



Advocacy Ethos and Approach for Members

We believe in...

Improving environmental,
social and governance
outcomes through authentic
engagement.

About this Booklet

This booklet outlines IAP2 Australasia's ethos and the approach to advocating to decision-makers in the Australian political system. It is intended for reference by IAP2 members when they seek to meet with elected and non-elected officials to advocate for IAP2's policy demands, or when preparing for a meeting with officials following successful engagement.

As the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, IAP2 Australasia believes that engagement, when done well, improves environmental, social and governance outcomes and increases trust in the democratic process.

We advocate for all communities to be authentically engaged in decisions that affect them, in alignment with the IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement.



Introduction

As the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, IAP2 Australasia, believes that engagement, when done well, improves environmental, social and governance outcomes and increases trust in the democratic process.

We advocate for all communities to be authentically engaged in decisions that affect them, in alignment with the IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement.

Our members work in both the public and private sectors, in infrastructure, construction, transport, health, disaster and emergency services, non-profit, First Australians and intercultural community and stakeholder engagement. Through their professional work, our members advocate IAP2's standards and core values to decision-makers in positions of influence across government, corporate and non-profit sectors.

Beyond this everyday advocacy through our membership network, IAP2 may opt to advocate in its capacity as peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector. In doing so, IAP2 will seek that officeholders integrate the values of our organisation into their own public participation and engagement practices.

Through its advocacy as a peak body, and promotion of its Core Values, IAP2 seeks to:

- ✓ Empower members
- ✓ Share local challenges and strategies, resources, good news
- ✓ Leverage IAP2 activity and resources
- ✓ Advocate with a united voice.



Ethos

Why local advocacy matters

Our members work in both the public and private sectors, in infrastructure, construction, transport, health, disaster and emergency services, non-profit, First Nations and intercultural community and stakeholder engagement.

Through their professional work, our members advocate the IAP2's standards and Core Values to decision-makers in positions of influence across government, corporate and non-profit sectors.

Beyond this everyday advocacy through our membership network, IAP2 may opt to advocate in its capacity as peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector. In doing so, IAP2 will encourage officeholders to integrate the Core Values of our organisation into their own public participation and engagement practices.



Who are decision-makers?

While decision-makers do not only reside in the government sector, this booklet focuses mostly on elected and non-elected officials in the Australian political system. IAP2 believes that those in the community, non-profit or private sectors can exercise considerable influence over public discourse and policymaking and seeks to promote its standards of public participation and community engagement wherever influential decisions are made.

Australia's system of government comprises three levels – local, state and federal. At all levels, representatives are elected to govern on behalf of their constituents. Most local governments elect representatives via a majoritarian system, with the candidate who secures a majority of ranked-choice votes being elected to represent their electoral district.

All states except Queensland have two chambers of parliament – a lower and upper house – with the lower house elected through a ranked-choice majoritarian ballot, and the upper house elected through a system of proportional representation.

The Australian Capital Territory uses the unique Hare-Clark system of proportional representation, in which five candidates are elected from each of the five electoral districts. Candidates must meet an established quota of votes to be elected. Voters cast their ballots by ranking their preferred candidates in order.

Decision-makers and officeholders play an important part in the democratic process, representing the very constituents on whose behalf the IAP2 seeks to advocate. In many ways, IAP2 advocates a model of public participation that complements that of the electoral system. Decision-makers, however, may view IAP2's model of public participation as an obstacle to their public duties, seeing IAP2's mission as redundant or superfluous to Australia's system of representative democracy.

What do decision-makers do?

Representatives elected to any level of government can influence the lives of their constituents. The Australian Constitution dictates the levels of government responsible for various functions, which in turn, determines whom IAP2 chooses to engage with when making representations.

Typically, local, state and federal governments are responsible for their own standards of public participation, community consultation and engagement. IAP2 is therefore interested in engaging with elected representatives at all levels of government.

Elected representatives at a local government level, for instance, have considerable influence over planning and zoning processes that determine which commercial and residential construction projects are approved by local planning boards. State and territory representatives can influence programs and decisions that affect passenger transport, the protection and maintenance of natural resources and tourism. Federal representatives influence funding agreements between federal and state/territory governments on infrastructure projects, education, passenger and freight rail, and support for trade and local industries.

All these responsibilities affect residents and require governments at all levels to consult their constituents extensively. Representatives who fail to adequately consult local residents or promote public participation risk community opposition to their proposals, or they may not be re-elected when their term in office expires.

IAP2 proposes a standard of public participation in decision-making processes that benefits both constituents and public officeholders. Through more extensive public consultation on decisions that affect the lives of residents, decision-makers are presented with a fuller understanding of their constituents' views, leading to a more informed decision. Similarly, constituents are more aware of the benefits and potential drawbacks of decisions affecting them and can direct their voting decisions and public advocacy accordingly.

Does IAP2 'lobby'? How does our advocacy differ from lobbying?

While lobbying is typically understood as exercising malign or improper forms of influence over public officeholders, IAP2 openly and transparently engages in advocacy activities with the intention of influencing government decision-making. IAP2 believes that transparently pursuing the case for greater public participation is not contrary to the principles of integrity in democracy and could even foster a culture of greater transparency. Much like IAP2's views on the benefits of community engagement, IAP2 believes that public and transparent advocacy leads to better informed decisions by both government and the public, and is indicative of a healthy democratic ecosystem.



Principles for Public Advocacy Campaigns

At all times, IAP2 seeks to transparently advocate on behalf of its organisation and members, according to its Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement, and guided by the IAP2 Core Values.

How do we campaign?

Checklist for building a successful campaign

- Map the problem by affected groups
- Map the problem by influence-holders
- Identify and engage key stakeholders, allies and champions
- Identify campaigning objectives
- Identify advocacy targets and levers for influence
- Build a strategic approach
- Find the right key messages/arguments
- Plan activities
- Set a clear timeline
- Develop an evaluation framework.

Mapping the problem or opportunity

IAP2 believes that greater awareness of and engagement in policymaking processes and decisions will lead to policy outcomes that satisfy more constituents than if public participation campaigns were not held.

Greater public participation and awareness may result in the public supporting outcomes that are undesirable to some IAP2 members. However, for IAP2 to selectively intervene in engagement opportunities based on a desired partisan political outcome would undermine the reputation of the organisation, risking support for the principles of greater public participation more broadly.



When considering groups affected by a problem or opportunity, IAP2 members should consider potential costs and benefits to stakeholder groups. If any imbalances of power, representation or influence are experienced by any of these groups, IAP2 should consider how they could help to rectify these imbalances.

Mapping those with power or influence over an issue

IAP2 members should map a problem or opportunity according to those in positions of power who can materially influence its outcome. Those in power are not always elected officeholders. Bureaucrats and appointed officeholders have considerable influence over events in government and public life. Bureaucrats and government appointees can also influence the decisions of elected officeholders, who often rely on them for advice.

Identifying pathways to change

IAP2 members should map a problem or opportunity according to the most reliable pathways to change. Consider willingness among decision-makers to engage more deeply with constituents on the issues at hand, and accept that public participation professionals have limited power to drive public discourse and political cycles.

IAP2 members should be aware that decision-makers may not view greater public participation as a benign or positive force. Many decision-makers see voluntary public engagement as a reliable indicator of the public's preferences or interest in a decision-making process. To them, encouraging or mandating participation potentially distorts the organic distribution of preferences across constituent groups. IAP2 members should recognise that the best opportunity to involve themselves in a decision-making process may therefore be to first canvas public opinion, rather than to appeal to decision-makers directly.



IAP2's Approach to Engaging Officeholders and Decision-Makers

How do you engage an officeholder?

Most organisations in a specialised industry like community engagement will engage with officeholders through a peak organisation – such as IAP2. They will utilise the advocacy materials and resources available, which may include a dedicated team of government relations professionals. It is helpful to an IAP2 member to advocate the organisation's standards and principles whenever engaging with decision-makers – and to be able to easily access IAP2's advocacy materials when doing so.

Before you start your engagement

- Ensure you have the right stakeholders. Find the person who can make or influence the decision.
- Get the timing right: decision-making in government can happen long before a public announcement, and decisions about budget for engagement can be decided at the earliest stages of project scoping.
- Consider that smaller projects with defined stakeholder groups are more likely to involve genuine engagement, where larger policies, programs and projects affecting larger groups tend to involve less tailored engagement.

Understanding the policy and political environment

- Do your homework on the people you are meeting. Do they and/or their agencies regularly undertake engagement? What kind of engagement? Many federal politicians and public servants see releasing a discussion paper and accepting submissions as sufficient consultation.
- Understand the budget cycle. The federal budget, for example, is usually released in May, with most decisions finalised by March. The formal budget community consultation period typically ends in January. State and territory budgets are decided on a different cycle. Funding for engagement will usually be part of the budget bid for a policy, program or project.
- Consider the relationships, factions and influencers within the political parties. Someone with an important title might not hold very much internal power, where someone on the backbench may be very influential within a faction.
 - If you are unable to meet with a minister, a meeting with a staff member or close factional ally can be equally effective in pursuing an issue.

Preparation

- Check to see whether the government already has an advisory body relevant to the policy, program or project. This might be an opportunity – the engagement piece could happen with an existing suite of stakeholders.
- Aim to link genuine engagement to a problem the decision-maker is trying to solve.
 - If the meeting is with a politician, see if they have previous statements encouraging community engagement or consultation.
- Find the evidence to support genuine engagement. Politicians and public servants will want evidence that genuine engagement represents value for money, whether in saved time or money, or greater community acceptance of a proposal.
- Align your pitch to the decision-maker's interests and priorities. Ensure you are taking them along a journey, which might need to start at an earlier point if they have not undertaken much genuine engagement.
- Consider meeting politicians in their electorate office rather than in a parliamentary office. Politicians may be distracted with parliamentary business and may need to leave the room to vote, which can make meetings challenging.

Documents

- Prepare a leave-behind document that outlines your key asks and evidence.
 - IAP2 may have resources that can be tailored to your issue.
- Your meeting request should get to the point quickly.
 - Make it clear in the first sentence that you're seeking a meeting.
 - Include your key asks in the emails, using subheadings if needed.
 - Attach the leave-behind document.

During the meeting

- Provide a hard copy of your leave-behind document at the beginning of the meeting. It can help focus the minister's attention on the matters you wish to raise.
- Take two people to the meeting. Include the most senior person in your organisation and a subject matter expert. A third person to take notes may be appropriate but avoid having any more than three people.
- Ministers will typically be accompanied by at least one staff member and possibly additional attendees from their department.
- Be clear in your pitch, be explicit about what you are asking for.
- Be mindful of who holds the power in the room. If a minister is present, direct your most persuasive arguments to the minister. If it is clear that a staff member is driving the agenda, still address the minister.
- While politicians often like to imply that they have supported your suggestion, they may lack the will to change things. Ensure you have a firm ask and secure a firm response about next steps.

After the meeting

- Send a polite follow-up email thanking the minister for their time.
 - Do not provide a detailed set of meeting minutes in this email.
- If you referenced any information that they were interested in seeing (for example, evidence), send this through after the meeting.
- If a politician has referred you to a specific public servant for the next steps, contact them shortly afterwards to arrange a meeting about implementing the ideas discussed with the politician.

Tips

- Remain politically neutral, not supporting one political party approach over another.
- Stay polite even if you find the meeting frustrating.
- Be aware that not all politicians see engagement as a way to stir up aggrieved community groups or provide a campaigning opportunity for rival political parties.

Key Principles for Designing Political-Friendly Public Participation

From IAP2's Connecting Public Participation and Politicians workshop.

1

Include politicians to champion the process and ask them what issues to focus on.

2

Ensure the methods create constructive conversations.

3

Involve diverse people/perspectives in the same room.

4

Create room for informal discussion rather than staged events.

5

Make clear what is on/off the table politically.

6

Focus discussion on creating multiple potential solutions for politicians to consider.

7

Report results from processing the input to politicians.

8

Enable politicians to give a response.

By acknowledging the political environment in which IAP2 is operating – including realising opportunities and limitations – members will find politicians and officials to be more receptive to IAP2 requests, and more willing to engage in future with IAP2 representatives. Members may also find decision-makers to be more forthcoming in identifying political constraints to IAP2's advocacy agenda.



IAP2 Australasia

International Association of Public Participation Australasia
ABN 20 165 006 511

Address: Level 9, Toowong Tower, 9 Sherwood Road, Toowong, QLD 4066
PO Box 618 Toowong QLD 4066

AU:1300 4ENGAGE (1300 436 424)
NZ: 0800 4ENGAGE (0800 436 424)

©2023 by International Association of Public Participation. All rights reserved.