

Community participation in road safety policy development and strategy planning

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Key Findings

- The scope of a WA whole-of-government approach to citizen engagement requires clarification;
- community participation in activities that has significant influence on decisions is different to the public being involved in decision-making; and
- of the initiatives reviewed, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum levels of *inform* and *consult* were prevalent.

Abstract

Public participation in Western Australian (WA) government policy development and strategy setting is not governed by a particular best practice model. The WA Service Priority Review *Working Together One Public Sector Delivering for WA*, released 2017, identified the need to build a public sector focussed on community needs and to develop a whole of government citizen engagement strategy for WA, including co-designing.

The Road Safety Commission (Commission) employs a diverse range of public participation and engagement initiatives. An initial step in preparing for development and introduction of a whole of government strategy review of the nature of public participation initiatives of the Commission. The review method was an analysis of five initiatives that provide reasonable representation of the Commission's public participation and engagement activities. For the purposes of this review, the International Association for Public Participation spectrum of public participation has been used to classify the activities.

This paper presents a summation of the review to date, communicating the current status and potential future direction of the Commission. Further work is required by the Commission.

Keywords

Community engagement; informing; consulting; involving; co-designing

Introduction

Public participation in Western Australian (WA) government policy development and strategy direction setting is not governed by a particular best practice model. The WA Auditor General's 2007 Report *Having your Say: Public Participation in Government Decision-Making*, noted that

community consultation and public participation practices varied within and across agencies. The report recommended that agencies should build upon good practice examples. Whilst reference was made to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model, no recommendation for adoption was made.

More recently the final report of the WA Service Priority Review *Working Together One Public Sector Delivering for WA*, released 2017, identified the need to build a public sector focussed on community needs. The report states that, since 2006 when the State's Citizenship Policy Unit was disbanded, commitment and prioritisation of engagement with the community by government agencies has diminished. It is also noted that whilst some jurisdictions, such as South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and New Zealand, have adopted whole-of-government approaches, no sector-wide approach for community engagement exists in WA. In the blueprint for reform associated with the Review, it is recommended that the quality of engagement with the community must improve to facilitate a more overt focus on community needs. The report discusses a process for co-designing services and identifies the development of a whole-of-government strategy for WA as an action item for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – International Transport Forum principles, shared responsibility is embedded in the road safety Safe System. As such, the consistency that should be gained from a whole-of-government approach to public participation and engagement in road safety policy development and strategy planning would be beneficial. In addition to the WA Road Safety Commission (Commission) there are ten other State government agencies directly involved in WA's road safety policy, legislative framework and community education. Several other agencies are less directly engaged through funding agreements and service delivery. In anticipation of the introduction of a whole-of-government approach, the current modes of community engagement and public participation used by the Commission should be reviewed.

The Commission has commenced this review to prepare for the introduction of a whole-of-government approach. A search of corporate records has not revealed any similar review by the Commission. This paper presents a summation of the review to date, communicating the current status and potential future direction of the Commission. The objective of this paper is to share what has been learnt from examining the community engagement and public participation approach of the Commission, which includes identifying potential work required to prepare for introduction of a whole-of-government approach. This work will be particularly important if the extent to which citizens participate in decision-making is to increase. This review does not provide an evaluation of the Commission's ability to adopt a whole of government approach.

Methods

For the purpose of reviewing the public participation and engagement activities of the Commission, the IAP2 public participation model has been used as the reference framework. IAP2 and the term "public participation" are used in authoritative reviews, such as the WA Auditor General's 2007 Report *Having your Say: Public Participation in Government Decision-Making* and the Victorian Auditor General 2017 report *Public Participation in Government Decision-Making*. In contrast, the WA Service Priority Review focussed on co-designing for services and favoured the term "citizen engagement". In the Service Priority Review report co-designing is differentiated from engagement methods such as consultation, but neither the characteristics of co-designing nor a spectrum of methodologies are presented for reference or consideration. Most of the publications referred to for this review used the terms community engagement and public participation interchangeably.

The IAP2 framework was considered a valid reference framework for the review as it has frequently been used for guides and frameworks developed by other States. Examples include the New South Wales Information and Privacy Commission 2018 *Charter for Public Participation – a guide to assist agencies and promote citizen engagement*, Victoria’s Department of Health and Human Services 2018 *Public participation framework and Stakeholder engagement toolkit*, and the South Australian (SA) Government’s Premier and Cabinet Circular 2019 *Best practice stakeholder engagement* and SA Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources 2016 *Guidelines for developing a community engagement strategy*.

The stated intention of IAP2 is to improve the practice of public participation and enable development in understanding, use and effectiveness of approaches to public engagement and participation. The IAP2 spectrum, as shown in Table One, identifies levels of public participation in decision-making. It is important to understand the spectrum presents levels, not stages for participation.

Table 1. The International Association for Public Participation Spectrum

		Increasing impact on the decision ⇔				
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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 provide the 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 seek feedback on drafts and proposals.	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 work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.	

A sample of the Commission’s public participation and engagement initiatives conducted during 2018 and 2019 were selected for review. The sample included initiatives that had well-defined objectives, different methodologies, and were conducted by different teams; for some external resources were procured. The sample represents the breadth of regular activities of the Commission.

Each of the initiatives reviewed was compared to the IAP2 spectrum levels of: inform; consult; involve; collaborate and empower. This resulted in classification of the initiatives according to the IAP2 spectrum. For the purposes of this review, co-designing of services is considered comparable to collaboration on the IAP2 spectrum.

The extent to which each initiative delivered the goals and promises on the IAP2 spectrum was assessed based on available documentation. One initiative has a multi-year duration and one remains incomplete, so outcomes of these are yet to be determined. These initiatives were classified based on the objectives, planned actions and intended use of the outcomes.

This is not an evaluation of the initiatives *per se*. The quality or effectiveness of the initiatives, or extent to which each has fulfilled the Commission's objectives or citizen expectations, are not included in the scope of this review. This review is limited to identifying the nature of activities with reference to the IAP2 spectrum.

Results

The review of initiatives revealed the following in relation to the level of citizen engagement, such as co-designing of services, signaled by the WA Service Priority Review *Working Together One Public Sector Delivering for WA*.

- The intended scope of a WA whole-of-government approach to citizen engagement needs to be defined so activities intended to be in-scope can be identified.
- Initiatives that have a high level of community engagement and influence, but do not involve the public in decision-making, are difficult to classify using the IAP2 spectrum.
- There is a difference between community participation in activities that may have significant influence on decisions and the involvement of the public in decision-making, which will need to be taken into account in any whole-of-government approach.
- A common language is required to consistently differentiate between community participation that influences decisions and community participation in decision-making.

Of the initiatives reviewed and classified with respect to the IAP2 public participation spectrum:

- two were classified as *consult*, with community input being obtained about alternatives and feedback being provided to the community about how the input influenced decisions;
- two were classified as *inform*, as the community were provided with information and to some extent kept informed; and
- one did not fit sufficiently within the requirements of the spectrum to be classified.

Discussion

This discussion is confined to the sample of five Commission initiatives included in the review. The sample represents different activities carried out in implementing the initiatives. As such, each initiative represents a group of like activities. There may be diversity within the groups of activities that could attract different classifications on the IAP2 spectrum. This diversity is noted when apparent.

The following discussion should be considered in the context of applying to a small sample, including:

- driver attitude and behaviour research;
- community perception of Commission engagement;
- motorcycle rider rules;

- fire and emergency volunteer exemption; and
- road safety leadership.

Within the broader desired outcome of improving road safety and reducing road trauma, each of the initiatives had specific objectives to be achieved. As a result, some of the initiatives included in the sample were found to have distinct stakeholder groups as the focus for the participation or engagement effort whilst others were very broad.

In the absence of any broadly agreed framework for public participation and engagement activities, the teams responsible for the initiatives used different approaches and practice principles. The public policy efforts of the Commission are guided by a documented framework intended to facilitate selection of public participation and engagement methods.

Routinely, the outcome of an initiative is used to determine the extent to which it was successful. Most often, if a policy position was determined or a legislative amendment was developed, these outcomes were used as evidence of success or failure. This approach emphasises the production of outcomes, rather than evaluating the public participation or community engagement process. This review provides insight into the extent to which the Commission is ready to adopt a whole-of-government approach. Where the Commission may need to explore and adopt new methods as a result of the development and introduction of a whole of government approach will be better understood. Some work has commenced in this area.

Community attitude and behaviour research use for policy development

Activities to inform and raise awareness within the community account for the biggest single budget allocation within the Commission. The Commission's objective for these activities is to improve road safety outcomes and reduce road trauma through raising awareness and improving understanding of road safety issues amongst road users. Similar to other road safety agencies, this effort is guided by evidence.

Through the Commission's community education and awareness raising function, public participation is achieved through a range of attitude and behaviour surveys, workshops and community monitoring mechanisms. The primary objective for these activities is to develop evidence-based communication strategies. These activities provide several benefits, including furnishing the Commission with statistically relevant and reliable data that is used both to evaluate the effectiveness of community education and awareness raising efforts and to provide evidence to inform planning and development of future effort. Initiatives based on these activities have been included in the review because the information gathered enables consideration of community attitudes when developing policy, or when amending or devising legislation.

Driver segmentation

The *WA Driver Segmentation* research undertaken by Kantar Public market and social researchers on behalf of the Commission is included in the review because the results have been used for policy and legislation development and the setting of priorities. This research focusses on community attitudes and self-reported behaviour in relation to distractions (mobile phone use) while driving, speeding, drink driving and use of seatbelts. The research was carried out during 2015 and 2018.

The community engagement in this initiative was a survey of respondents. The 2015 research included a survey of 1,620 respondents and deep dive workshops to further explore attitudes and beliefs. The 2018 research was a 26-minute survey, eliciting 2,116 total responses. Based on WA's

population for the respective years, both surveys had high confidence levels and low margins of error. The data was post-weighted to the known population parameters of WA drivers at the analysis stage using data sourced through licencing statistics from the WA Department of Transport. Whilst such details are important, it is the public participation aspect of this work which is relevant to the review.

The IAP2 spectrum is formed on the basis of the “...increasing impact on the decision...”; the decisions being those of the entity conducting the public participation, such as the Commission. Comparable to other research carried out on behalf of the Commission, the *WA Driver Segmentation* research does influence decision-making. The significance of the decisions made can vary. For example, the 2018 research revealed that compared to 2015 there had been no significant improvement in the attitudes and behaviours of hard-core speeders, but the research did find that the proportion of the population reporting that they never exceed speed limits had increased. The research outcomes informed decisions regarding potential amendments to legislation to address high-level speeding and recidivist drivers.

The *WA Driver Segmentation* research influences decision-making, informs the Commission regarding trends in the community, and assists in development of alternatives and solutions. The research has potential for significant influence on decision-making based on information gathered from the public. In comparison to the IAP2 spectrum, active public participation in the decision-making process does not occur. Subject to the extent to which the Commission provides information to the public, such as the problems discovered through the research, the *WA Driver Segmentation* research most closely aligns with *inform*. However, considering its design and purpose, it may be inappropriate to classify this initiative using the IAP2 spectrum.

The *inform* level has the goal of providing information to the public to increase understanding of decision-making and the promise is to keep the public informed. The Commission uses the *Driver Segmentation* research to influence decisions; however, generally the community are not informed about how the results of the *WA Driver Segmentation survey* are used for policy, legislation or the setting of priorities.

With respect to the *WA Driver Segmentation* research, the use of the IAP2 spectrum as the classification framework for the review has highlighted the need for further investigation regarding public participation and any potential whole-of-government approaches. There may be dimensions that distinguish public participation from community engagement, and differentiate deliberative influence on decision-making from participation in decision-making.

Community perception of the Commission’s community engagement

With the Government and Public Sector Practice organisation’s 2019 *Leaders’ Report – Increasing trust through citizen engagement* as background, Kantar Public was engaged by the Commission to collect, analyse and present the public’s perception of the Commission and road safety. This work is ongoing; it is discussed as a public participation activity due to the potential for the public to influence decisions about the future direction of the Commission. Public input will directly influence the Commission’s development of community engagement for strategic communications, policy and strategy development.

The objective of the initiative is to identify opportunities to establish an action plan for better engagement. Whilst the initiative is ongoing, the work to date is relevant for this review. Essentially, the Commission is obtaining community input that will assist it in moving towards the intended whole-of-government approach for citizen participation and engagement. Kantar Public is

using its proprietary *10C Citizen Engagement Framework*. This example also raises the issue of the public's influence on decisions in contrast to being involved in decision-making processes. Subject to the Commission providing information to the public about decisions made, the characteristics of *inform* level of the IAP2 spectrum may be present. The community can express concerns, although they are not presented with alternatives as required for a classification of *consult*.

Targeted stakeholder groups for legislation development

Community participation regularly occurs for policy and legislation development carried out by the Commission. Often, the range of options suitable for consideration by government is limited or largely known to the Commission. The nature and extent of public participation is considered in the context of the issue, the objectives of the government and the available evidence. Each public participation or engagement methodology is specifically developed for the target group and the issues involved. The public policy effort of the Commission is guided by a documented framework.

Road safety issues may be contentious when evidence regarding effective road safety measures does not reconcile with community expectations or beliefs. A divergence between what the community may want and what evidence indicates should be done requires careful management of public expectations in the policy or legislation development process. Some processes, for example road traffic penalty reviews, may not be appropriate for community participation.

Motorcycle rider policy development and potential legislation amendments

The Commission is presently implementing the *Western Australian Strategic Direction for Improving the Safety of Motorcyclists and Moped Riders 2016 – 2020*. Several actions are included in this document, including adoption of National initiatives like the motorcycle protective clothing rating tool. Most WA-specific actions were identified as issues that would benefit from public participation in the development of options or making of decisions about existing options. This policy development project is typical of such work by the Commission.

The public consultation process for the project which was focussed on rules regarding motorcycle rider use of bus lanes, lane filtering and lane splitting (motorcycling rules). A consultation paper was produced to elicit feedback from the community during June and July 2018. Initially 858 responses were received from the public. This sample of respondents was largely made up of motorcycle riders, with 803 out of the 858 respondents holding valid motorcycle rider licences. During September 2018 a supplementary process was conducted to obtain a more balanced sample of respondents. Consequently, an additional 373 respondents who did not hold motorcycle licences contributed to the overall public input of 1,231 responses. Given WA's population, a high confidence level with a low margin of error should have been achieved. However, the bias within the original set of public submissions highlighted the need for the Commission to strengthen consultation methodologies to mitigate the likelihood of such scenarios.

Inviting community participation for this policy development, and any potential legislation development or amendment process, required the Commission to make a commitment to reflect community concerns or aspirations in the decisions made. Motorcycle rider associations and advocates were keenly interested in the outcomes of the public consultation process, with expectations being amplified as a consequence. The general community is supportive of some of the changes, which will assist in meeting the expectations of the motorcycle riders, and not supportive of others. The latter requires the Commission to ensure motorcycle riders are provided with adequate feedback to understand how broad public input has influenced the outcomes.

The characteristics of the *consult* level of the IAP2 spectrum are clearly evident in the consultation process about motorcycle rules. Clear alternatives were provided for consideration, as required by the *consult* public participation goal. The *consult* promise to listen, acknowledge and provide feedback about the influence of public input upon the decision are all identifiable characteristics of this process.

This initiative does not reflect the characteristics of the higher levels on the IAP2 spectrum. The promise of the *involve* level requires public input to be reflected in alternatives developed, whereas in this initiative the alternatives were developed without such public input. Similarly, the public participation goal and promise for *collaborate* includes public participation in the development of alternatives and solutions. These characteristics were not evident. This reinforces the classification of the public consultation process about motorcycle as *consult*.

The classification of *consult* undoubtedly comes as no surprise to those involved in public policy development. Public policy development has customarily involved processes identified as consultation, often with consultation or options papers being produced to elicit public comment. The various public participation reports, frameworks and guides developed and implemented by other jurisdictions and agencies indicate an intention to employ greater innovation in public participation for policy development. The WA Service Priority Review *Working Together One Public Sector Delivering for WA* signals the direction that is likely to be taken with the WA whole-of-government public participation or community engagement approach. It discusses the opportunity for government to “...embed ways to include community viewpoints in decision-making, policy development and service design.”

This review is intended to provide insight into the current status of the Commission in relation to implementing such reforms. Based on the status of the Commission, greater public involvement in decision-making will be required to achieve a higher level on the IAP2 spectrum. The public policy consultation process for motorcycle rules demonstrates the need to investigate innovations in public participation and engagement in public policy development in order to be better positioned for implementation of any whole-of-government approach.

Fire and emergency volunteers potential legislation amendment

The need to reconsider an exemption for fire and emergency volunteers from a zero-blood alcohol limit when driving vehicles of 22.5 tonnes or more was identified. This work was very narrowly focussed, did not require the development of additional alternatives or solutions as the exemption was either required or not, and involved a very distinct group within the community. The initiative is representative of similar specific legislative changes that may arise as consequential amendments, discovered as part of another legislative review process or may result from an event that raises concern regarding the adequacy of existing legislation.

The Commission had the ability to identify every fire and emergency volunteer organisation that would be affected by the exemption. Therefore, a very targeted process was developed and conducted early 2019. The process included writing to all affected organisations describing the exemption, its application and how it originated, and inviting written submissions regarding potential repeal of the exemption. To increase certainty of participation, all relevant local governments were also provided with the material and invitation to comment. This approach was taken because, based on anecdotal information, in regional areas most local governments employ some fire and emergency volunteers or there is an ongoing relationship between the local government and the volunteer organisations.

Gaining input from the fire and emergency volunteer organisations and the local governments was intended to inform the Commission's analysis as to whether the zero-blood alcohol limit exemption was required. A follow-up workshop was conducted with respondents to communicate the results of the survey, discuss the Commission's proposal and clarify any matters of concern. The approach demonstrated many of the characteristics of the IAP2 spectrum level *consult*.

Similar to the process for motorcycle rules, participation of the public was clearly defined to provide feedback about specific, limited alternatives. The characteristics required for this initiative to be classified as an IAP2 spectrum level of *involve* or *collaborate*, are not met. Primarily, both these levels require a promise of public input being reflected in the alternatives developed, or in the development of alternatives and solutions. This supports a classification of this public consultation process as *consult*.

Investigation of the most contemporary approaches to public participation and engagement in legislative development and amendment is required. A greater understanding of the opportunities and limitations will inform how existing processes might be modified or redesigned.

Notably, this review has not identified any policy or legislative review initiatives that demonstrate the characteristics of *empower* on the IAP2 spectrum. The nature and extent of decisions that could be delegated to the public as envisaged by the IAP2 level of *empower* would need careful consideration. A decision about the zero-blood alcohol limit exemption for fire and emergency volunteers might be a candidate as it is a matter with a low level of complexity, the breadth of impact within the community is narrow and the potential risks are readily mitigated. However, providing such a narrow scope for public participation may not be in the spirit of what is intended for the *empower* level on the IAP2 spectrum.

Road safety leadership for local government and industry

The Commission hosted the Monash University Accident Research Center (MUARC) to conduct an Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme in WA once during June 2018 and again during June 2019. The objective was to improve the level of road safety knowledge and understanding of leaders within multiple sectors of the community and establish networks for collaboration across sectors. The Commission invited people from various sectors in WA with the intention of engaging individuals and organisations who can influence within the community and their respective sectors to participate. Participants came from various geographical regions of WA and both cohorts had diverse representation including: industry, State and local government, not-for-profit organisations, and tertiary education institutions.

The programme included a road safety leadership challenge that requires organised groups to work together during the programme and for several months afterwards. The challenge concludes with each of the groups presenting their findings and recommendations at a follow-up session, which for the 2018 event was attended by the WA Minister for Road Safety.

The Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme actively engages participants, encouraging high level participation in a road safety activity. However, the participants' engagement is not in a decision-making process. The programme is intended to foster a shift in thinking by the participants and motivate them to be road safety leaders within the community. This includes cultivating their ability to influence and improve road safety strategies and policies within their respective sectors and organisations.

The Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme is recognised by the Commission, participants and stakeholders as highly engaging. The programme enables participants to hone their ability to contribute to improving road safety outcomes within their communities and sectors, and to foster cultural change for WA. Whilst a significant and highly valued activity contributing to the Commission's engagement efforts, the decision-making element in the public participation goals and promises of the IAP2 spectrum indicates that it may not be classifiable as a public participation activity. This activity aims to influence the decisions and actions made in other sectors, for the good of the community.

As noted above, the terms community engagement and public participation are used interchangeably in many of the referenced publications. The WA Service Priority Review *Working Together One Public Sector Delivering for WA* used the term engagement and did not articulate any interpretation of this as being different from participation or limited to engagement for decision-making. The Government of SA's Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources *Guidelines for developing a community engagement strategy* define community engagement as "...any process or interaction used to occupy the attention and efforts of a community, including ... community participation in activities." The Guidelines also provide a definition for community participation in decisions and explains that community participation may be a part of community engagement.

The Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme does not have the characteristic of participation in decision-making. However, as an activity in which the community participates, the broader definition provided in the SA's Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources *Guidelines for developing a community engagement strategy* could be applicable. In the context of this review, the Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme reinforces the need for the Commission to gain an understanding of any whole-of-government approach for community engagement, in particular the nature of activities that will be included.

Conclusions

The review of initiatives has provided insight into the public participation and engagement activities of the Commission. It has mainly assessed the initiatives as being in the IAP2 public participation levels with lower degrees of impact on decisions resulting from public involvement in the decision-making process.

The review process, including the classification of activities using the IAP2 spectrum, prompts reconsideration of the Commission's public participation activities. Some activities, such as the community perception and monitoring research, may have significant influence on decisions. Such activities elicit information from the community which subsequently influences policy and legislative development and amendment; however, they do not directly involve the community in the decision-making process. On the other hand, the Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme has a high level of community engagement, but does not involve the public in the Commission's decision-making. Ideally, it influences decision making in other sectors. The programme serves an important purpose of educating and joining forces with the community.

Further work will be required by the Commission if it is to proactively adopt any whole-of-government approach for citizen engagement. Compared to the level and nature of citizen engagement discussed in the WA Service Priority Review, the Commission will need to maximise the information and opportunity which should be derived from the research being carried out by Kantar Public using their *10C Citizen Engagement Framework*. In addition, work is required to establish common language and definitions for public participation and community engagement if

any whole-of-government approach is to be adopted. Other activities need to be explored by the Commission to achieve the higher levels of public participation in decision making.

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Due recognition is given to Kantar Public as the source and owners of the proprietary tool 10Cs framework.

The Monash University Accident Research Centre is acknowledged as the owners of the intellectual property of the Executive Road Safety Leadership Programme.

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