



Australian Government
National Capital Authority

NATIONAL CAPITAL AUTHORITY

Commitment to Community Engagement

Canberra - a place for all Australians

Acknowledgement of Country

The National Capital Authority acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community. Our work is on Ngunnawal Country.

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FOREWORD

...the surveyor will bear in mind that the Federal Capital should be a beautiful city, occupying a commanding position with extensive views, and embracing distinctive features which will lend themselves to the evolution of a design worthy of the object, not only for the present, but for all time.

Instructions from the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Hugh Mahon, to District Surveyor, Charles Scrivener, at the start of the search for a site for Australia's new capital

The National Capital Authority's (NCA) role is to continuously bring this vision to life – to ensure that Canberra, the area chosen for the Federal Capital, is a place for all Australians and a place that all Australians can be proud of. While Canberra is located within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), its role and function as the National Capital remains the responsibility of the Australian Government. The NCA leads this work and is accountable to the Australian people through the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament.

The NCA has had a "Consultation Protocol" since 2007 with a "Commitment to Community Engagement" (CCE) released in 2011 and revised in 2015. Since then, the landscape for community engagement has evolved, with increasing proportions of time and engagement spent online and technology providing new platforms for engagement. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend with online engagement options expanding and becoming commonplace. Remote participation is easier and social media has become a major channel of conversation. It is timely to review and refresh the NCA's approach as it should be much easier now for all Australians to get involved in shaping their National Capital.

The Australian Public Service Framework for Engagement and Participation was published in 2020 with a key objective to enhance engagement with community expertise to improve policy, program and services, and deliver better outcomes for citizens. It recognises the importance of engagement to build trust with the public and to deal with complexity. The principles, standards and elements of the APS framework informed the development of our new CCE.

The present city of Canberra is far larger than most of its founders ever imagined. However, at each stage of its growth, the NCA and its predecessors have taken care to maintain a high quality and standard of development appropriate to Australia's capital. I encourage all Australians to take an active interest in working with us to continue to shape this magnificent place.

Terry Weber

Chair, National Capital Authority
November 2022

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Our definition

“Community engagement is intentional interaction(s) between people, communities and stakeholders across Australia and the NCA as public decision-makers.”

For the NCA, community engagement involves proactive approaches to the broad Australian community to:

- keep people informed about decisions which have already been made or will be made and/or
- offer people opportunities for input to the NCA’s thinking and decision-making processes.

Our role encompasses decisions about a very wide range of matters including long term planning and design outcomes, planning and supporting national and local events, protecting the environment, as well as consideration of specific development proposals and works within the National Capital.

The work of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) provides guidance around community input to decision-making through their spectrum of public participation. This has international recognition as the model of best practice of engaging with the community. We have adopted the spectrum as our framework and common language for planning engagement. This means, depending on the scope or impact of the project, the NCA may inform, consult, involve, collaborate with or empower the community in decision making (refer Figure 1).

A large project will involve multiple engagement activities at different stages.

Why we engage

We engage to ensure that we understand the diversity of community views.

In making decisions, the Authority considers a wide range of options informed by community input alongside advice from experts in planning, landscape and architecture, as well as the perspective of government. This ensures we shape Canberra as a capital that all Australians can be proud of, consistent with its enduring national significance.

OUR COMMITMENT:

The NCA's mission is "to shape Canberra as a capital that all Australians can be proud of by ensuring it is well planned, managed and promoted - consistent with its enduring national significance."

Our focus of community engagement is specifically around decision-making. For the NCA, community engagement involves proactive approaches to the community to keep people informed (about decisions which have already been made or will be made) and to offer opportunities for input to decision-making.

We are committed to considered and well-planned, proactive community engagement as an integral part of our work.

Our community engagement principles

Intentional

- Be clear about what we are trying to achieve.
- Be clear about the scope for people to influence outcomes and where other processes have made recommendations and decisions.
- Be clear about limitations and constraints for community comment and involvement.

Inclusive

- Use a variety of methods allowing as many Australians as possible to participate if they wish.
- Proactively seek appropriate participants where there are missing voices.

Timely

- Allow sufficient time for the community to participate in consultation processes.
- Begin engagement at the earliest appropriate stage in the life of a project.

Feedback

- Let people know how their input and feedback was used.
- Meet or exceed all statutory engagement requirements.

NCA - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We welcome input from all Australians interested in the future of the National Capital. Our broad approach is outlined in the table below. Activities are designed to provide opportunities to involve people based outside the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as well as local ACT residents.

We aim to ensure that our engagement activities are respectful, culturally appropriate and inclusive of the diversity of our community. Our Reconciliation Action Plan describes in more detail our intent to actively engage First Nations people in the work and processes of the NCA.

Table 1 : Engagement approach

Activity	Who is this for?	How does it work?
Social media (e.g. Facebook/ LinkedIn/ Twitter, Instagram)	Anyone wishing to comment on NCA plans and activities promoted	Opportunity to provide feedback via a link to 'Have your Say' and also tracking of likes/ retweets /comments, etc. Public sentiment and comments can feed into options, modifications and/or final considerations.
Info email / General	People who want to provide feedback to the NCA on a range of activities or services	Visit website to make online comments or submissions. Ideas and comments are reviewed and replies provided.
Have Your Say / project specific	People who want to comment on specific proposals and projects Opportunities are promoted on Facebook and LinkedIn	Visit website to make online submissions/ respond to surveys/register for workshops (as applicable to the specific project engagement plan). Comments are reviewed and a summary is released publicly.
NCA Community Forum	Nominees of invited community groups interested in discussing the NCA plan for the year and forthcoming engagement opportunities	Forum twice a year (Face to face with online option) Prepare a calendar of community meeting opportunities to attend as required by projects or by invitation
NCA email group	People and groups who opt-in to be notified if there is a project/consultation happening	Email notification of specific consultation opportunities. Submissions made via "Have Your Say"
NCE	Visitors to the NCE who want to provide feedback or comments.	QR codes provided on site, face to face feedback (staff have a form to capture this) and a suggestion box for written feedback. Regular review and summary prepared.

Newspaper advertisements where there are statutory notification obligations

People who wish to comment on the National Capital Plan and any proposed amendments as notified

Written or email submissions and other feedback channels as detailed on Your Say page of the website

National Capital Plan and major works

The NCA website and Community Forum will provide information on upcoming consultation processes and the NCA's anticipated program of projects and works.

Community engagement and consultation to seek feedback on planned capital works, National Capital Plan amendments, Development Control Plans, master plans, structure plans, etc. will be scheduled on a project by project basis. In line with public consultation requirements under Section 15 of the PALM Act, this will include notices in the *Commonwealth Gazette* and one newspaper of general circulation.

Often projects or applications being considered by the NCA are subject to other approval or engagement processes, particularly in relation to *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* processes or considerations of the Australian Government or Parliament. It is important the NCA's communication and consultation processes are clear about what has been decided through other processes and the specific matters being considered by the NCA.

Community consultation processes will be designed with reference to the IAP2 Spectrum and in accordance with the NCA's principles. Under prescribed functions in the Australian Capital Territory (Planning and Land Management) Act 1988, opportunities for full empowerment and community participatory decision-making are in many instances not possible. For example, in some projects and developments, the Parliament of Australia, with members and senators representing communities across the nation, is the decision-maker.

We will select the most appropriate engagement tools according to **scale, significance, community impact and project-specific factors and constraints.**

Figure 1 IAP2* Spectrum of Public Participation

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Examples of NCA tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact sheets Web sites / social media Displays, Flyers Media interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public comment Focus groups Surveys Meetings with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen advisory committees Consensus building Participatory decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decision
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/ or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
NCA use	Common		<<< ----- >>>	Uncommon	

* © International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org