

media release

Outback Communities Authority Media Release. 1 March 2011

Board to consider adopting community engagement policy

A revised version of the OCA's community engagement policy which addresses community feedback will be tabled for approval at the OCA's 10 March Board meeting.

Residents from more than 26 Outback communities responded to the nine-week call for feedback on the draft policy.

OCA Chair Bill McIntosh says the policy should ensure people who live and work in the outback have convenient opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes about the delivery of services and infrastructure.

"We have heard from nearly 150 residents who either provided feedback on our draft policy or confirmed contact details so they could ensure they continue to receive information about how to participate in our decision-making processes," Mr McIntosh said.

"While this is a reasonable response rate I am hopeful that participation will improve, particularly when we are consulting on plans to deliver infrastructure and services and that is what really matters to people who live in remote areas," he said.

"I have written to everyone who contributed this week, including some land owners and pastoralists, to thank them for their views because adopting a community engagement policy will be an important first step in empowering communities to determine their own future."

"Importantly, the door is still open – we want to keep in touch with as many outback residents as possible. People can continue to register their details online, or by phoning the OCA, to ensure we have the best contact details for them."

The feedback received over the last nine-weeks indicated that outback residents want regular communication from the OCA via:

- direct mail
- email (where available)
- articles in local community and progress association newsletters
- advertisements in the Roxby Monitor, The Sun, Transcontinental, Coober Pedy Times, West Coast Sentinel, Stock Journal, Whyalla News, Flinders News, Gibber Gabber, Across the Outback, Isolated Children's Parents' Association newsletter, and Pastoral Board News, and
- "open to all" meetings in townships where specific decisions are to be made.

It was also clear that residents want more than 21 days to consider reports or discussion papers about important infrastructure and service issues before providing feedback.

Once a new version of the policy is adopted at the 10 March Board meeting in Fowlers Bay it will be available on the OCA's website, from progress associations and will be posted or emailed to those people who contributed to the consultation process.

The OCA is a statutory authority responsible for local governance in the South Australian Outback, where there are more than 30 Outback communities and numerous grazing and farming properties not serviced by local councils. For a full list of the communities it supports, please visit the OCA website.



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