed closing date.

The case studies in this section relate to promoting Local Government elections, and providing opportunities to experience local democracy in action.

“GET INVOLVED IN THE 2006 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS” CITY OF CHARLES STURT

The City of Charles Sturt with a population of 103,942 covers the metropolitan area west of Adelaide extending to the coastline.

Council endorsed the design of a “2006 Elections Communication Plan” to foster increased interest and involvement in the 2006 elections. The strategy commenced late 2005 for roll out during 2006, timed around the key election timetable dates. The key messages of the communications related to the close of voters roll, nominations opening, candidates information sessions, nominations closing, mail out of ballot packs, and close of voting with a reminder to vote. The communications were based on the pro-formas prepared by the LGA and included the following.

- Articles in each quarterly edition of “City to the Sea” newsletter
- Press releases and articles in Council’s “Across the City” column in the Messenger Newspaper

- Displays in libraries, community centres, and the Civic Centre. Displays were updated to include timely information related to the key dates and stages of the election timetable
- Eight banners along Port Road, and outside Youth Central to capture the attention of young people
- An Information session for potential candidates, attended by 20 people
- Training of customer service staff to ensure they had information about Council elections
- Flyers were made available at all customer contact points where staff wore “Vote Now” badges
- “Have a Say” stickers were used on all Council correspondence at key times during the election cycle.

Some of the promotional material included interpreter information in Serbian, Vietnamese, Italian and Greek languages.

“Voter turn out numbers remained relatively static from the previous election results, but candidate nomination rates were slightly higher.

Post election, communications built on the momentum, introducing the new Council and profiled new Elected Members.

For further information contact:
kconstantine@charlessturt.sa.gov.au

“AGENDA FORUMS” CITY OF WEST TORRENS

The City of West Torrens with a population of 53,100 is situated to the west of, and adjacent to the boundary of the City of Adelaide.

Council agendas increasingly cover more diverse and complex topics. As a result, Council Members generally want to have greater access to information, beyond what can be presented in a written report, and more time for research before Council meetings than is currently prescribed in the Local Government Act 1999 (SA).

Council resolved that after the 2006 Local Government Elections would be an ideal opportunity to review its decision making framework, with the aim of ensuring Council Members have adequate time to access all the information needed to enhance decision making in the Chamber.

As a result, an “Agenda Forum” (the Forum) framework has been adopted, the features of which follow.

- A draft agenda and relevant reports or information for the following Council Meeting are presented at a Forum attended by Council Members and open to the public.
- The Forum commences with a 15 minute public question time, enabling community members to ask questions about items on the Agenda. Guidelines have been prepared to ensure question time is well managed with equitable opportunities for all community members to ask questions or to be heard.
- The Forum may also include presentations, workshops and provision of information by Council staff and others on topical issues.

The introduction of the Agenda Forum and an invitation for the community to attend were promoted through local Messenger newspapers, in Council’s newspaper “Talking Points”, and via the City of West Torrens website. Agendas are posted on the website and are available in hard copy in the Library and Civic Centre in advance of the Forum date.

The approach has resulted in more productive dialogue and greater level of detail, and an efficient “one-stop-shop” response to Council Members’ requests for information and briefings. An added spin off is all in attendance hear the same questions and answers at the same time, thus reducing the risk of ambiguity.

Importantly, the Forum provides the opportunity for members of the public to have input into and observe Council Members gathering the information to inform their decisions in Council meetings. The approach has resulted in an enhanced level of openness, transparency and accountability to the community and it is expected this will translate into greater community confidence in the decisions made by Council.

For further information
contact: pkoritsa@wtcc.sa.gov.au

“FRIENDS OF THE LOWER FIELD RIVER – HARNESSING VOLUNTEER EFFORT” CITY OF MARION

The Field River, in City of Marion’s southern suburbs, is a unique feature of the local suburban landscape. Responsibility for the care and control of the river valley is a mosaic of State Government Departments, private owners, Local Government Councils.

Around 18 months ago Council was challenged by residents through the local Messenger Newspaper about the decline in health of the riverine environment. Residents wanted to know what Council intended to do to improve the rapidly declining ecological and community value of the area. Council recognised an opportunity to harness this interest by engaging some of the residents to partner with Council to work towards improving a small section of the River.

In conjunction with a community event being held in a nearby reserve, residents were invited on a tour of the river and to record their concerns. Residents were also invited to nominate on a register to meet again to explore the concerns in more detail. This resulted in a core group of eight residents taking the lead to progress the initiative.

Subsequently, a committee was elected at a public meeting, attended by around 50 people where the group officially became known as the Friends of the Lower Field River. Members of the group continue to gain knowledge and understanding of the complex environmental issues. Educational workshops for other interested residents have been convened.



The Friends of the Lower Field River initiative has grown beyond the local level to encouraging community ownership in the upper reaches of the Field River.

The Friends have established a voice through regular contact with politicians and other community leaders to share their vision and lobby for environmental improvements. It is through these partnerships that the next phase of environmental improvement along the River will be achieved.

For further information
contact: kms@marion.sa.gov.au

MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

A Youth Advisory Committee, commonly referred to as YAC, is a group of young people (12-25 years of age) who consult with other local young people, discuss local youth issues, and provide information and advice to their local Council, service delivery agencies and youth networks. Through this engagement, a YAC provides a voice for young people to the Council.

The SA Government, through the Office for Youth, provides grant funding to support Councils to create and strengthen YACs. 58 of the 68 Councils in South Australia have taken up this initiative and support YACs in various ways.

Leading practice examples have been showcased in Part 2 of *“Youth Development :: Policy to Practice – A Guide for Local Government in South Australia 2005”* available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/youth. The publication also highlights various youth development models based on engaging young people and working in partnerships which build leadership skills and the capacity of young people to participate in the life of the community. Just three examples are featured in this show case.

“ADDRESSING LOW SCHOOL RETENTION RATES” CITY OF PLAYFORD

The City of Playford is a large metropolitan Council situated to the north of Adelaide with a population of 72,304.

In 2005, the City of Playford YAC identified school retention as a concern. Statistics showed that young people in the Playford

area had lower than average educational outcomes. YAC members shared a view that the school system was rigid and seemed to lack any relevance for some students from challenging backgrounds. This meant that they were at risk of leaving the school system with no real future to look forward to.

Around the same time, the SA Government through the Social Inclusion Unit initiated the Northern Innovative Community Action Network (Northern ICAN) – an initiative that provides funding for innovative and sustainable projects aimed at re-engaging at risk or disconnected young people back into learning.

The Northern ICAN Program Manager met with the YAC twice to discuss their concerns. These discussions mobilized the YAC into action and a YAC School Retention Working Group was formed. The group wanted to find out the views and ideas of other young people and present a report to the Northern ICAN Management Committee to consider prior to ICAN setting its strategic priorities for the following two years.

A Youth Week event presented an ideal opportunity to tap into a captive youth audience. Council provided training to the YAC School Retention Working group in survey methods to collect data through a questionnaire and interviews with young people. The survey focused on areas such as what young people liked and disliked about school, their favourite subjects and what was good about them, what motivated them at school, what they would



change, whether they intended to complete SACE, and whether they were aware of alternative learning options.

The Working Group collected information through 83 interviews. Incentives of stickers and lolly pops were offered in exchange for a few minutes of their time. The results were compiled and one YAC member, with support from the YAC Coordinator, presented the initial findings to the Northern ICAN Management Committee including what was required to keep young people engaged in learning. This was followed up by a report on the outcome of the survey and 10 recommendations for Northern ICAN to consider.

Northern ICAN adopted a number of YAC's recommendations, word for word - an amazing success story for a group of young citizens wanted to make changes to the education system.

(see www.ican.sa.edu.au/files/links/Northern_ICAN_strategic_di.pdf page 16)

Young people engaged through YAC continue to gain "on the job" experience. They are learning about Councils business and civic life; developing transferable skills of negotiation, research, analysis and communication; writing reports; and making presentations to senior government officers. All of these experiences build confidence in their own capabilities and capacity to drive change.



This is what Luke, 17 years of age, had to say about the experience during a presentation to Council.

"The YAC is a great form of participation, as not only do we as young people get to voice our opinion on issues that affect us but also issues that affect our peers and wider community. The YAC empowers young people through development of personal skills, abilities and life skills. It gives young people a voice within their community. It develops us into fine upstanding members of society and the community. It enriches our self confidence and self worth and self esteem and it allows us as young people to make a valuable contribution"

For more information
contact: LBukva@playford.sa.gov.au

"YOUTH SUPPORT COMMITTEES – AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT" RENMARK PARINGA COUNCIL

Renmark Paringa Council with a population of 9,848 covers an area to the south of the Murray River adjacent to the South Australia-Victoria border.

As part of Council's Strategic Planning process, three committees were convened, one of which was the Renmark Action Committee for Youth (RACY). RACY was launched at the same time as Council's Youth and Children's Council, and a local Youth Network. The aim of the three committee structure is to enhance communication between young people, Council, and youth sector service providers, and to foster the participation of young people in local decision making processes and community life.

The **Renmark Paringa Youth and Children's Council** comprises Student Representative Council membership from each year level of Primary and High School, and aims to:

- introduce Council as a friendly and helpful place in the community, and demystify the role of Local Government;
- encourage young people to share their ideas, share information through their peer networks, and feedback information to inform Council decision making; and
- create pathways for active involvement in RACY once students reach 12 years of age.

The **Renmark Action Committee** for Youth (RACY) comprises 12-25 year olds, and meets monthly in the Council Chambers. RACY initiate, plan and deliver projects young people are interested in and passionate about, for example:

- developing a skate park and decorating with aerosol art;
- running skate competitions attracting interstate competitors; and
- public speaking, such as the Governor's Leadership Foundation.

The **Youth Network** supports the initiatives of the RACY and includes School Principals, mental health workers, Council representatives, Chaplains, and a SAPOL representative.

"The youth support committees have been hugely successful in achieving:

- a voice for young people directly linked to Council and other community agency decision makers;
- enhanced cross sector communication and collaboration;
- building young people's leadership skills along the way;
- ongoing support mechanisms for young people; and
- have fostered community partnerships through exploring funding options and initiatives, and involving parents, families and significant others in enabling access to more relevant services and resources for young people"

For further information contact:
mjohns@renmarkparings.sal.gov.au

"SALISBURY NORTH SKATE PARK A WELCOMING SPACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE" CITY OF SALISBURY

The City of Salisbury with a population of 123,252 is situated in the northern metropolitan area of Adelaide.

The Salisbury North Skate Park was constructed in 2001 and has grown into a vibrant and welcoming community space for young people. But this has not always been the case, as in the past the area faced significant issues of vandalism and graffiti, resulting in ongoing complaints from residents in the neighbourhood. A collaborative community effort to address these issues has resulted in the skate park becoming a popular community venue for a regular program of events and activities including skate and BMX competitions, aerosol art projects and monthly barbeques.

This transformation was facilitated by the City of Salisbury engaging with community groups in the area and young people who frequent the skate park. The objective was to work out what was causing the problems, what could be done to foster harmonious community relations, and how Council and community groups could support the activities young people wanted to be involved in. As a result, the following positive outcomes have been achieved.

- Young people suggested that brightening up the area with large scale aerosol murals would give it a youthful and welcoming image. Several projects involving local professional aerosol artists have led to young people having a strong sense of ownership and pride in the skate park. The artwork has also led to a significant reduction in tagging and vandalism.



- A partnership has been formed between the City of Salisbury, SAPOL, the Salisbury North Neighbourhood Watch, and young users of the park. The 2007 Youth Week Skate Park Event – “Get over it 2” – was the third major event organised through this partnership, with most of the major decisions for the event being made by young regular users of the skate park.
- The 2007 “Get Over It 2” was a huge success. The event involved local and open skate and BMX competitions, open scooter competition, demonstrations by Da Klinik in hip hop and breakdance and other cool stuff, basketball competitions, jumpy castle, airbrushed tattoos, DJs and lots of prizes and giveaways. The event attracted over 40 competitors and a crowd of approximately 800 community members. This event also receives very generous ongoing support from numerous local community groups and businesses.
- The Salisbury North Neighbourhood Watch provides free monthly barbeques to the regular users of the skate park which has strengthened the relationships between the younger and older members of the community.

The barbeques and other events at the skate park area have fostered an intergenerational approach to dealing with broader community issues such as vandalism, tagging and safety. Effective working relationships have been formed between the young people who frequent the skate park, members of the Salisbury North Neighbourhood Watch, SAPOL, and Salisbury Council. As a result, there is now a much greater sense of place and community connectedness in the neighbourhood.

For further information contact:
lweiss@salisbury.sa.gov.au

Whilst not featured as a case study in this showcase, the **City of Onkaparinga Youth Development Model** is acknowledged as a leading practice example of a community engagement initiative providing a voice for young people in the southern region of Adelaide. The effective engagement of young people and their active participation in the design of youth focused services and programs, is central to the coordinated approach to regional planning and service delivery.

The Model was featured as a leading practice example in *Youth Development :: Policy to Practice – A Guide for Local Government in South Australia 2005* – refer www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/youth

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

Councils establish various committee and advisory groups (formal and informal structures) which have links to Councils' decision making processes. Depending on the nature of the group, membership may be:

- open;
- invited following expression of interest;
- by direct invitation from Council; or
- by stakeholder group nomination.

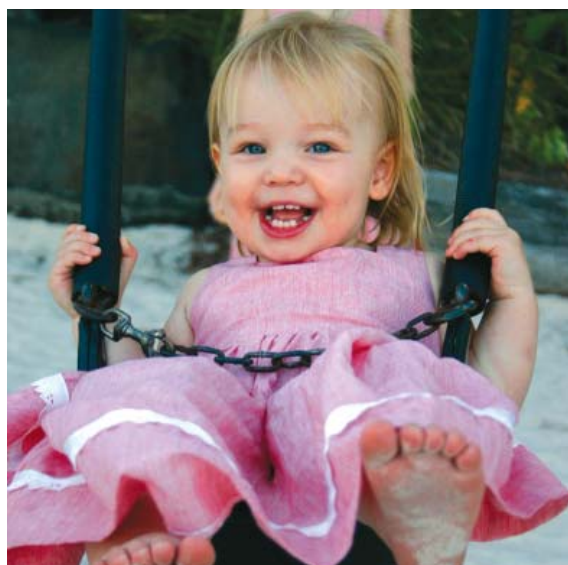
The "Community Engagement – Snapshot of Councils" Report highlights the range of topics of interest to committees and advisory groups informing Councils decision making, most commonly being concerned with infrastructure and urban planning, social planning and sustainability, and economic development.

The following examples showcase the joint initiative of four Councils aimed at developing collaborative approaches with key agencies to address quality of life issues in the region.

"INNER SOUTHERN SOCIAL PLANNING ALLIANCE" CITIES OF HOLDFAST BAY, MARION, MITCHAM AND UNLEY

The Councils of Holdfast Bay, Marion, Mitcham and Unley, together with SA Government agencies of health, housing, education and community services, and non-government support agencies in the inner southern region, have formed the Inner Southern Social Planning Alliance (ISSPA).

ISSPA was formed in 2005, in part driven by increasing difficulty in attracting resources compared to the (outer) south and North and North West regions of Adelaide. This was because the region overall has an above average socio economic status profile, despite pockets of significant social and economic disadvantage.



ISSPA has undertaken a Regional Needs Study, which reinforced the perception of the region as generally more affluent, more homogenous, more skilled and more highly paid than the Adelaide metropolitan area on average. However a closer look through the Regional Study highlights pockets of lower socio-economic status in all Council areas, in particular along the South Road corridor (western Mitcham and Unley and eastern Marion), through to Marion central and to a lesser extent in the south east and to the north of Holdfast Bay. Those most affected were identified as:

- the aged and frail, some of whom are "asset rich, income poor" struggling to maintain their independence and family home;
- people with mental health problems and/or living in dysfunctional relationships (it was noted there is a high proportion of Supported Residential Facilities in the region);
- people with a disability and their carers;
- Aboriginal people, particularly in the Marion area;
- new immigrants and refugees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;

- young people, disconnected from family or educational support; and
- parents with young children on low income.

Following an extensive research and consultation phase, the ISSPA Study was endorsed by the Alliance and released early in 2007. The consultation phase involved:

- engaging Council and agency policy and decision makers;
- design and application of a questionnaire to collect quantitative and qualitative data from key agencies;
- consultation with community representative groups, in particular to identify social support and health needs;
- individual consultations and issues identification workshops with participating Councils and agencies;
- a planning workshop with Alliance members to develop the framework for future strategic directions; and
- launch of the ISSPA Study by Prof Ilona Kickbusch, Thinker in Residence, followed by an Action Planning Workshop on 26 February 2007.

Having engaged all project partners, ISSPA is a key consultative forum and communities of interest network. There is a clear commitment by ISSPA members to adopt collaborative and regional approaches to service delivery and to strengthen its advocacy efforts in representing priority community needs.

“We want to understand community needs and work towards ensuring the people living in our area have access to adequate, equitable and appropriate funding, resources and services to meet their social health needs”

For further information go to www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=878

“WILLUNGA TOWN SQUARE– GATEWAY TO THE TOWNSHIP” CITY OF ONKAPARINGA

Willunga township is in the southern rural area of the City of Onkaparinga which has a total population of 156,037.

Council carried out minor “tidy-up” works in the Willunga Town Square in 2003 to make the area safe for events like the “Tour Down Under” which attracts up to 30,000 visitors to the area.

An approach was later made to Council by Members of the Willunga Farmers Market and a private developer (referred to collectively as the project advocates). The project advocates shared Council’s view that further work in the Town Square could redefine it as the gateway to the township, promoting the area’s unique character and qualities. Such a development would also enhance the streetscape and provide an opportunity for the relocation of the Market from the Hotel carpark to the more prominent position in the square.

In considering the approach, Council recognised the contribution the Market makes to the community and local industry, and had provided small grant funding and other support for the establishment and operation of the Market in the past.

Preliminary discussions with representatives from the Rural Hills South Community Forum and Main Street Traders indicated support for the concept proposed by the project advocates. Council agreed to assist with further development of the concept plan, and prepared a community consultation and communication strategy to guide project advocates to engage and promote the project, and test the proposal with the general community, with Council assistance.

Key stakeholders external to Council were identified as community groups; State and Federal Government agencies and Members of Parliaments; potential funding providers; and infrastructure/utilities service providers.

The general approach of the strategy consisted of three core components.

- **Support the project advocates** who had prepared initial concept plans. Council collaborated through a comprehensive engagement process with the broader community to test the concept, and inform the community of the progress of the project. Council worked with the project advocates to refine the concept in light of consultation and cost estimates.
- **Community consultation sessions** were convened by the project advocates in Willunga to test the concept plan. Council designed and assisted in facilitating the sessions where community advocates presented the project. Community involvement guided the further development of the concept proposal, and assisted community ownership of the design.

A summary of community responses was reported to Council and the community, and subject to securing funding and development approvals the final design for implementation was endorsed by Council.

- **Informing the community.** The project advocates, assisted by Council, informed the community and all interested parties about consultation opportunities and outcomes, Council resolutions, implementation strategies, and advised of progress through the life of the project.

A detailed communication and consultation plan identified techniques and milestones, the purpose of each step in the plan, and allocated responsibilities for tasks and timelines. The plan was flexible to enable separate briefings if required and timely responses to new and emerging issues.

As a result, the concept design underwent a high level of scrutiny prior to broader community consultation. This ensured the end result reflected community aspirations, was complementary of the Willunga character, and in keeping with the principles, standards and guidelines for key elements of infrastructure and traffic management.

For further information contact:
benhal@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au





“VOLUNTEER CHARTER” TOWN OF GAWLER

The Town of Gawler is an outer metropolitan Council north of Adelaide, comprising a mix of urban and rural areas with a population of 19,726.

Early in 2004 the Town of Gawler signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of SA to develop a Volunteer Charter, an exciting and unique arrangement. The aim of the Volunteer Charter was to articulate a commitment to an agreed way forward for volunteerism in the region, by engaging with a cross section of community interests.

During 2004 and 2005 a number of community consultation forums were convened to capture the attention of any one who had an interest in volunteering. Letters inviting involvement were distributed to over 350 groups in Gawler, focus group sessions were convened, and the project was promoted widely through the local print media. Subsequently, the Gawler Volunteer Advisory Committee was established as a Section 41 committee to assist in guiding the development of the Charter, and to provide a link between community and Council on volunteer matters in general. The Committee membership includes:

- a Council Member
- Manager, Community Development, Town of Gawler
- Northern Volunteering representative
- eight community members collectively representing sporting clubs, service clubs, the health and age sector, social services, education, the arts, and young people.

The process successfully fostered partnerships and a shared commitment to a carefully crafted “Town of Gawler Volunteer Charter”, which was officially launched by the Minister for Volunteers, the Hon Jennifer Rankine MP, on 17 May 2007.

The Charter articulates the roles and agreed responsibilities of the signatory organisations namely the Town of Gawler, the Government of SA, the Gawler Volunteer Advisory Committee, and the Gawler Business Development Board. The Charter is presented as an A2 colour poster, and has been distributed widely for visual display in public places throughout the Town of Gawler.

The Charter acknowledges the important value of volunteering in building community capacity, outlines strategies to promote and facilitate its growth, and states the shared commitment of signatory organisations.

The Gawler Volunteer Resource Centre, opened in January 2006, is a focal point and community hub to service the needs of volunteers and for those seeking volunteer experiences.

“The volunteer service helps support members of the Gawler community, as well as those within disadvantaged of sometimes marginalised communities. As members of the Gawler community help support and assist their fellow neighbours, they actively strengthen and build upon friendships and relationships. This helps contribute to the cohesive and supportive community of Gawler, where individuals work together to strengthen and improve their community.”

For further information visit
www.gawler.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u-462

STRATEGIC PLANNING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE REVIEW

Engaging with the community on strategic planning and financial management decisions can help Councils prioritise service delivery to respond to community needs effectively, as well as enhance a Council's reputation as open, accountable and willing to listen. This in turn can facilitate harmonious relationships and community understanding and acceptance of potentially unpopular decisions, such as an increase in rates.

“LET’S WORK TOGETHER ON THE BUDGET” ADELAIDE HILLS COUNCIL

The Adelaide Hills Council area is a diverse landscape situated in the Mt Lofty Ranges to the east of Adelaide, with a population of 39,048.

Council has adopted a creative approach to engaging its diverse community with the design of a broadsheet and questionnaire as a method of consulting on annual goals, rates, and budget priorities. The annual broadsheet is delivered to every household and ratepayer in the Council area, and is also available in public places. Four “Meet your Councillors” sessions were also convened in key locations across the Council area to facilitate discussions between community and Council Members.

The Council's key message was:

“We're **Working Together** with our community so pick up a pencil and **make yourself heard** on which services and facilities are the most important to **you and your family.**”



A newspaper A3 folded style production introduces major budget items, explains how the rating system works in easy to read language, and sets out the key areas of Council's strategic management plan. A summary follows covering the status of current services and programs, and possible options for the future. Completing and returning the survey is simplified by:

- clear instructions about what to do;
- a simple requirement to circle a preferred response for each question, but also an option to include comments along the way;
- a reply paid envelope to complete the task, or the option of delivery to a service centre or library; and
- the option of completing the questionnaire on line, via Council's website.

An invitation is also extended to residents and ratepayers to continue their involvement in the further development of the budget plans, through participating in on-going reference groups.

The strategy very successfully mobilised residents and ratepayers prior to the 2006/07 budget period, with over 2000 responses shaping the priorities in the final budget. Council rated the community input about priorities as extremely valuable in facilitating informed decisions in the Chamber. It is hoped that listening and taking account of community views will result in greater community confidence in the Council's management of Adelaide Hills community resources.

For further information visit:
www.ahc.sa.gov.au

“LINKING STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PAR S30 REVIEW PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS” ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL

The Alexandrina Council area is located in the southern area of the Fleurieu Peninsula, with a population of 20,949.

In 2004, Council embarked on a three month consultation process for the development of its strategic plan. Council wanted to ensure that decision making reflected the interests of the diverse community profile, and balanced social, economic and environmental priorities.

A series of discussion papers were prepared which aimed to increase awareness and understanding of local issues within the broader State planning context, and to facilitate informed input into the community engagement process. Key issues to be addressed included:

- urban consolidation and town planning, and a need for more industrial land in Goolwa;
- environmental concerns including urban pollution, pressure on Community Wastewater Management Systems (CWMS), and kerbside recycling for major townships;
- water conservation, including stormwater and CWMS re-use;
- protecting heritage buildings; and
- increasing meaningful employment options, in particular for young people.

A Steering Committee guided the process, comprising Council Members, Council’s Strategic Planning and Community Development Officers, a representative from the Office of Sustainability (SA Government), and a community representative.



Council was also aware that it had not reviewed its Development Plan for six years, when the three Development Plans of Strathalbyn, Port Elliot and Goolwa, and part of Willunga were consolidated. It was therefore timely to initiate a Development Plan Section 30 Review. The statutory public consultation requirements for this process were incorporated into the community engagement strategy, and a discussion paper was prepared on this topic.

Information was communicated through public notices in local papers, notices to adjoining Councils, and a centre spread in the local paper focusing on the discussion sheet topics. Door knock discussions were initiated in targeted areas, as well as conversations with local Aboriginal communities, and Community Information Sessions in eight townships. Comments and feedback were also invited via a response form, available in hard copy or electronically. Relevant government agencies and authorities, service providers, industry and community interests were also identified as key stakeholders and consulted through the process.

The approach fostered a focus on the key issues at a strategic level rather than “pot holes” at an operational level. We noticed there was greater community understanding of Council’s planning process developing through the consultation process and the need for Council to balance the interests of diverse communities when making decisions.

For further information contact:
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“VISION 2020” CITY OF BURNSIDE

The City of Burnside (Burnside) is a metropolitan Council to the east of Adelaide, with a population of 42,986.

Council was committed to developing their strategic plan – titled Vision 2020 - “from the ground up” with all community members and interested parties, Council Members and staff having an opportunity to contribute to the development of plan.

The development of the strategic plan involved two community consultation phases. The initial comprehensive community engagement phase was undertaken over a four-month period in early 2005.

The Vision 2020 project was launched at a Major Issues Forum, which included presentations from inspiring speakers on the topics of community involvement and demographic changes in Burnside. The community was informed about and invited to be involved in the strategic planning consultation process through:

- Advertisements, articles and media releases, and community radio;
- Displays at the Burnside Village Shopping Complex and the Civic Centre, direct mail brochures, letters, email and text messages; and
- Website promotion.

Strong community interest resulted in unprecedented participation of over 2000 community members and professional specialists. The key elements of the consultation phase were as follows.

- A questionnaire sent to all households
- Telephone survey (statistically representative) of 432 residents
- Five focus groups on the topics of families, young people, older people, new residents, and baby boomers
- Nine Visioning and Issues Workshops, offered at varying times and dates to encourage strong community involvement.

The above initiatives were followed by planning workshops, which built on the outcomes. They included:

- Specific interest group workshops, covering social, environmental and financial development
- Burnside’s Environment Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Committee (during National Youth Week)
- Professional Group Workshops, involving a range of private industry and government organisations; and
- Two planning workshops with Council Members to finalise the Vision 2020 draft plan.

The second consultation phase sought endorsement from the community.

Due to the community’s integral involvement in the process, more than 94% of the Burnside community participating in the evaluation of the strategic planning process either agreed or strongly agreed with the Vision and Strategic Directions presented in Vision 2020.

In endorsing Vision 2020 in November 2005, Council acknowledged that the release of the Strategic Plan was only the very first step along the road to achieving the community vision. Council is committed to monitoring progress along the way as the plan is implemented.

For further information visit:

www.burnside.sa.gov.au/goto/vision2020

The Rural City of Murray Bridge and the City of Port Lincoln also reported on the design and implementation of comprehensive community engagement strategies, as part of their strategic planning process, the features of which included:

- a survey to gauge community views about local issues and priorities;
- facilitated community stakeholder workshops, and community forums;
- promoting consultation opportunities through local media; and
- drafts prepared to reflect community views and aspirations made available for feedback prior to endorsement by Councils.

“PROPOSED CHANGE IN VALUATION AND RATING SYSTEM” CITY OF MOUNT GAMBIER

The City of Mount Gambier is the regional centre in the south east of South Australia, with a population of 24,043.

During the early 2000's there were significant increases in some residential property site values, prompting a review of Council's valuation and rating systems. As a result Council formed a Working Party which included community representatives to review the current system, explore possible alternative valuation and rating structures, and to report to Council on its findings. In brief, the Working Party recommended:

- a change of valuation method from site to capital value;
- introduction of a fixed charge in lieu of a minimum rate;
- introduction of differential rating for land use; and
- the use of rate capping as a transitional measure.

Council wanted to consult with and seek feedback from ratepayers across the Council area, to hear how any change may affect specific ratepayers. Council also recognised the potential for passions to run high during any consultation engagement process. As a first step, the technical information surrounding the rating system needed to be simplified to effectively engage the community in providing feedback on proposals for change.

An Information Sheet was prepared, which set out why Councils collect rates, and the nature of and inequities in the current rating system. The Information Sheet also set out alternative options available under the Local Government Act and proposals and rationale for the Council's preferred



proposed system. Careful attention was paid to using plain English to explain technical aspects of the rating system. The Information Sheet was distributed to all residents and ratepayers, with an invitation to provide feedback via:

- phoning the Rating Review Information Line;
- visiting the Council Office;
- attending a public meeting; or
- completing a response form.

The Information Sheet, response form, and the Working Party recommendations were all available via Council's website.

Following the consultation process the Working Party finalised its report to Council. The preliminary proposals were reviewed to respond to concerns about the impact changes may have on pensioners, resulting in the introduction of a rate cap for eligible pensioner concession ratepayers. The community engagement process was well received, giving Council confidence to implement the new rating structure as of the 2004/05 rating period.

“Given the magnitude of the changes to the rating structure and likely community impact, we were surprised there was very little negative reaction once implemented. When the rate notices were issued under the new system there were enquiries, but very few complaints. We consider that this was because we effectively engaged our community along the way and listened to what they had to say.” (Director, Corporate and Community Services)

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“REVIEWING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT” CITY OF UNLEY

The City of Unley with a population of 36,591 is situated south of Adelaide, adjacent to the Parklands.

Like most metropolitan Councils, the City of Unley provides a locally based and volunteer driver Community Bus Service. The service comprises a door to door shopping service, a fixed route service and a charter hire service.

Council’s schedule to replace the fleet of vehicles in 2007 triggered a review of the service to decide future directions for the service. The review commenced in 2005, with the aim of assessing whether the service met changing needs and expectations of the community, including but not restricted to fleet requirements. A high level of community engagement was achieved through a range of methods, including:

- two focus groups, one targeted at volunteer bus drivers and assistants, and the other targeted at non-users;
- three surveys – one involving passengers on fixed routes and door-to-door services, one to charter hire groups, and one to the wider Unley community;
- three observation bus trips which also enabled the evaluator to consult with passengers, bus drivers and assistants; and
- engaging the volunteers in considering the draft recommendations as a result of the review.

Up to 200 people have been directly engaged in the project, and the review and evaluation has resulted in plans for significant changes to:

- fleet type and vehicle numbers;

- the manner in which the service is delivered;
- the way services intersect with other transport services to the same target group; and
- targeting services to those with highest needs.

A commitment to ongoing engagement of volunteers, staff and community users of the service has been demonstrated through the establishment of working parties to implement and further inform changes recommended.

For further information contact
hhoare@unley.sa.gov.au



“MOUNTAIN BIKE STRATEGY” – CITY OF MITCHAM

The City of Mitcham is situated to the south of Adelaide with a population of 62,415.

A Mountain Bike Strategy has been developed to guide Council’s direction in providing a network of legal mountain bike trails across nine Council reserves in the Mitcham Hills. The strategy sets out a number of initiatives and management practices to ensure the trails provide enjoyable riding experiences minimising any environmental or social impacts upon the reserves, other users of the reserves and nearby residents.

Council was keen to involve a wide cross section of the community. A list of potential government and non-government stakeholders, in addition to Mitcham residents and ratepayers was prepared covering interests such as recreation, cycling, environment, transport, heritage, safety and security, and residents groups.

Information about the release of a draft strategy for consultation and an invitation to make written submissions via a feedback form were direct mailed to the stakeholders and also communicated through:

- City of Mitcham Community News;
- Advertiser and Hills and Valley Messenger articles following a press release; and
- “Mitcham Matters” columns in Messenger newspapers.

Copies of the draft strategy were available on Council’s website and at libraries. The consultation period spanned three months, and during that period other activities were initiated by local residents.

- A local resident letter boxed a survey to residents living near one of the reserves.
- A group of residents engaged an independent traffic consultant to advise on the appropriateness of traffic management options in the draft strategy.



A total of 398 Council surveys were completed, 67% were not residents of the City of Mitcham, and most were mountain bike riders. 94% of all respondents supported the draft Strategy (20% with modifications). Of the 127 Mitcham residents that responded, 87% supported the draft Strategy.

Based on the comprehensive information provided through the community engagement process Council progressed with confidence to finalise the Strategy.

Grant funding has been secured from the SA Government and matched by Council resources, and a part time Trails Officer was appointed in June 2006 to coordinate the staged implementation of the Strategy.

Site specific plans for each reserve and on-ground works commenced in January 2007, and further consultation with the local community is continuing to fine tune the detail. Residents and other stakeholders are kept up to date through a “Mountain Bike Strategy Update” page on Council’s website. Council also extends an invitation to anyone who wants to get actively involved as a volunteer trail builder to help build a network in Mitcham and speed up the process.

For further information visit www.mitchamcouncil.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=661

**“A NEW DOMESTIC WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE - VOTE FOR THE OPTION YOU PREFER”
THE BAROSSA COUNCIL**

The Barossa Council is a rural Council situated to the north of Adelaide with a population of 21,060.

Council is committed to implementing strategies which minimise waste, increase recycling and reduce the amount of material going to landfill. Council resolved to implement a new waste collection service for residents as of July 2007, which is environmentally responsible, easy to use and cost effective. Two options were being considered and Council wanted to know which service was preferred by the community for the new three bin waste management system.

A community engagement strategy was developed to announce the pending implementation of the new service, and to encourage residents to provide feedback about their preferred option. The strategy involved preparing an information sheet, posting the Draft Management Strategy onto Council’s website, media releases about the review of the domestic waste management scheme, and community radio announcements locally early in February.

The public announcements were followed up later that month by displays in service centres and libraries, roadside signs, and mail out to households. The mail out included an A4 double sided information sheet outlining the two options. The Information Sheet clearly set out in simple table form the service offered through the two options, changes to the current service, the estimated annual cost of each option and the current service, and included a tear off “voting slip”.

The simplicity of the voting slip made it easy for residents to clearly indicate their preference.

Your opinion is important to council
What is your preferred collection service?
(Please tick ✓)

Option 1....
Option 2....

What are the features of your preferred option that appeal to you?

.....
.....

As an alternative to returning the Reply Paid slip, you can forward a response to Council by emailing to barossa@barossa.sa.gov.au

The response was overwhelming!

This was one of Council’s most successful consultations with one third - over 3500 - of all households returning a “voting” slip.

The community contribution was welcomed by Council, and enabled them to make a well informed decision about the community’s preferred option for the new waste collection service.



“2006-2007 COMMUNITY SURVEY” CITY OF TEA TREE GULLY

The City of Tea Tree Gully is situated in the north eastern metropolitan area of Adelaide with a population of 100,005.

Council’s 2006/07 issue was its sixth annual Community Survey, the aim of which is to gather community views about Council services and to assess customer satisfaction.

Timely articles in the local Messenger and Council’s newsletter – “Gully Grape Vine” - advise of the pending release of the annual community survey. The survey is distributed throughout the area in a package with the local Messenger newspaper. As an incentive to participate, respondents are advised they will be included in a draw to win a prize, such as an iPod (for those aged 25 and under) or a LCD television for the over 25s.

The survey covers the following topics:

- Rating of the range of services and satisfaction with service delivery
- Extent to which Council services and facilities are used and valued
- Voting participation
- Effectiveness of communication techniques in engaging the community
- Rating satisfaction with responses to enquiries and problems
- Maintenance of reserves, roads and footpaths
- Neighbourhood amenity and recreational facilities
- Environmental management
- Library services
- Youth services and activities.

Through the survey, residents are invited to nominate as a member of a resident’s panel.

Panel members are subsequently invited to participate in future consultation initiatives to further inform Council’s decision making.

The response rate to the survey has generally been around 4000 responses. Council Members are particularly keen to review and work towards high customer satisfaction levels, and find it a very useful tool to inform their decision making.

The data collected from surveys has led to a number of key projects and improvements to service standards. For example, through the survey Council was able to gauge community views on cat management issues, and that feedback is being used to assist Council Members deliberations on this emotive issue. The survey has also been used to enhance community satisfaction through prioritised allocation of Council services and facilities.

The annual survey has now become an ongoing component of Councils community engagement framework.

For further information contact:
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WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The first phase of the Community Engagement Project has been to develop the showcase to provide examples of community engagement initiatives in Local Government in South Australia. The second phase will be to prepare resources to assist Councils to shape community engagement approaches within their organisations.

The aim of the showcase was to capture your interest and motivate further innovative thinking, and to highlight the benefits to be derived from effective community engagement initiatives.

We would like to find out if we have been successful, and also receive feedback about what resources might be useful for Councils to assist them progress towards developing an integrated community engagement framework.

Councils and other interested parties are therefore invited and encouraged to provide feedback on the showcase and contribute to the development of the second phase of the project via a feedback form available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/goto/engage

The Project Team looks forward to hearing from you and to your ongoing involvement and contribution in the second phase of the project.

Acknowledgements

Across the State, many Councils have committed time and energy to provide information and case study examples, which have contributed to the development of the Community Engagement Showcase

The Project Team acknowledge and sincerely thank all who have participated for their valuable and welcome contributions.

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Adelaide Hills Council
Alexandrina Council
The Barossa Council
City of Burnside
City of Charles Sturt
The District Council of Coorong
Town of Gawler
Regional Council of Goyder
District Council of Karoonda East Murray
Corporation of the City of Marion
City of Mitcham
City of Mount Gambier
District Council of Mount Remarkable
Rural City of Murray Bridge
City of Onkaparinga
City of Playford
City of Port Adelaide Enfield
City Council Port Augusta
City of Port Lincoln
Renmark Paringa Council
City of Salisbury
City of Tea Tree Gully
Corporation of the City of Unley
Wattle Range Council
City of West Torrens
Corporation of the City of Whyalla

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