

7<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Adelaide City Council  
GPO Box 2252  
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## **City of Adelaide Draft Community Consultation Policy: Public Consultation**

SECRA is strongly supportive of attempts to improve consultation with the community on issues of direct interest to it.

Unless decision-making processes are equally inclusive and transparent and reflect the balance within the consultation process then the consultation process itself, and those engaged in the process, cannot be viewed as having any real power or influence.

In addition, there needs to be trust that consensus once reached, stands.

The Planning system within South Australia is a good example of how consultation has been misused. This has led to a direct disengagement of the community from all facets of the process including willingness to participate in what is increasingly being viewed as token consultation. In addition, many are discouraged from giving their personal details when expressing their views as there has been potential for bullying.

See below our comments (in bold) on the *Statement* in the Draft policy.

*The Community Engagement Strategy establishes Council's commitment to the following principles when engaging the community in a decision-making process (of which legislated consultation is a part) as follows:*

- *To seek out and encourage contributions from people who may be affected by or interested in a decision.* **Some consultation should be limited to, or have more weight given to, those who are directly affected by the proposed issue eg reducing speed limits in residential streets. The safety of people living in these streets is more important than the possible inconvenience to those driving through those streets.**
- *Provide relevant, timely and balanced information so people can contribute in a meaningful way.* **It has become a 'motherhood' statement that consultation is 'good' per se and SECRA is of the view that unless consultation is timely, inclusive (with stakeholders given equal weight where they are equally effected), and transparent, then it cannot be viewed as being legitimate but rather as a means of legitimising a final /foregone decision.**
- *Provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and to speak honestly.* **To give the same weight to a simple yes/no answer as to a considered argument is to "disrespect" those who have gone to the trouble of developing such an argument. Furthermore, yes/no answers can facilitate corruption of the consultation process by making it easier for "votes" to be bought.**

**SECRA encourages its members to make their own submissions. If they do not wish to, we would prefer that they do not answer yes/no but state that they support the SECRA submission. This achieves transparency.**

**Some people are reluctant to have their names and addresses published online given identity theft issues, fears for personal security and possibilities of bullying. Addresses should be removed in the public document.**

- *Actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist in making the final decision. See above comments. Active listening involves deciding how genuinely engaged people are with arriving at achievable outcomes. Ideas are easy.*
- *Consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process. See comments above. An organisation, such as SECRA, which speaks for a number of individuals should not be given the same weighting as an individual.*

**It has been observed also that some Councillors dismiss the views of those responding to public consultations as not reflecting the majority who do not respond. How can Councillors know what "the majority" think if they do not respond?**

- *Tell the community about the final decision, and how their input was considered. Just as participants should give a reasoned argument for their opinion so should the Council explain in detail why a certain decision was taken. Council Minutes do not perform this task. This information should be emailed or posted to those who made submissions.*
- *Collaborate with peak bodies and other levels of Government to achieve common goals for the City of Adelaide. The Council needs to disagree with peak bodies and other levels of Government where they are not acting in the best interests of the City of Adelaide.*

Yours sincerely,

Heather Nimmo  
Secretary  
South East City Residents Association (SECRA)