

24 February 2023

The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: Minister.King@mo.infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Minister

Community and stakeholder engagement organisation IAP2 Australasia is writing to request the opportunity to meet with your office your department's two new regional programs – the Growing Regions Program (GRP) and the Precincts and Partnerships Program (PPP). As the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector in Australia, our organisation is excited to discuss how our industry-leading standards on engagement can inform the development of guidelines for these new initiatives.

Upon the announcement of the GRP and PPP in October 2022, you declared that the Government would restore integrity to regional funding through the development of new grant program guidelines. IAP2 is interested in discussing with your office how our best-practice standards on community and stakeholder engagement can inform this commitment. IAP2 has extensive expertise in generating engagement and consensus across a range of industries – for partners both in government in private enterprise – and advocates for community and stakeholder engagement in alignment with the IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement.

IAP2 understands the centrality of engagement to the delivery of the Government's infrastructure agenda, noting recent findings by Infrastructure Australia (IA) outlining the impact that a lack of engagement can have on project delivery. A recent report by IA, titled An Assessment of Australia's Future Infrastructure Needs, found that community opposition to infrastructure projects cost the Government approximately \$20 billion in project delays, cancellations and mothballing between 2009 and 2019. IAP2 would welcome the opportunity to consult with your office on integrating our industry best-practice standards for community and stakeholder engagement into future funding agreement guidelines, to prevent community opposition from hindering future government priorities.

A discussion on proposed guidelines for these programs would be particularly valuable given the appointment of an interim board for Infrastructure Australia, pending a restructure of the agency. IAP2 welcomes this appointment of an interim board and imminent restructure as an opportunity for a renewed focus on engagement in future infrastructure projects. We look forward to discussing how this renewed focus could be reflected in governing legislation for future projects.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marion Short', with a stylized, cursive script.

Marion Short
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About IAP2 Australasia

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is the leading public participation organisation globally which seeks to promote and improve the practice of community and stakeholder engagement.

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed tools that are widely used and acknowledged. These include:

- **IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation** - for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes.
- **IAP2 Spectrum** - which assists with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. The Spectrum is widely used and is quoted in most community engagement manuals.
- **Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement** - which is recognised as the international standard for public participation practice.

IAP2 Australasia has almost 13,000 members throughout Australia and New Zealand – and is committed to championing engagement that improves environmental, social and governance outcomes. Our vision is for “Authentic engagement, everyday”.

Policy Position:

As the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, IAP2 Australasia believes that engagement, when done well, improves social, environmental, and economic 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.

The Evidence for Authentic Engagement

There is significant evidence to support the need for increased authentic engagement to reduce risk and speed up the delivery of projects to support Australia's economic recovery. These include:

- Community opposition has contributed to the delay, cancellation or mothballing of more than \$20B of infrastructure projects in the last decade.
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Better functioning cities and towns could deliver a \$29B increase in GDP in the long term.
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- 80% of Australians indicate it is important that government considers the views of the community when planning or investing in major infrastructure.
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- 82% of businesses said “communicating and engaging with stakeholders openly was seen as the most critical factor for building trust”.
Source: Creating value and balancing stakeholder needs (KPMG and AICD survey – 2019)
- Securing a social license to operate reduces the No. 1 ranked stakeholder risk.
Source: Top 10 Business Risks and Opportunities – 2020 (EY)