

# **Citizen Centred Governance**



Prepared by Chief Minister's Department  
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# CITIZEN CENTRED GOVERNANCE

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## A. Introduction

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The Canberra Plan framework, released in 2004, is made up of a strategic overlay (the Canberra Plan document) supported by the three plans - social, spatial and economic. Achievement of initiatives under the Plan, as well as the need to incorporate changes that have occurred in the ACT – for example, strong population and economic growth as well as new challenges such as water, skills, housing affordability and climate change – led to the Plan’s refresh. The renewed Plan will be launched in August 2008.

What started as a logical need to refresh a key government planning document led to wider thinking about how to support across-government planning and delivery in a changing environment.

As a result, renewing the Plan then became part of a wider initiative to more firmly locate this key strategic document, as well as other government and portfolio plans, in an across-government performance and accountability framework. Desired outcomes from this project are to build stronger across government delivery mechanisms in addition to existing portfolio based approaches and improved reporting and accountability along with improved efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of community services and enhanced outcomes.

This Accountability in Government initiative is funded in the 2008-09 Budget, with the aim to:

- strengthen the Government’s capacity to deliver policies and service delivery outcomes;
- promote agency accountability and performance;
- develop a performance and accountability model and the first stage of implementation; and
- prepare the ACT for incorporation of COAG performance process in accountability arrangements.

A broader model of Citizen Centred Governance emerged very quickly from the initial focus to build in the desired community perspective, and engagement, into government systems and processes. This model covers three main elements of government activity:

- priority and direction setting;
- service frameworks and delivery; and
- accountability.

This work reflects a world-wide trend in public governance that incorporates citizen engagement. The OECD notes that engaging citizens in policy making is both a “sound investment” and a “core element of good governance” and that it “contributes to building in public trust in government”.<sup>1</sup>

This thinking was also reflected in the outcomes of the Canberra 2020 Summit held in April 2008, with wider government engagement with the community and the notion of a more active citizenry, as well as at the Australian 2020 Summit. Other Australian Governments have invested in wider engagement activities as part of enhanced governance arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD, 2001, Citizens as Partners – Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making.

For instance in Queensland, the rationale for wider community engagement involves concerns around low levels of trust in government; community expectations for responsive, accountable and effective government; evidence and acknowledgement of increased social exclusion and disadvantage; and the realisation that government does not have the expertise, resources or influence to solve all issues.<sup>2</sup>

This work then encompasses the entirety of government and the community's engagement with government – not just as a recipient of services, or consultation on specific issues, but as an active participant in:

- wider discussions about the future of our city;
- the shaping of services provided; and
- the receipt and use of government information.

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<sup>2</sup> State of Queensland (Department of Communities), 2005, Engaging Queenslanders: An Introduction to community engagement.

## **B. Refining the Basics: Improved Governance**

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The Chief Minister's Department is working with an Allen Consulting Group team led by Stephen Bartos to update the ACT Government's performance and accountability framework. Along with other Governments that adopted the New Zealand output based budgeting model in the mid-90's (including New Zealand itself), the ACT Government built in more outcome focused modifications in 2005. This was reflected in wider strategic indicators in Budget Papers, and refinement of output indicators to remove the effort on relatively low level activity measures.

The Government recognised that more should be done.

The work with the Allen Consulting Group is progressing within government to take into account developments in other jurisdictions while recognising the scale and requirements of ACT Government. A report will be provided to Government so that a decision on the next steps could be made in late 2008.

This work will focus on two elements of Citizen Centred Governance – improved direction setting and enhanced accountability.

### **B.1 Improved Direction Setting**

An integrated performance and accountability framework incorporates government planning flowing out of the Government's key strategic document, The Canberra Plan, and more detailed annual planning and direction setting to identify strategic objectives and priorities, budget allocation, and how these are supported across government – such as through portfolio or, for an across government priority, through lead minister/agency arrangements. Stronger across government activity, such as through infrastructure planning, improved demographic and other data would support Government direction setting. Wide ranging community engagement on big picture issues are also a key part of this activity.

### **B.2 Enhanced Accountability**

Accountability mechanisms that support robust evaluation, reporting and monitoring will also be considered. Again, Government will be looking for ways community feedback can be incorporated into the model.

#### **Recommendation One**

That CMD finalise an outline performance and accountability framework for consideration by government by the end of August 2008, with finalisation by the end of 2008, coinciding with greater clarification of COAG reporting requirements.

## C. Citizen at the Centre

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### C.1 Trust in Government

Trust and confidence in politicians and Governments at all levels and in all countries has been on the decline for some time. This phenomena is not limited to politicians but also encompasses professions, businesses and brands.

Substantial research and analysis has taken place to better understand this phenomena

Factors identified by researchers include:

- Degree of Relevance: The distance between citizens and elements of government are in direct proportion to trust displayed. For example nurses, teachers, firemen, doctors and even local members are largely trusted yet their remote manifestations are not [Departmental head offices, political parties, Ministers]. There is a direct connection between trust and personal relationships/interactions. In effect people trust people not institutions.
- Expectations & Performance: Where there is a gap between the level and quality of service and the expected levels, there is a drop in confidence in the service provider.

This may seem trite when compared to the complex multi stakeholder environment of governments who daily balance competing demands in arriving at equitable solutions to the hardest challenges facing a community. However the development and maintenance of trust and confidence is a personal value proposition between each individual and the government concerned and often is expressed as basic expectations such as those above.

- Transparency: The remoteness of central government is often compounded by apparent opaqueness when citizens do not understand or are not informed of major decisions such as allocation of resources [budgets] or major policies.

Similarly the degree of openness around reporting on results, availability of government information and evaluation of policy will also impact trust and confidence in government.

- Scope of Government: Governments are often perceived to be too intrusive in people's lives with legislation and regulation expanding rapidly over the last half century. The resulting cost of government is also resented. Paradoxically many [if not the same] citizens will remonstrate loudly if government does not fix every problem faced by the community.
- Ritualised negativism: scepticism of government is applauded and reinforced via jokes, advertising and even political slogans ['keep the bastards honest']. There is little that can be done to reverse the cynicism and scepticism of authority that is part of the human psyche.

## C.2 Engagement and Consultation

Every generation is better educated than the previous one and with that better education comes increased understanding and expectations of institutions – especially government. Citizens increasingly want to have a say in matters that affect them. Involvement of citizens in forming policy, direction and service is now routine for most governments. However citizen engagement is not without problems as issues of fairness, representation and access [i.e. the economically disadvantaged, people with a disability and the elderly have diminished access to such processes and can be under represented] and the balance of special interests.

Governments must determine the level of citizen engagement needed in public issues under different circumstances. These include:

- Communication – one way communication and giving of information by governments to citizens
- Public consultation – listening to citizen’s input on specific matters or issues
- Participation – citizens having the potential to influence policy outcomes
- Engagement – the exercise of shared real power with citizens over matters that matter most to them.

It should be noted that citizen engagement in public policy is not a substitution for representative democracy. Nor is it a form of direct democracy. Citizen engagement aims to give citizens a **voice** and **choices** on matters that most affect them.

*Access to information, consultation and active participation in policy making contributes to good governance by fostering greater transparency in policy-making; more accountability through direct public scrutiny and oversight; enhanced legitimacy of government decision-making processes; better quality policy decisions based on a wider range of information sources; and, finally, higher levels of implementation and compliance given greater public awareness of policies and participation in their design.*

OECD, 2001, *Citizens as Partners – Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*

### International perspective

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its publication *Citizens as Partners – Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*<sup>3</sup>, notes that engaging citizens in policy-making is both a ‘sound investment’ and a ‘core element of good governance’ and that it ‘contributes to building public trust in government’.

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<sup>3</sup> OECD, 2001, *Citizens as Partners – Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*

The publication observes that a number of driving forces have led OECD countries to strengthen their relationships with citizens including surveys showing declining confidence in key public institutions.’ It indicates that:

*Calls for greater government transparency and accountability have grown, as public and media scrutiny of government actions increases and standards in public life are codified and raised. Governments in all OECD countries are under pressure to integrate public input into the policy-making process, and respond to citizens’ expectations that their voices be heard and their views be considered in policy-making.*

The document also states:

*The context in which national governments and their citizens interact is increasingly complex. Policy decisions are made at multiple levels of government...Faced with such complexity and a perceived loss of influence over national and local policy decisions, many citizens are complaining of a ‘democratic deficit’. In considering these challenges, governments increasingly realise that they will not be able to conduct and effectively implement policies, as good as they may be, if their citizens do not understand and support them. Thus, governments are looking for new or improved models and approaches to inform, consult and engage citizens in the policy-making process. Such efforts to introduce elements of participatory democracy are not intended to replace, but to complement, representative democracy.*

Two aspects of consultation / engagement that have a large impact on their effectiveness is access and channels.

### **C.2.1 Access**

Much discussion and research has been undertaken in Australia and overseas into barriers to participation and engagement.

People with disabilities, children and young people, people who are culturally and linguistically diverse and other [often disadvantaged] sections of the community need to be specifically considered when designing community consultation and engagement mechanisms.

Making information accessible to all sections of the community in a manner and form that is understandable, available and easily accessed is just part of ensuring community consultation is undertaken on an equitable basis.

Concerns are widespread that without careful design community consultation and engagement favours those better educated and more articulate and those with the time and resources available to pursue an issue or cause. “Issue capture” by the few is as much an issue as the lack of voice by others in the community. Hearing from all sections of the community strengthens the consultation results and improves governments’ decision making.

Access to the many channels of communication and engagement is an important equity consideration. For instance the availability of computers is not universal however many governments are increasingly using the web as the predominant medium for interaction. Similarly simple issues such as the time of meetings can preclude many people from participating.

A note of caution also needs to be sounded. There is the capacity for community [and public servant] burn-out if there is endless consultation/engagement and no perceived forward momentum. It is understood that there was media commentary at the time of the development of the original Canberra Plan [2004] that indicated weariness with consultation and a desire for executive action.

Other elements of the consultation process include tailoring the approach to the community concerned. It is unlikely that a development proposal in Gungahlin would elicit the need for public meetings and an information campaign aimed at the people living in Tuggeranong.

What is important is timely, accurate alternative and accessible information that can inform communities of what is happening in their locale and a clear understanding of how they can engage in the shaping of their environment.

### **C.2.2 Channels**

The availability of communication channels that can be used for the different levels of consultation continues to grow. This has expanded rapidly in the last ten years by the digital revolution and convergent technology.

The various channels for information giving/exchanging and degrees of community consultation and engagement include:

⇒ **Face to face discussion and meetings**

e.g.

- “town hall meetings”
- focus groups
- individual discussion
- Telephone surveys

⇒ **Printed material**

e.g.

- mail
- brochures / reports

⇒ **Phone**

e.g.

- information / help-lines
- Canberra Connect
- direct service contact [Police, Ambulance]

⇒ **Online**

e.g.

- information and comment
- transactions
- blogs
- wikis
- podcasts and vodcasts
- streaming
- email

⇒ **Service Centres**

e.g.

- shop fronts
- kiosks / booths
- community noticeboard

⇒ **Radio**

e.g.

- talk back radio
- advertisements

⇒ **TV**

e.g.

- public interest programs
- ads

The need to consider multi channel communication not just for the various approaches to participation but also for service communication and transactions is a characteristic of all aspects of government business.

### **C.2.3 Community Consultation and Engagement in the ACT**

The OECD notes “Highly educated, well-informed citizens expect government to take their views and knowledge into account when making decisions – a development that has led to the ‘professionalisation’ of the public sphere’.

This observation is particularly relevant to the ACT, which has a highly educated, human rights conscious community with very high expectations in relation to participation and service delivery. In addition, Canberrans are generally well equipped to participate in decision-making and able to take advantage of the full range of engagement tools, including those based on information computer technology.

The ACT Government has a strong commitment to community engagement, demonstrated by the launch in 2005 of the ACT Government’s Community Engagement Manual and Service Charter<sup>4</sup>.

The Manual provides valuable guidance to public service staff on how to engage the community in the development of policy. It defines community engagement as ‘any activity that enables the government to:

- Respond to issues raised by the community;
- Inform the community about proposed policies and actions;
- Provide the opportunity for the community to voice an opinion proposed government policies and proposals;
- Invite the community to submit proposals for government consideration; or
- Work more closely with the community to shape policy options and priorities.’

The different levels of engagement are defined, ranging from information and consultation to involvement and collaboration, together with goals and typical methods of engagement. In relation to the timeframes for engagement, the Manual strongly recommends that the ‘absolute minimum’ for any community engagement activity be six weeks, with twelve weeks recommended for large projects, policies and strategies seeking comprehensive feedback.

The Service Charter commits the Government to adhering to the principles of the Social Compact and fostering relationships with stakeholders by, amongst other things, providing opportunities for the community to contribute to the agenda for issues under consideration, where appropriate; and advising the community of what influence the community can expect to have from their involvement and how their input will be used and the boundaries or limits to the engagement. The Charter states that engagement activities and processes will be regularly evaluated to identify areas for improvement, with the community involved where appropriate and practical.

The Manual is supported by a Community Engagement website at <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/engagement>.

The community engagement framework is underpinned by the Social Compact.

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<sup>4</sup> *Your Guide to Engaging with the Community – ACT Government Community Engagement Manual and ACT Government Community Engagement Service Charter*, ACT Government, 2005

The compact sets out the principles and undertakings agreed to by community organisations and the ACT government to enhance working relationship that involves both formal and informal mechanisms.

Some of the key principles include:

- Consumer and community participation in planning, policy development and other decision making processes;
- Mutual respect for the capacity and capabilities of each sector, and recognition of their limitations;
- Integrity, ethical practice accountability and leadership in the way each sector operates; and
- Taking responsibility in the relationships and being accountable for the process and outcomes.

Community engagement and consultation in the ACT is based upon the framework set out in the ACT Community Engagement Manual and Charter, which were launched in 2005. Since that time there have been numerous developments in community engagement in the ACT including the:

- growth in interest in online engagement – both within the community and within government;
- increase in access to home internet from 67 per cent in 2004-05 to 72 per cent in 2006-07 (the next highest jurisdiction is Western Australia with 66 per cent);
- expansion of Canberra Connect services;
- reform of the planning legislation; and
- the conduct of a number of large consultations (see below).

The ACT Government and its agencies employ an extensive range of consultation and engagement techniques and resources that are shaped to meet the intent of having a wide range of input from the Canberra community. These include:

- community participation in advisory committees and boards;
- Community Engagement manual;
- Service Charter;
- Service Charter tool kit;
- community engagement website with links to specific consultation and engagement events;
- accessible multichannels for communication and engagement and feedback;
- Community Cabinet meetings;
- community representative bodies [e.g. Community Councils];
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body;
- Chief Minister radio talk-back;
- “Town Hall” meetings; and
- surveys/questionnaires and focus groups

Appendix A sets out a list of some recent consultations designed to enable communities a voice in shaping Government decisions. Appendix B lists feedback links from the Engagement Website where citizens can follow up the outcome of Government decision making post consultation.

Each of these consultations involved the use of different mechanisms to engage the community and stakeholders. Public perceptions of the effectiveness of the

mechanisms and overall processes have varied, depending to a large extent upon the nature of the issue being considered. For example, consultation surrounding changes or reductions in service delivery or reduced access to facilities or services is more likely to generate negative perceptions, irrespective of outcome, than those relating to designing a new service or plan from the concept to implementation stage.

Strengthening community engagement, and taking account of the needs of people with a disability, people who are disadvantaged or isolated and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, is highly consistent with the *ACT Human Rights Act 2004*. The Human Rights Commission advised that the Act states at section 17 that 'Every citizen has the right, and is to have the opportunity, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives'. The Commission has also advised that from 1 January 2009 section 40B of the *Human Rights Act* will require public authorities to act in a way that is compatible with human rights and to give proper consideration of relevant human rights when making a decision.

#### **C.2.4 What can be done to improve or clarify the range of community consultations and engagement arrangements?**

In looking at the ACT a distinction needs to be made between:

- citizens input to policy / direction setting;
- citizens voice and input into shaping services; and
- community input to specific development proposals.

In relation to the first area; **policy formation and direction setting**, the following comments are made:

There is a strong ACT culture of consultation that is embraced by the community. Existing consultation and engagement largely revolve around a government proposition [e.g. community thoughts and opinions on control of fireworks; or, review of liquor licensing provisions]. The level and extent of ACT community consultation in this area is extensive [see [Appendix A](#)].

Some governments are looking beyond the specific propositions to engage communities in discussion about the large and complex issues that they mutually face. These broader community conversations are open ended as the range of interrelated matters around complex issue are explored openly. The hallmark of these conversations is that government does not 'own' the process but may help or facilitate third party and community dialogue.

Because many of the big issues facing communities are complex and involve community benefits and trade-offs a new dynamic of community consultation is essential. Some of these complex and inter-related issues came up as discussion items in the recent local 2020 summit and included sustainability of transport options and their inter-relationship with urban form and density; water and energy alternatives; population and economic growth versus a sustainable footprint; investment in cultural activities versus investment in basic services. An increasing number of complex public policy issues require the active participation of citizens as active agents of change in order to achieve the desired outcome. The Canberra 2020 summit pointed to the

opportunity for these bigger conversations and the ability for communities to contribute to an understanding and exploration of alternatives.

Melbourne City Council has used this technique to help guide their strategic future. The same general approach can be applied to the Canberra Plan which can benefit in the future from such open ended dialogue around complex issues facing the future of the Territory.

#### Recommendation Two

That the Government look to opportunities for broader dialogue around long-term complex issues affecting the community.

#### Recommendation Three

That the community be asked about preferred consultation modes using different methods to get a demographic spread.

As indicated above, online engagement or e-democracy is becoming increasingly popular both in Australia and overseas.

The OECD publication on e-democracy<sup>5</sup> observes that:

- Technology is an enabler not the solution;
- The online provision of information is an essential pre-condition for engagement but quantity does not mean quality; and
- The barriers to greater online citizen engagement in policy making are cultural, organisational and constitutional not technological.

It sets out the guiding principles for successful online consultation as:

1. Start planning early
2. Demonstrate commitment
3. Guarantee personal data protection
4. Tailor your approach to fit your target group
5. Integrate online consultation with traditional methods
6. Test and adapt your tools
7. Promote your online consultation
8. Analyse the results
9. Provide feedback
10. Evaluation the consultation process and its impacts

The challenges for the future of online engagement are identified as relating to scale (including the challenge for governments of how to listen and respond appropriate to each contribution), capacity (including challenge of raising awareness and capacity amongst government officials and bridging the digital divide and involving traditionally

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<sup>5</sup> OECD, 2003, *Promise and Problems of E-Democracy – Challenges of Online E-Democracy*

disenfranchised groups), coherence (understanding how knowledge management techniques could support the policy making cycle), evaluation (benefits and impacts of opening up the policy process to wider public input need to be evaluated) and commitment (engaging online raises expectations that public input will be used to inform policy making and governments need to adapt their structures and processes to ensure the results of online consultations are analysed, disseminated and used).

Examples of e-democracy include email alerts, translation support, dedicated websites, online surveys and opinion polls, newsletters, e-petitions, e-communities, e-referenda, electronic citizens juries, discussion forums, chat rooms, blogs (online journals) and wikis (interactive editable sites, wikipedia most well known).

As indicated above, the ACT Government has an online engagement website and frequently uses other online tools, including websites for agencies and initiatives, email, electronic lodgement and payment facilities, electronic notification systems and electronic route planners.

Other Australian Governments have further evolved their online resources, including consultation resources. The Queensland Government has a well developed community engagement and consultation websites, developed as key elements of the Governments improving community engagement strategy, which can be found at [http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share\\_your\\_knowledge/resources/guides\\_publications.html](http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/resources/guides_publications.html).

The Queensland Government also makes information relevant to each region available online.

The Western Australian Government also has an engagement consultation website and places regular advertisements in the media notifying all current consultation processes. The advertisements, under the banner of 'Government Notice Board – Keeping the Community Informed' are prominent, well laid out, and bring public notifications of consultation together in one place.

Other Governments have varying levels of online engagement, with websites, online registrations and payments and notifications systems common to all.

There is always room for fine-tuning community consultation/engagement practices. In terms of the channels and access issues there are developments around the use of e-democracy opportunity that need to be further explored. For instance the use of a wiki by the New Zealand Police draft legislation in addition to more traditional consultation measures drew a wider range of contributions and attracted considerable attention to engagement techniques whereby the wiki enabled the public to directly work on the draft legislation. Other examples of e-democracy can be found at [www.theconnectedrepublic.org](http://www.theconnectedrepublic.org)

#### Recommendation Four

That CMD, JACS and Treasury [InTACT] report back to Government within four months on e-democracy opportunities to enhance community engagement.

The Engagement website is a good staging point for people wanting to navigate the opportunities for having a say. Experience now points to means of improving the user-

friendliness of the site, the range of consultations linked to the site and the refinement of the feedback section that directs the public to the results of the consultations.

#### Recommendation Five

That the ACT Government Community Engagement website be refreshed.

Drawing people's attention to the opportunities to have a say are not limited to the website and in most instances advertisements are placed in the Canberra Times. Knowing where and when to look for information in the newspaper about consultation / engagement activities that impact the community can be a source of frustration. The West Australian Government has consolidated the notifications of such activities into "Community Noticeboard" section within their main newspaper. The section appears in the same place each week and contains information on upcoming events announcements and links to other information sources.

#### Recommendation Six

The ACT Government adopt the "Community Noticeboard" approach to newspaper advertisements that agglomerates notification of events, consultations and announcements into one consolidated placement.

The Community Engagement Manual is a sound platform for advising government [and non-government] organisations on the techniques and opportunities for engagement. The Manual can be further enhanced by adding to the toolkit with examples of good practice drawn from consultations undertaken in the ACT and other jurisdictions.

#### Recommendation Seven

That the ACT Government enhance the Community Engagement Manual with the addition of best practice consultation examples that can be added to the Participation Toolkit.

The **second** sectoral area of community engagement and consultation is that of **service delivery**. The ACT is unique in Australia in that it is a city state with responsibility for all levels of service provisions, from the state level services of health and education and transport to the local services of parks and waste.

The community are engaged in a variety of ways in shaping the services provided. Sometimes this is at the policy level e.g. health services but more often at the direct service design level e.g. ACTION bus network. In addition there are a variety of different approaches to gauging the citizens' satisfaction with services via surveys, questionnaires and focus groups.

The COAG Reform agenda has raised the question of a uniform national approach to assessing customer satisfaction with government services, such an approach would underpin the Commonwealth's COAG performance framework that is tied to the Specific Purpose Payments and National Partnership Payments funding reforms.

The ACT is part of a working party with other jurisdictions exploring the application of uniform methodologies to gauge service satisfaction.

#### Recommendation Eight

That Chief Minister's Department engage with the emerging across jurisdiction discussions on public satisfaction with government services.

The **third** sectoral area of community consultation and engagement is that of **specific development applications**.

Recently there has been considerable discussion and debate surrounding the reform of the ACT Planning and Development Act 2007 and the processes that development applications have to follow in the different assessment pathways. The role of the independent statutory authority [ACTPLA] plays in assessing applications is clearly spelt out under the new Act and regulations.

The *Planning and Land Development Act 2007* requires development applications on the merit or impact track to be publicly notified. If an application is identified as requiring major public notification, the authority must display a sign on the site and publish notice in a daily newspaper.

ACTPLA commissioned a review of stakeholder engagement in ACT planning in 2003 and implemented a range of recommendations including building on the Statement of Planning Intent, developing a code of conduct for planners and developing guidelines for conducting consultations.

Community consultation about planning matters takes place in two broad areas. Firstly that of policy formation [which land uses are best applied to what areas and under what controls] and secondly, development applications [how does a specific development proposal comply with the previously determined land use controls].

The area of greatest contention is that of development applications assessment and the seeking of community comments on a proposal. Whilst it is not ACTPLA's role to speak for or against an application in its assessment phase its need for impartiality is often misconstrued for indifference and a lack of concern for community views. This perception is understandable if a community member feels that there is a lack of information available about the process, timing, proposal or opportunity to give voice to their views.

There has been considerable work by ACTPLA to improve its website with input from the community such that details of policy, process and current development applications are readily available. Similarly ACTPLA works closely with Community Councils to ensure input at all levels.

It is noted that ACTPLA has redesigned and significantly increased the size of signage for public notification of major developments and this will come into effect by end July 2008.

Whilst recognising the significant amount of consultation undertaken by ACTPLA on plan variations, new legislation and major land releases not to mention development applications there is still unease in the community when it comes to specific developments. The larger development application notices mentioned earlier will assist in making them known to the community. However other public notification mechanisms should be explored as a means of building trust in the independent planning assessment process.

#### Recommendation Nine

That ACTPLA to explore additional public notification mechanisms for Development Applications to improve the immediate community's awareness of proposals and then opportunities for comment.

That ACTPLA evaluate the community understanding and awareness of Development Application processes and the communities understanding of opportunities for comment on development applications.

### **C.3 Citizen's Experience of Government Services**

One of the determining factors in the confidence that citizens place in governments is the degree of alignment between people's services expectations and the delivered results.

The ACT embarked on an ambitious service strategy in 2001 that centres around a one-stop shop approach to service contact, information and transaction. The Canberra Connect service is still seen by many in Australia as a good example of government making life simpler for the consumers of government services. The model can be further developed to broaden the transaction and service reach.

Service expectations by the community continue to expand and be responsive to changing citizen circumstances. Not only is there an expectation that services, information and transactions are readily available at all hours but also that they can be tailored to individuals needs. Meeting the communities growing expectations is a challenge for all governments.

Many of the ways governments respond to these expectations are to shape their services based on the citizen's experience. Hence the issues around channels and access as well as feedback on service quality and appropriateness help shape the evolving nature of government services. The use of questionnaires and surveys is commonplace in understanding citizens' needs and experiences. These techniques inform service design, service delivery and the ongoing innovation of services. Citizen engagement in service delivery enables options for involvement in co-design and co-production of government services.

There has been considerable evolution of government service delivery over the past decade with the enthusiastic take up of e-government opportunities. Much has been done by the ACT Government to use e-government techniques to reorganise back office processes into a more effective shared service centre, web enabled transactions and development of services such as Canberra Connect.

At another level e-government opportunities are part of enabling a more tailored service experience. We need to explore how to enhance citizen choices among service delivery channels, and providing integrated services designed around citizen needs.

Modern communication and information technologies have opened up the potential for a better crafting of services to meet individual needs and allowing citizens to be more active participants in the nature, choice and specificity of services, to meet their needs.

#### Recommendation Ten

That Chief Minister's Department report back to government on the refreshing of Government's e-government service strategy following consultation with other agencies.

## **D. Power of Information**

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The availability of government generated information is important for a range of reasons:

- its availability, particularly in the form of performance data, provides an understanding of the particular governments ability to achieve outcomes. This builds understanding and trust; and
- its availability also enables citizens to use government information as ingredients in a new range of services. This generates opportunity and adds value to government information.

As mentioned in Section B the work currently underway by the Chief Minister's Department to update the ACT Government's performance and accountability framework will canvas the range and extent of government performance data. At the same time, the COAG performance data requirements are being evolved to underpin the extensive reforms to the Specific Purpose Payments to States and Territories. By the beginning of 2009 a substantially different accountability structure, reporting mechanisms and data sets will emerge via COAG. This will mean all jurisdictions will be reforming their own overall accountability mechanisms. The ACT is now well placed to integrate both Commonwealth and jurisdictional accountability arrangements.

### **Recommendation Eleven**

That Chief Minister's Department consult with Chief Executives on the integration of COAG accountability measures with the ACT review of its performance and accountability framework.

### **D.1 Public Sector Information Availability**

The public sector generates a significant amount of information in the form of statistics (e.g. demographic and service data), timetables, maps and geographical information as well as activity information (budget and capital works).

In the ACT and elsewhere there is a growing trend for third party use and application of government information to support economic activity. A good example is the Allhomes online real estate services that utilises ACTPLA provided information on land and sales data to generate comprehensive property information. The resulting commercial service is extensively used and highly valued.

In the UK the Government is reviewing the availability of non-personal information. The driver is the emergence of on-line tools that allow people to use, re-use and create information in new ways ([www.commentonthis.com/powerofinformation](http://www.commentonthis.com/powerofinformation))

The opportunity exists for the ACT Government to assess the availability of non-sensitive information and any barriers to making it available.

### **Recommendation Twelve**

That the ACT Government assess the availability of government generated information to the public and report on opportunities for further dissemination.

## **D.2 Freedom of Information**

The Freedom of Information legislation is designed to provide legal certainty to the request and release of information within prescribed limits. The initial driver for this type of legislation in each jurisdiction was the right of individuals to access records or information the government in question held regarding the individual. There is an increasing trend across Australia for the media and politicians to use freedom of information requests for leverage. Often the withholding of information in accordance with the legislative provision is in itself portrayed as a government with something to hide.

The Queensland Government has recently received a report on the review of their FOI operations. The review covers the fee charging system; exemptions; public interest test; coverage of the legislation; appeals; and information commissioner. The ACT Chief Minister has announced that the Chief Minister's Department together with the Department of Justice and Community Safety will review the Queensland report and provide advice on possible improvements to the ACT Freedom of Information Act. In this regard initial discussions with the chair of the panel undertaking the Queensland review has already taken place.

### **Recommendation Thirteen**

That Chief Minister's Department and the Department of Justice and Community Safety report to Government by end of November 2008 on the outcome of the Queensland FOI review and potential amendments to the Freedom of Information Act.

## **E Supporting Elements**

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### **E.1 Public Service**

The main theme across this report has been on the continuing evolution and change in the way government meets the changing needs of the people of the ACT. To achieve these changes and to address the increasing expectations of the community the capacity and capability of the public service to innovate must be reinforced. The ACT Public Service recognises that it must, as a first step, build the capacity of the public sector and focus on attraction and retention. Considerable work has already been undertaken to shape a strategy that builds capacity of the staff and executives in the Public Service and aims to attract the best to work in the ACT Public Service. The strategy will shortly be released and will serve as a foundation for further work on building individual and collective capacity for innovation.

### **Recommendation Fourteen**

That the ACT Public Service capacity building strategy be publicly released by the end of August 2008.

## **F. Summary**

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All Governments face the continuing challenge of meeting the expectations and needs of their citizens. The changing demographics, technological, environmental and societal landscape of the ACT means that the government's direction setting, service delivery, reporting mechanisms need to adapt. Whilst the refinement of government process can be expected to evolve as a matter of course there is an overriding imperative. The focus of governments work is to improve the health, wellbeing and living standards of its citizens and as such the citizen is at the centre of everything we do. Hence the imperative is to consciously build our services, processes and decisions around the citizen.

Governance relates to how governments and society makes decisions on issues of public importance, how citizens are given voice in public decision –making and how social partners work together to create public goods (Denhardt, 2003).

It is proposed that through the recommendations contained in this report the ACT Government adopt a citizen centred governance approach that reinforces the role citizens play in shaping decision and services that affect them.

The combined elements in this approach are set out in the diagram at Appendix C.

### **Recommendations**

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#### **Recommendation One**

That CMD finalise an outline of a performance and accountability framework for consideration by government by the end of August 2008, with intended finalisation by the end of 2008, coinciding with greater clarification of COAG reporting requirements.

#### **Recommendation Two**

That the Government look to opportunities for broader dialogue around long-term complex issues affecting the community.

#### **Recommendation Three**

That the community be asked about preferred consultation modes using different methods to get a demographic spread.

#### **Recommendation Four**

That CMD, JACS and Treasury [InTACT] report back to Government within four months on e-democracy opportunities to enhance community engagement.

#### **Recommendation Five**

That the ACT Government Community Engagement website be refreshed.

#### **Recommendation Six**

That the ACT Government adopt the "Community Noticeboard" approach to newspaper advertisements that agglomerates notification of events, consultations and announcements into one consolidated placement.

#### **Recommendation Seven**

That the ACT Government enhance the Community Engagement Manual with the addition of best practice consultation examples that can be added to the Participation Toolkit.

**Recommendation Eight**

That Chief Minister's Department engage with the emerging across jurisdiction discussions on public satisfaction with government services.

**Recommendation Nine**

That ACTPLA to explore additional public notification mechanisms for Development Applications to improve the immediate community's awareness of proposals and then opportunities for comment.

That ACTPLA evaluate the community understanding and awareness of Development Application processes and the communities understanding of opportunities for comment on development applications.

**Recommendation Ten**

That Chief Minister's Department report back to government on the refreshing of Government's e-government service strategy following consultation with other agencies.

**Recommendation Eleven**

That Chief Minister's Department consult with Chief Executives on the integration of COAG accountability measures with the ACT review of its performance and accountability framework.

**Recommendation Twelve**

That the ACT Government assess the availability of government generated information to the public and report on opportunities for further dissemination.

**Recommendation Thirteen**

That Chief Minister's Department and the Department of Justice and Community Safety report to Government by end of November 2008 on the outcome of the Queensland FOI review and potential amendments to the Freedom of Information Act.

**Recommendation Fourteen**

That the ACT Public Service capacity building strategy be publicly released by the end of August 2008.

## G. References, Links & Appendices

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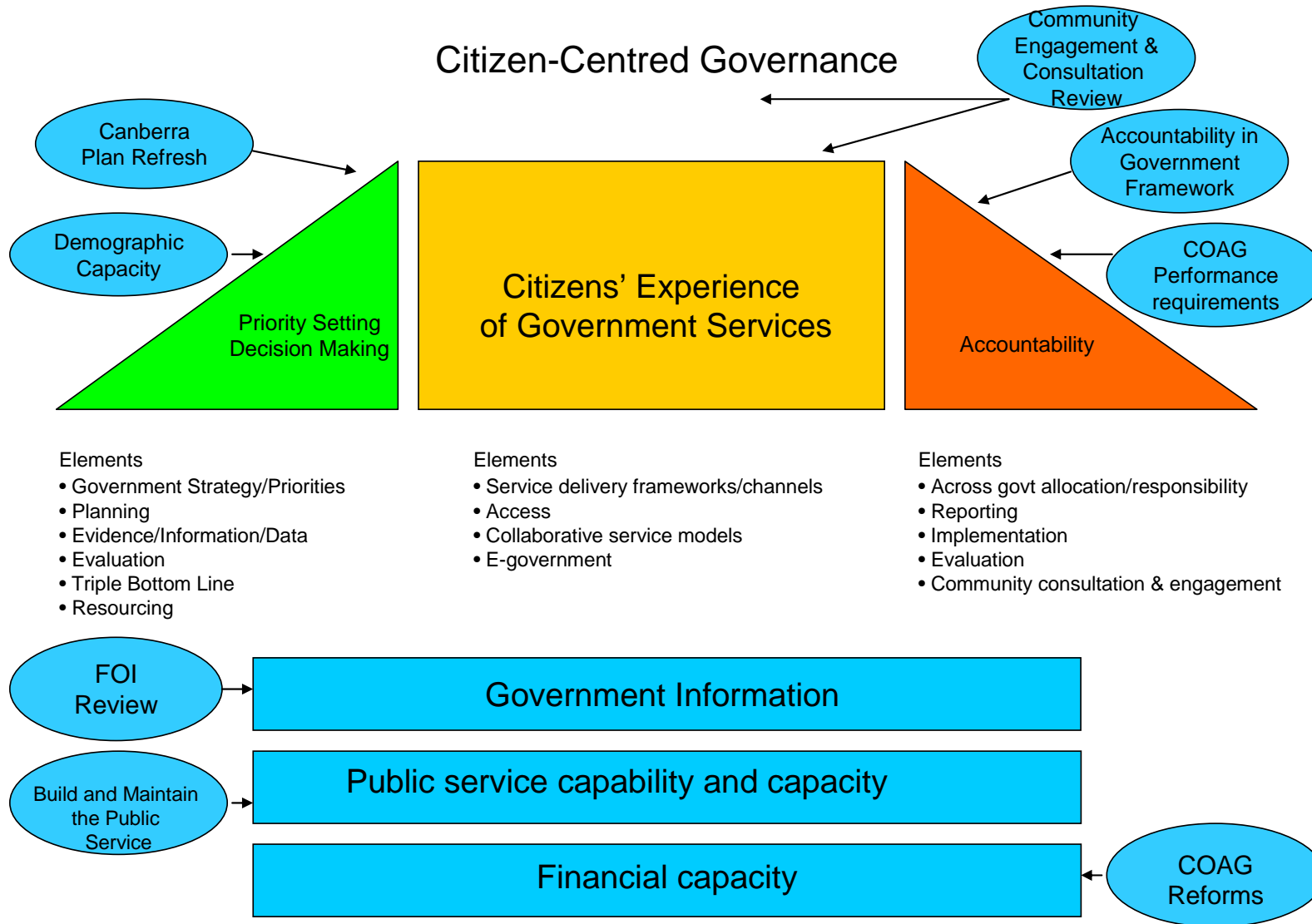
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### Current and Recent Consultations

- ACT Ministerial Advisory Council on ageing call for nominations (Due 8 Aug 2008)
- Requests for Comments Review of ACT Victims of Crime Act 1994 (Due 1 Aug 2008)
- Consultation into the Future Use of Community Sites (June – Aug 2008)
- Land Rent Scheme Information Sessions (July, Aug, Sept 2008)
- Human Rights Commission 2008 Workshop Calendar
- Work Safety Bill 2008 - Exposure Draft (Due 21 July)
- Surgical Services Plan 2008-2012 (Due 18 July)
- Body Piercing And Tattooing of children and young people in the ACT (July 2008)
- Ainslie Shops Upgrade (July 2008)
- Eddison Park Master Plan (Due Mid July)
- Deakin Shops Upgrade
- Bunda Street Refurbishment
- Community Consultation on Belconnen and Tuggeranong Skate Parks
- Community Consultation on Playground Safety Program
- Community Consultation to Improve Parking in Fyshwick
- Focus Groups for TAMS and People with Disabilities in the ACT Community
- Belconnen town centre
- Garden City provisions evaluation
- Planning system reform
- Technical regulation of utility networks
- Unit titles review
- Braddon Commercial Area
- Molonglo and North Weston
- East Lake Urban Renewal
- Gungahlin Town Centre study
- Review of the Children and Young People Act /Children and Young People Bill 2008
- Inclusive Practices in the Alexander McConochie Centre jointly convened by the Community Inclusion Board and ACT Corrective Services
- Community Inclusion Board stakeholder consultation on social impacts of climate change
- Review of the Adoption Act
- ACT Disabled Parking Review 2007

### Feedback on past Engagement (Further information available on DHCS Community Engagement website [www.dhcs.act.gov.au/engagement](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/engagement) )

- Review of Philanthropy in the ACT
- The Red Tape Review
- Review of ACT Government Concessions
- Feed-in Tariff
- ACT 2020 Summit 5 April 2008, Canberra May 2008
- Tharwa Bridge Community Consultation - December 2007
- Territory and Municipal Services Community Satisfaction Survey 2007
- ACT Disability Service Delivery System
- Framework for response to HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Sexually Transmissible Infections
- Palliative Care Strategy
- Unit Titles Act 2001
- Framework paves way for Consumer/carer participation (Media release 31/07/07)
- Chief Minister releases health and environmental reports on Water2WATER (Media release 19/7/07)
- New Process for Restructured Territory Plan (Media release 9/7/07)
- Target for 40% Reduction in Water Use for New Developments (Media release 6/07/07)
- Progress on Canberra Social Plan (Media release 30/6/07)
- Sports Grants Target Participation (Media release 2/7/07)
- ACT Legislative Assembly 2007 Redistribution (Media release 29/6/07)
- Water2WATER Consultation Program - Thank you for your feedback
- New Child & Family Centre assists Tuggeranong Families
- Parking at our public hospitals Pay parking at Canberra's public hospitals ended at 9pm Friday 25 May 2007.
- Wheelchair Accessible Taxis Community Consultation—March 2007
- Launch of Human Rights Commission to strengthen ACT community
- 2005 ACT Secondary Student Drug and Health Risk Survey Report Released
- Pre-natal reporting legislation passed - The Children and Young People Amendment Bill 2006 (No.2) unanimously passed in the ACT Legislative Assembly.
- Report released on Dragway
- 2005-06 Progress Report on the Implementation of the Government Response to the Report on Review of Carers Legislation in the ACT
- 2005-06 Progress Report on the Implementation of Caring for Carers in the ACT - A Plan for Action 2004-07
- Planning System Reform Project
- Draft ACT Multicultural Strategy 2006-2009
- Amendments to the Children and Young People Act 1999 from 1 August 2006
- Kingston Variation 256 tabled 22 August 2006
- ACT Mental Health Strategy and Action Plan 2003-2008
- Mid Term Progress Report 2006
- Towards a Sustainable Community Services Sector in the ACT - Report of the Community Sector Taskforce
- Canberra 100 - Celebration of a Century Consultation Report



## Contact Details

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Comments on this document can be emailed to [engage@act.gov.au](mailto:engage@act.gov.au)  
The closing date for comments is 8 September 2008.

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