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from Inquiring into insurers responses to 2022 major flood
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SURVEY REPORT

South East Queensland Community Attitudes to Consultation & Engagement

COMMUNICATION
MEDIA.

Harbinger & Consultants

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August 2011

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1 Executive Summary

In July/August 2011, South East Queensland residents were invited to participate in an online survey about community attitudes towards community engagement and consultation. This survey was instigated by Harbinger Consultants and this report presents the results and findings of this survey.

The key results of the survey are as follows:

- Respondents have been primarily involved in consultations about urban development, followed by consultation on infrastructure and planning initiatives
- Consultations have been initiated primarily by Local Government, followed by State Government and the private sector. However, more than 10% of respondents noted that they were unsure of who consulted them indicating that proponents may not declare themselves. This has transparency and accountability implications.
- Respondents indicated that generally and professionally accepted consultation methods are preferred, particularly public forums and surveys. Such methods mean that community members are able to gather information, ask questions and provide feedback. This is interpreted as meaning that residents prefer consultation methods which are designed for two way communication, decision making and information gathering.
- Respondent attitudes to consultation are varied and the main responses are 'cynicism', 'having a say', 'pointless' and 'necessary'. These responses reveal the mixed feelings in the community about consultation and engagement. They also reveal that despite their cynicism and a perception of pointlessness, there is a sense that consultation is both necessary and a platform for having a say. This indicates that consultation is valued by respondents, but that this sense of value may not be shared by those delivering consultation programs, especially third parties undertaking consultancies or contracts for other parties.
- Respondents indicate that the desirable and most desirable attributes of good consultation include openness, transparency, honesty, clarity, factual information and listening. Consultation processes should be designed to enhance those values and attributes.
- Respondents identified a wide range of motivations for participating in consultations. Of these, 28.6 per cent identified 'protecting community interests' as their major motivation, while no one identified 'dislike change' as their motivation. Residents see themselves as 'defenders' of community interests and, potentially, their 'way of life'. Other highly ranked motivations included: 'influencing decisions', 'concern' and 'having a say'.

Anecdotal responses reveal a range of frustrations and tensions in consultations about planning and development in particular. Respondent preferences for and expectations of consultation and engagement methods have not been met. There is clearly a desire for more open and transparent processes among respondents and a general sense that consultation is 'going through the motions'. Issues have been raised about communication, quality of engagement, professional and project teams, community capacity, attitudes and the need for follow up. Respondents also identify expectations and opportunities for better consultation.

While this report does not make recommendations, key issues about community engagement have been raised. These issues need to be understood by those involved in community engagement and consultation. There is a disconnect between community expectations and values and the implementation of some consultation and engagement strategies, including professional values.

2 Introduction

In July/August 2011, South East Queensland residents were invited to participate in an online survey about community attitudes towards community engagement and consultation. This report presents the results and findings of this survey. The aim of the survey was to:

capture basic information from community members in South East Queensland about their experiences of consultation and engagement in relation to planning, policy and development consultations.

It is anticipated that the feedback provided in this survey will enable professionals to respond to changing community expectations about these processes, while also flagging some potential opportunities for additional research, particularly in terms of evaluating the impact or benefits of well designed consultation and engagement programs in urban management and development contexts.

It is understood that community consultation and community engagement, while similar, are different practices. Citizens themselves may tend to understand these terms through their own experience and perhaps conflate them rather than regard them as defined fields of practice.

Community engagement is understood to refer to the *involvement of community groups and members in the decision making process and is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community*

Community consultation is understood to refer to *a two-way communication process which aims to give the community opportunities to contribute to decisions which affect them.*

Communities throughout the country are consulted and engaged on matters of policy, planning and development by private sector, government and non-government interests. South East Queensland, in particular, is experiencing a range of development and planning pressures. While communities expect to be consulted about matters that may impact on them, there is little information from communities and individuals about their experience of these consultation processes especially during this period of accelerated change. Professional associations tend to shape the discussion through a lens of professional and industry development. In some instances, these organisations assert and recognise excellence with awards and commendations. Community engagement and consultation are strategic processes that are integral for risk and reputation management, change management, community/stakeholder relations, community development, building community capacity and social capital, and governance. For corporations, stakeholder and community engagement can be integral for meeting corporate responsibility objectives.

Harbinger Consultants was moved to instigate the survey on the basis of mixed messages received from community members about consultation processes. When Brisbane Residents United formed as a coalition of resident action groups, it became apparent that there were significant conflicts about urban management in the region, which were more localised than the broader discussions about population growth management. Community consultation is understood as a valued and expected part of planning for and in our diverse communities and an integral part of decision making processes. However, residents' comments seem to indicate that while residents participate in these processes, they remain uncertain about whether concerns are being heard, especially with regard to development and infrastructure projects.

3 Methodology

A brief online survey was prepared by Harbinger Consultants using an online facility, Survey Monkey. The survey was not commissioned by any corporation, non-government agency or government body. It was instigated as spot research in response to subtle indicators emerging from environmental scanning and professional practice that such research was warranted.

The survey was promoted throughout South East Queensland among community organisations, local newspapers, ward offices and social networks (via Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn). The intention of this method was to develop viral awareness and response – to ‘tap into’ community networks. It is unknown whether any local newspapers reported that the survey was underway or whether Councillors distributed any information about the survey.

The survey received 264 responses from the period of 26 July to 12 August 2011. While 264 respondents commenced the survey, 220 (83.3%) respondents completed the survey.

The survey deadline was changed from 31 July 2011 to 12 August 2011 to accommodate a request from Griffith University’s Urban Research Program, which had assigned completion of the survey as an assessment task due in mid August. Griffith University’s use of the survey for this purpose does not compromise the confidentiality or methodology of the survey. The project team are not students, staff or partners of Griffith University.

This work is not intended as scientific or scholarly research. It is not intended as a representative study.

3.1 Survey Design

The survey was comprised of 10 questions and designed in three sections:

- Demographic information (place of residence, age and gender)
- Experience of Consultation and Engagement
- Attitudes about Consultation and Engagement

In general, the survey used expressions and words – primarily in section three – that had been heard in our conversations during consultation and engagement events as well as in the media and online communications. The language had been gleaned from residents rather than from theoretical or practitioner literature. It was felt that by using this style of vernacular, the survey would present with authenticity and make more sense to potential respondents.

The survey was tested with colleagues involved in communications and social science prior to publication and promotion.

4 Findings

This section details the findings from the survey. It is presented in question and response form.

Section 1: About You

Question 1: Where do you live?

Of the respondents, three do not reside in South East Queensland and one did not supply a postcode. This question was completed by 259 people. Respondents are not evenly distributed throughout the region with most respondents located within the Brisbane LGA (77.22 per cent) as follows.

LGA	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Brisbane	200	77.22
Logan City	27	10.42
Redlands City	4	1.52
Gold Coast	4	1.52
Scenic Rim	5	1.93
Toowoomba	2	0.77
Ipswich	5	1.93
Moreton Bay	3	1.15
Sunshine Coast	6	2.31
Not in Sunshine Coast	3	1.15
Total	259	

In the following postcodes, there were 10 or more respondents:

Postcode	Number of respondents	Suburb	LGA
4053	37	Stafford, Stafford Heights, Michelton, Brookside, Everton Hills, Everton Park, McDowall	Brisbane
4067	18	St Lucia	
4068	10	Chelmer, Indooroopilly, Taringa	
4075	27	Corinda, Graceville, Sherwood, Oxley	
4124	20	Boronia Heights, Greenbank, Lyons, New Beith, Spring Mountain	Logan City

Question 2: What is your gender?

More males (51.8 per cent) than females (48.2 per cent) completed this question.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Male	51.8%
Female	48.2%
<i>Total respondents</i>	257

Question 3: What is your age?

The age group with the highest response rate was the 46-55 age group (26.3 per cent), followed by the 36-45s (20.8 per cent) then 56-65s (18.1 per cent) age groups. The 19-25 (15.1) age group was the fourth highest responding age group.

Answer Options	Response Percent
18 or younger	0.0%
19-25	15.1%
26-35	10.0%
36-45	20.8%
46-55	26.3%
56-65	18.1%
66-75	8.5%
75 or older	1.2%
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>259</i>

Section Two: Experience of Consultation and Engagement

Question 4: What have the consultations you have attended in the last two years (since 2009) been about?

Respondents were asked to tick all options that apply. Most respondents had been consulted about urban development (72.8 per cent), planning (54.4 per cent) and infrastructure (35.5 per cent). While SEQ is not generally mining impacted, extractive industry (such as quarrying) projects are located or planned in the region.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Infrastructure	35.5%
Urban Development	72.8%
Mining	3.9%
Policy	18.0%
Planning	54.4%
Other	19.7%
<i>Total Responses</i>	<i>228</i>

Question 5: Which group has initiated these consultations? Please tick all that apply.

Respondents were asked to tick all options that apply. Most respondents had been consulted by local government (63.7 per cent), state government (32.3 per cent) and the private sector (21.2 per cent). Also, 11.5 per cent of respondents were unsure about which group of those listed had consulted them.

Options	Response Percent
Federal Government	5.8%
State Government	32.3%
Local Government	63.7%
Private Sector	21.2%
Non-Profit Sector	18.1%
Unsure	11.5%
<i>Tertiary Institution</i>	
Total Responses	226

Question 6: On matters that directly impact on you, how do you prefer to be consulted or engaged?

The responses to this question indicate that respondents have definite preferences with regard to consultation methods. Respondents also tend to affirm that standard consultation methods are appropriate. Of those, surveys (49.3 per cent), information sessions (45.9 per cent), public forums (43.0 per cent), newsletters (41.9 per cent), and websites (40.3 per cent) are preferred. Social media, however, received a mixed response with no clear indication of overall preference at attracting a predominantly neutral response of (30.3 per cent). Of those methods listed, social media attracted the highest 'least preferred' response, while online forums attracted the highest 'not preferred' response, reference groups received the highest neutral response, surveys received the highest preferred response and public forums received the highest 'most preferred' response.

Answer Options	Least preferred	Not preferred	Neutral	Preferred	Most preferred	Response Count
	<i>percentage</i>					
Interviews	12.3	11.4	30.1	29.7	16.4	219
Surveys	4.5	8.5	24.2	49.3	13.5	223
Focus groups	9.2	14.2	25.2	35.3	16.1	218
Information sessions	3.2	7.7	19.5	45.9	23.6	220
Public forums	2.7	8.1	21.3	43.0	24.9	221
Letters	8.2	16.0	27.4	36.5	11.9	219
Newsletters	7.4	14.3	26.7	41.9	9.7	217
Reference Groups	6.6	17.5	34.6	31.8	9.5	211
Websites	6.6	10.0	26.1	40.3	17.1	211
Online forums	9.5	20.4	30.3	29.4	10.4	211
Online surveys	4.6	14.7	24.8	39.4	16.5	218
Social media	20.3	19.8	25.1	18.8	15.9	207
Total Responses						234

*PUBLIC NOTICES
PHONES
FEEDBACK LOOPS*

Section Three: Attitudes About Consultation and Engagement

Question 7: Based on your experience what word or expression in the list below generally describes your current attitude to consultation processes and events?

Respondents were asked to tick no more than three responses. The highest scoring responses are 'cynicism' (37.7 per cent), 'having a say' (35.5 per cent), 'pointless' (33.8 per cent) and 'necessary' (33.3%). These responses reveal the mixed feelings in the community about consultation and engagement.

Answer Options	Response Percent
Having a say	35.5%
Confrontation	8.3%
Valuable	17.1%
Cynicism	37.7%
Tick-a-box	15.4%
Worthwhile	15.8%
Necessary	33.3%
Anger	13.2%
Democracy	14.9%
Pointless	33.8%
Ambivalent	11.4%
Fatigue	7.9%
None of the above	0.9%
<i>Total Responses</i>	228

GROUP COMMUNICATIONS

Question 8: In your experience, what are the attributes of good consultation and engagement?

Responses to this question reveal how residents evaluate consultation and engagement. Respondents indicate that the desirable and most desirable attributes of consultation include openness, transparency, honesty, clarity, factual information and listening. Other attributes of good consultation and engagement include relationship buildings, independence, discussion, deliberation, answers, ideas and having a say. Such attributes are consistent with leading and good practice, as advocated by professional and practice bodies such as IAP2. These attributes indicate that residents have expectations of consultation and engagement that are values driven or based.

Answer Options	Most Undesirable attribute	Undesirable attribute	Neither desirable nor undesirable	Desirable attribute	Most desirable attribute	Response Count
	percentage					
Openness	0.9	0.0	2.8	40.4	56.0	218
Transparency	1.4	0.5	4.6	27.6	65.9	217
For real	0.5	1.0	18.4	31.8	48.3	201
Outreach	1.0	3.5	43.0	32.5	20.0	200
Honesty	0.5	0.0	1.4	29.1	69.0	213
Clarity	0.5	0.0	2.4	33.0	64.1	209
Factual Information	0.5	0.0	3.8	21.7	74.1	212
Relationship building	1.5	2.0	30.2	43.4	22.9	205
Independence	0.5	4.4	29.4	37.3	28.4	204
Mediation	1.0	5.3	43.7	34.0	16.0	206
Discussion	0.9	0.9	13.8	49.3	35.0	217
Deliberation	1.0	4.4	28.4	42.2	24.0	204
Diverse	3.0	4.5	33.7	39.6	19.3	202
Answers	1.0	1.0	20.5	40.0	37.6	210
Listening	0.9	0.5	7.1	31.6	59.9	212
Ideas	1.0	1.5	14.1	44.4	39.0	205
Cultural awareness	4.4	5.8	23.8	37.9	28.2	206
Creativity	2.0	5.4	25.2	40.1	27.2	202
Hospitality	3.5	11.5	41.0	32.0	12.0	200
Having a say	0.9	1.4	13.7	42.2	41.7	211
<i>Total Responses</i>						224

Question 9: What mostly motivates you to participate in consultations?

Respondents identified a wide range of motivations for participating in consultations. Of these, 28.6 per cent identified 'protecting community interests' as their major motivation, while no one identified 'dislike change' as their motivation. Other highly ranked motivations included: 'influencing decisions' (15.4 per cent), 'concern' (12.3 per cent) and 'having a say' (8.4 per cent).

Answer Options	Response Percent
Having a say	8.4%
Concern	12.3%
Interest	5.7%
Influencing decisions	15.4%
Anger	1.3%
Help make up my mind	2.2%
Seeking information	6.2%
Activism	1.8%
Self-interest	2.2%
Fear	0.4%
Dislike change	0.0%
Protecting community interests	28.6%
Environmental protection	7.0%
Exercising democratic rights	7.9%
None of the above	0.4%
<i>Total Responses</i>	<i>227</i>

Question 10: If you have any additional comments – either specific or general – about your experience of and attitudes to consultation and engagement, please write them below.

This final question gave respondents an opportunity to contribute further thoughts and ideas about consultation and engagement. There were 115 responses comprised of over 8,000 words. Several people expressed their anger at state and local government processes and authorities, while others noted that consultants working for government bodies misrepresented the issues. Positive comments indicated that some consultations had been worthwhile including those associated with the flood recovery.

The responses to this question are diverse and relate to a broad range of experiences, localities and communities. The following issues have been distilled from the respondent commentaries.

Category	Comments and Concerns
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-determined outcomes • One way messages (no dialogue) / PR / marketing / issues management • Consultations not well promoted • Lack of timely and accurate information • Community needs assurances
Quality of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going through the motions • Community not involved in decision making • Process is not participatory • Lack of appropriate consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders • Community dynamics not managed (factional groups can hijack processes; others can be shut out) • Conflicts of interest are not acknowledged in consultations • Communities unable to influence decision making • Lost opportunities for community education and empowerment • Lost opportunities for engaging 'wisdom of the crowds' • Distrust of focus groups, control groups and reference groups • Consultation (and community) not taken seriously • Failure of meeting processes – minutes are not a true record • Concerns expressed about changing character of localities
Professionals & Project Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uninformed professionals • Professional behaviour can be bullying, coercive, patronising, exclusionary, misleading • Professionals use ambiguous language • Should be informed about who is doing the consultation • Lecturing by project teams; telling communities it's going to happen • Lack of neutrality
Community capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time constraints (both individual and notification periods) • Community's respond to consultation processes by organising as oppositional groups • Need to involve thinking and progressive people to solve problems and address issues • Community is worn down (by proponents) over time
Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farcical • Cynical about consultation • Going through the motions / tick-a-box / ingenuous • Waste of time • Findings from consultations are manipulated • Growing scepticism and wariness about consultation, government and corporations (developers)
Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community should be informed about outcomes of consultation • Uncertainty about how community responses will be used (no report back or feedback to the community) • Lack of response to consultation outcomes/findings • Community is ignored / not listened to • It's possibly to make a difference in some consultations

Expectations

- Consultation must happen early
- Would like to influence outcomes and decisions; be involved in decision-making
- Openness, transparency, honesty, accountability
- Need to have meaningful conversations; ongoing consultations
- Well organised meetings can be worthwhile
- Need diverse groups involved in consultations

The following comments provided by respondents are indicative. A 'word cloud' of the comments was created using Wordle and this provides a picture of the most intensely and commonly used words in respondent comments:



Other than the key terms 'community' and 'consultation', words like 'process', 'local', 'residents' and 'people' are commonly used, indicating a priority on those words and their meanings in a community context. In quoting several of these statements in this report, names of agencies and locations have been removed and indicated with [...]. Overwhelming respondents voiced concerns about being consulted on **pre-determined outcomes** or foregone conclusions with comments such as:

Following recent local community consultations [...] where much dissatisfaction was expressed about information and planned actions I was left with the conclusion that consultations were held to 'tick the box', decisions were already made and residents concerns were paid only lip service and in one case entirely disregarded. In many cases their information (traffic density in relation to road capacity) seemed distinctly unrealistic and faulty and if plans become implemented will wreck havoc on our community. I have no faith in the integrity of the consultation process as recently implemented.

Information provided by [...] was so vague at meetings with no actual facts provided. That is maps provided re: location of development such as roads, type of housing, parks, etc cannot be considered actual locations. These types of consultation meetings permit the ticking of "Community Consultation" box.

I have had extensive experience of the so called consultation process at both the State and local level. It is a process whereby they tell you what has already been decided and then want you to agree. It verges on the dishonest and fraudulent at times and I would be more that pleased to show you these instances. Many community groups have found that they have spent many hours taking part in the [...] process only to have whatever the local developers in their area wanted being implemented in the final plan. To say that this process is failing is

an understatement. In West End there were nearly 5,000 submissions against their plan, in Milton over 1600 and in Walter Taylor over 500 to name just a few areas. This is a sign of a process that is not only failing to meet local needs but one that leaves people with a mistrust of their Government and its representatives. Community opposition is growing.

Several comments referred to **token consultation** as a way of indicating that the consultation process was not genuine or undertaken for show. For example:

The consultation process APPEARS genuine but is actually TOKENISTIC .Residents are presented with glossy brochures that I now believe are sent with a decision already in place. As a result I think these are a waste of resources and in any community it builds cynicism of the value of pilot groups. Pilot groups are often chosen to support the desired outcome. For example the introduction of PREP to schools chose schools that had experienced staff and resources. The pilot results were successful. Now that it is being implemented, the major issue is staffing and Teacher child ratio. The REALITY does not match the PILOT results. Communities need to know that the government can WALK the TALK. ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

As a [...], Brisbane Resident we have had patchy consultation about major changes to planning and roadwork. The Consultations have been tokenistic and some undertaken by consultants rather than council employees. These sessions have left me with complete cynicism about the process - it is clearly window dressing and not real concern for ideas and local interests.

I find that many consultations are just focused on public relations and issues management - often feels like going through the motions. It's not a two-way discussion. We'd like to be consulted like it matters and so that the process really does mean better results for the community.

One respondent noted that consultation processes sometimes did not follow appropriate cultural protocol, especially when consulting with **Aboriginal communities and residents**.

After Individuals or agencies (Government and NGO) come into aboriginal communities and talk to a couple of people and then state that they consulted with the aboriginal people of those communities. Not identifying the key grass root people.

Respondents also advocated for **better processes of consultation and engagement**, offering suggestions on how such processes can be improved including:

Rarely, if ever, have I experienced consultation where I have felt heard, been taken seriously to the point where the consultant even takes notes; I have not experienced true consultation which I understand has several components to the process, where not only are you heard, your opinions noted and given feedback, ideally discussion takes place or even had follow-up after the consultation let alone had the ideas embedded in the end result. Each and every consultation has been about the consultant ticking the box toward a self-driven agenda to say they have consulted. However, when acting in the position of consultant myself, I have adhered to my preferred process listed above which I consider true as opposed to token consultation.

It is important that consultation be facilitated in an open way and that as far as is possible a diverse range of people with informed points of view be part of a dialectical process and consensus reached that takes into account short medium and long term pros and cons.

Consultation is an ongoing process. It seems to me an absolutely crucial nexus point where power relations are negotiated and people's agency recognised. There are many ways to do it and many points of entry into the exchange of information and ideas.

[...]Yes, listening to and convincing broad communities to adopt or endorse specific policy is hard and even on occasion disappointing work, but [...] can lead to overwhelmingly positive outcomes unimaginable (and impossible) if the project had been founded on manipulation, distortion or hot air [...] Need to allocate permanent resources to support and sustain positive responses, tackle negative ones with honesty, clarity, patience and goodwill and re-engage at every opportunity. "Engage early, engage often and act on the information received. "Engage early, engage often and action on the information received".

Professional and industry attitudes and performance in community consultation processes and events attracted criticism:

It has been my experience that most consultation and liaison processes are not genuine or, if the intent is genuine, the consulting body has a culture of 'knowing better' or 'getting away with us much as possible'. Just last week for example, the head of a major community infrastructure project attempted to answer a genuine request for information about a potentially polluting aspect of the development with a 'everything is OK and we are doing a good job' type of answer and when I challenged her on the reply another development team member said 'technical reports are very intellectual'. I'm sure he didn't realise how insulting his answer was when he said it but it does give a good example of the type of development culture that exists. Developers also attempt to wear any community opposition down rather than take the risk of really consulting or really establishing any partnership with community. Developers see community engagement as a necessary evil that has to be managed. When I suggested a public meeting to consult about the potentially polluting aspect of the project, the hasty rejection illustrated their fear of real consultation. They find it a lot harder to manage a public meeting than a 'Community Liaison Committee.'

My recent involvements with "consultation" have been with the [...]. I put the term in inverted commas, because whatever it was, it was not consultation. Nothing is more frustrating than the appearance of "consultation"/"we care what you think"/ etc being put onto an exercise that in reality is "this is what's going to happen but we have to make it look like we had community input so we'll ask for your opinions but we all know they count for nothing." This has happened twice in the last twelve months in my own suburb - it certainly has made me a little jaundiced with the idea of being "consulted" or "engaged". I have several specific examples of the ways in which the [...] processes were flawed, and would be happy to discuss these - such as attending a "consultation session" where no-one from the [...] was available to actually answer questions or provide any real information. The "project" people that were there knew so little that it was just embarrassing.

If you are coming along to a Community Forum, you expect the 'interviewer' to have a bipartisan/neutral approach toward what is being said rather than siding with one side or the other. The interviewer should have the knowledge and understanding of the local issues/topics that may be raised at the Community Forum so that they can have a constructive discussion with 'interviewees' without taking sides.

I have unfortunately frequently found, at information sessions, the representatives are often unable or unwilling to answer fairly standard questions. They often seem wedded to a rote line of statements which may or may not have any relevance to the subject I am interested in.

Several respondents noted that consultations did not consider the **time constraints** experienced by residents. Such constraints necessitated diverse communications methods and easy access for residents.

it's clearly necessary to have a range of channels used when consultation is occurring - I can't go to an 'open day' or 'meet the planners' on a week day as I work full time (besides which, half the time they are promoted with very little notice) and I can hardly be bothered going out of my own way for a public meeting on a weekend either - but I think these are important for those who prefer those methods. Meanwhile, I prefer something I can mull over, read up on, and then feedback on in some way. I like to think that my comments will make a difference and I value the right to have a say. I do feel it is a community obligation to think and talk about these things and have an input and I am grateful to the 'squeaky wheels' in my neighbourhood who are actively voicing what many of the lazy/busy/silent majority would agree with [...]

I find consultation very time consuming. I really value being able to contribute my thoughts, but as someone with only 1-3 hours of personal time per day and a myriad of chores to accomplish during that time, the time demand of the consultation process is a big determinant of my participation.

This chapter presented the results from the Survey on South East Queensland Community Attitudes to Consultation and Engagement. Anecdotal responses particularly reveal a range of frustrations and tensions in consultations about planning and development. Respondent preferences for and expectations of consultation and engagement methods have not been met. There is clearly a desire for more open and transparent processes among respondents. Issues have been raised about communication, quality of engagement, professional and project teams, community capacity, attitudes and the need for follow up. Respondents also identify expectations and opportunities for better consultation.

5 Survey Conclusions

This survey presents a range of responses to current community engagement and consultation processes and practice in South East Queensland, predominantly Brisbane LGA, from a resident perspective. The key results of the survey are as follows:

- Respondents have been primarily involved in consultations about urban development, followed by consultation on infrastructure and planning initiatives
- Consultations have been initiated primarily by Local Government, followed by State Government and the private sector. However, more than 10% of respondents noted that they were unsure of who consulted them indicating that proponents may not declare themselves. This has transparency and accountability implications.
- Respondents indicated that generally and professionally accepted consultation methods are preferred, particularly public forums and surveys. Such methods mean that community members are able to gather information, ask questions and provide feedback. This is interpreted as meaning that residents prefer consultation methods which are designed for two way communication, decision making and information gathering.
- Respondent attitudes to consultation are varied and the main responses are 'cynicism', 'having a say', 'pointless' and 'necessary'. These responses reveal the mixed feelings in the community about consultation and engagement. They also reveal that despite their cynicism and a perception of pointlessness, there is a sense that consultation is both necessary and a platform for having a say. This indicates that consultation is valued by respondents, but that this sense of value may not be shared by those delivering consultation programs, especially third parties undertaking consultancies or contracts for other parties.
- Respondents indicate that the desirable and most desirable attributes of good consultation include openness, transparency, honesty, clarity, factual information and listening. Consultation processes should be designed to enhance those values and attributes.
- Respondents identified a wide range of motivations for participating in consultations. Of these, 28.6 per cent identified 'protecting community interests' as their major motivation, while no one identified 'dislike change' as their motivation. Residents see themselves as 'defenders' of community interests and, potentially, their 'way of life'. Other highly ranked motivations included: 'influencing decisions', 'concern' and 'having a say'.

In their comments, respondents also reflected on and discussed their experiences of consultation and engagement, identifying concerns and opportunities as listed below:

- Untimely communications delivered in a public relations modality inhibited information sharing and participation.
- Engagement did not result in participatory decision making and competing interests are not well managed. This meant community knowledge and experience was not tapped effectively and expectations were not managed by the process. Such an approach appears to eliminate opportunities for negotiation and mediation.
- Professionals and project teams engaged in behaviour that was regarded as unprofessional and inappropriate. They were sometimes found to be insufficiently knowledgeable to respond to community questions.
- While residents were willing to participate in consultations, there were issues of capacity, particularly time. Unsatisfactory consultations are possibly driving the formation of resident action and oppositional groups, resulting in redirection of community capacity.
- Community attitudes to consultation were generally unfavourable due to negative experiences. However, aspirations for better consultation were expressed.

- There was a lack of follow-up after consultation processes which meant participants were not informed of outcomes or how their input had influenced the project or whether they had been listened to.
- Community members noted expectations and thoughts about better approaches to consultation, particularly values driven, informative, participatory and inclusive approaches

A word cloud reveals the prevalence of words such as ‘people’, ‘process’, ‘local’ and ‘residents’ in respondent comments. These comments generally reveal that respondents are dissatisfied with consultation processes and particularly regard them as ‘going through the motions’ or meeting statutory requirements. This can result in lost opportunities to build community capacity, particularly for planning processes rather than development applications. Additionally, there is a sense of eroding trust between government, the planning/consultation professions (or industry) and community.

While this report does not make recommendations, key issues about community engagement have been raised. These issues need to be understood by those involved in community engagement and consultation. There is a disconnect between community expectations and values and the implementation of some consultation and engagement strategies, including professional values. As a practitioner and practice development organisation, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a suite of core values for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes:

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

The findings of this survey affirm the currency of these core values from a community perspective. It is apparent from the survey results that such values are not well integrated with planning and development regimes. When people oppose development, they do so for complex reasons. The results of this survey reveal that ‘protecting community interests’ is the primary reason for participating in consultation. Such motivations are complex and cannot be simply characterised as NIMBYism or ‘anti-development’. However, there are implications for negotiating change in built environments that are dominated by separate and inflexible land uses, such as suburbs and centres on transport corridors.

Community consultation and engagement is regarded as an integral for governance in planning and policy and is embedded in a range of new policies and proposals including those advocating for sustainability including social sustainability. From a change and conflict management perspective, there is a need to consider new approaches and methods that can result in negotiated outcomes and engage the values of residents. While respondents indicate a general preference for standard

consultation methods, there is, as Carson and Gelber propose, innovative and principles driven methods such as citizen juries, charrettes and feedback panels.¹

This survey reveals that core values have not been upheld and cultural values have not been engaged. When this happens, consultation and engagement ceases to be meaningful as a forum for articulating community aspirations. Good community engagement and the cultivation of engaged citizens has a major role to play in urban change management processes. The report presents some challenges for practitioners and communities alike. In particular, it highlights that, in a region where dozens of resident action groups have emerged, there is presently a disconnect between the intent of consultation and the experience of consultation. Consultation and planning is regarded as something that is done *to* residents rather than done *with* them; as such it affirms an expert-community division that alienates resident interests. However, participatory and consultative processes alone are not the solution to rifts about urban management. This report is intended as a reminder that leading practice in governance, policy and planning contexts will include leading practice in consultation and engagement.

5.1 Next Steps

Harbinger Consultants is making this research freely available via online document sharing and our website. It is our intention to develop further reflections on the findings, extend the analysis and publish these. Others are welcome to use this work, with attribution as per our Creative Commons licence, for their own publications and to support their research. If you use this work, please let the authors know – <http://harbingerconsultants.wordpress.com>.

¹ Dr Lyn Carson and Dr Katharine Gelber, *Ideas for Community Consultation: A discussion on principles and procedures for making consultation work*, NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, November 2001

Appendix 1

Survey on South East Queensland Community Attitudes to Consultation and Engagement

Section 1: About you

1. Where do you live?

City/Town _____
 Postcode _____

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your age?

- 18 or younger
- 19-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66-75
- 75 or older

Section 2: Experience of Consultation and Engagement

4. What have the consultations you have attended in the last two years (since 2009) been about?

Please tick all that apply.

- Infrastructure
- Urban Development
- Mining
- Policy
- Planning
- Other

5. Which group has initiated these consultations? Please tick all that apply.

- Federal Government
- State Government
- Local Government
- Private Sector
- Non-Profit Sector
- Unsure

6. On matters that directly impact on you, how do you prefer to be consulted or engaged? Please tick all that apply.

	Least preferred	Not preferred	Neutral	Preferred	Most preferred
Interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reference Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online forums	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Attitudes about Consultation and Engagement

7. Based on your experience what word or expression in the list below generally describes your current attitude to consultation processes and events? Please tick no more than three responses.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a say | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confrontation | <input type="checkbox"/> Democracy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Valuable | <input type="checkbox"/> Pointless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cynicism | <input type="checkbox"/> Ambivalent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tick-a-box | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worthwhile | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary | |

Question 8: In your experience, what are the attributes of good consultation and engagement?

	Most Undesirable attribute	Undesirable attribute	Neither desirable nor undesirable	Desirable attribute	Most desirable attribute
Openness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transparency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For real	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Honesty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clarity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Factual Information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationship building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliberation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diverse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Answers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural awareness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospitality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 9: What mostly motivates you to participate in consultations?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a say | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-interest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concern | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interest | <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Influencing decisions | <input type="checkbox"/> Protecting community interests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental protection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help make up my mind | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercising democratic rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking information | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Activism | |

Question 10: If you have any additional comments – either specific or general – about your experience of and attitudes to consultation and engagement, please write them below.

HARBINGERCONSULTANTS

people, place, product, potential, partnership + pollinating

Harbinger Consultants is a people-focused social, urban and cultural consultancy committed to positive change, place based approaches and creative sustainability. Since 2005, we have undertaken research, planning, strategy and consultation for clients and partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors. As Harbinger Consultants, JM John Armstrong and Linda Carroli apply enterprising, innovative and interdisciplinary thinking as well as awareness of ecological, social, design and technological ideas to shape creative and vital futures and cultures for communities, organisations and places. Working collaboratively with clients and other stakeholders, our processes and methods are designed to engage and activate the rich streams of intelligence, sense and passion that flow through communities, organisations and places. Through enabling, transformative and strategic processes, we seek to enhance resilience, capacity and wellbeing so that people - decision makers, service providers, enterprises and industry - can think, plan and act.

SERVICES & CAPABILITY

Harbinger Consultants' service provision is focused on research, planning and strategy for the realisation of creative and connected places, environments and spaces. We work across three priorities – both independently and as part of larger project teams – using creative, deliberative and consultative methods to realise enduring and sustainable outcomes that are people and planet responsive and futures oriented.

Place

- Community engagement, collaboration and consultation
- Place-based strategic thinking
- Cultural, creative industries and public art planning
- Cultural infrastructure, clustering and precincts
- Robust and smart communities and enterprises

Organisations

- For-profit and not-for-profit
- Small to medium enterprise, home-based business and 'solopreneurs'
- Social enterprise, Indigenous enterprise, creative enterprise, and corporate responsibility
- Organisational planning, evaluations and development

Community

- Place, projects and people
- Community development and capacity building
- Community consultation, collaboration and engagement
- Community infrastructure
- Diversity and inclusion
- Communications, awareness and engagement

PEOPLE

JM John Armstrong has held executive and senior management roles in higher education, enterprise and government. As Manager of Blak Business Smart Business he led a team of Indigenous staff to provide ongoing personalised, professional guidance for the sustainable development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Intensive and extensive consultations with Indigenous Community leaders and others enabled Armstrong to provide a valuable service for a rich and diverse mix of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, enterprises and organisations. He has worked with many organisations to develop and facilitate strategy, policy and change including cultural organisations and institutions. An experienced project manager and formerly CEO of a Sunshine Coast based creative enterprise incubator, John was a member of the Board of the Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency for five years and formerly Chair of Access Arts and Metro Arts. Having served on many non-profit Boards he most recently served as Secretary of the South East Queensland Indigenous Chamber of Commerce. He has also participated in government initiatives in placemaking, creative city and urban agriculture. Formerly Project Manager of Campfire Group and Gallery Manager of Fire-Works Gallery, John developed and managed international, metropolitan and regional cultural projects to facilitate intercultural exchange, cultural export, market development and professional development

focused on Indigenous art and artists. As a public art curator and strategist, he has worked on several projects in regional and metropolitan Queensland including Princess Alexandra Hospital and Nambour Town Centre. He was Associate Professor, Head of Visual Arts at QUT for a number of years and also held the role of Assistant Dean of the School of the Social Sciences on secondment. As an award winning contemporary artist, practicing in the 1970s and 80s, Armstrong travelled widely and his artwork is held in many public collections. He represented Australia in international cultural events such as the Sao Paulo Biennale and the Paris Biennale.

Linda Carroli has extensive experience working in community, communications and cultural contexts, with recent experience in the urban development industry. Her work includes projects addressing a range of organisational, cultural and community development and social innovation priorities including community infrastructure. Drawing on her background in the cultural sector and communications, she has consulted on a diverse range of urban planning, property development and strategic planning initiatives, including as part of the project team that developed the Strategic Community Development Plan for the Brisbane City Council's River City Blueprint's Inclusive City Strategy, which included consideration of cultural development, and on the development of a community wellbeing framework for mining affected communities. She has a particular interest in cultural development, the cultural life of places, place management and place-based strategies and is an honorary member of the Institute of Place Management. She is also a member of the International Association of Public Participation. Having completed studies in media, cultural studies and heritage, she is currently undertaking postgraduate studies in urban planning and design. For several years, she was the Chair of the Australian Network for Art and Technology and also edited an art, science and technology electronic magazine and portal, Fine Art Forum. Formerly a member of the state government's Queensland Government Community Forum for the Greater Brisbane Region, she was appointed Deputy Chair of Regional Development Australia Brisbane's committee. As an award winning writer of interactive works and cultural journalism, she continues to publish and produce in a range of media and contexts both nationally and internationally. She is also the recipient of a Centenary Medal for 'long and distinguished service in the arts'.

EXPERIENCE

As a flexible, collaborative and dynamic consultancy, Harbinger Consultants has worked on a diverse range of projects that provide direction and clarity for our clients and their stakeholders while achieving positive community outcomes.

Moreton Bay Regional Council Cultural Strategy and Plan

Moreton Bay Regional Council

In partnership with Brecknock Consulting, Harbinger Consultants was involved in the development of the Moreton Bay Regional Council's Cultural Strategy & Plan. This required cultural mapping and extensive consultation across the cultural and creative industries sectors and broader community. As part of the project team, Harbinger has undertaken community consultation within the planning process to ensure significant community and sector input in shaping the plan. The consultation process involved stakeholder identification, online and printed surveys, face to face interviews, information sessions and facilitated focus groups.

Community Centre Planning in an Emerging Masterplanned Community

State Government

A new community centre will be constructed as part of the masterplanning and development process for an emerging suburban community on an outer suburban greenfield site. Harbinger Consultants worked with Foresters Community Finance to undertake community consultation and facilitate community meetings to identify priorities for the community centre's offer with a view to scoping potential uses, tenants and service provision of the centre including social enterprise, cultural development and social service provision. Harbinger also facilitated focus groups, interviews and community meetings as part of the consultation process. The consultation also informed the operational plan and design concepts for the centre.

Cultural Wellbeing: Indigenous Program Strategy

Access Arts

As a provider of cultural services and programs to people and communities experiencing disadvantage and/or disability, Access Arts delivers an Indigenous Cultural Program. In undertaking a review of the program with a view to promoting social inclusion and developing some strategic directions for the program, Harbinger formulated the program under the umbrella of 'cultural wellbeing'. The intention in this framing was to ensure intercultural awareness and communication throughout the organisation as well as developing the program in a way that drew **connections between culture, community and country** as foundational in Indigenous people's wellbeing. The review included desktop research, interviews and focus groups.

Train Station as Community Hub: Speculative Design Project

This self-initiated study of a local train station proposes that community infrastructure and design for sustainability should be provided at train stations. Part of the problem of suburban environments is that there is little publicly owned infrastructure and therefore train stations can represent opportunities for clustering much needed social and cultural resources in suburban communities. Consideration was given to the accommodation of mixed and community uses. While a train station facilitates transit, it might also appropriately address a need of non-transit, i.e. to retain people in place through the provision of co-working spaces and alternative mobility facilities such as bike paths and/or space for bike co-ops. This proposal was posted to Live Local, an online social networking site to share stories and ideas about improving communities through 'relocalisation'.

Public Art Master Planning

Urban Land Development Authority (ULDA)

The ULDA is undertaking a range of infill and greenfield developments throughout Queensland for the purposes of providing affordable housing within the context of sustainable and dynamic communities. For emerging new communities at Fitzgibbon, Brisbane, and Oonoonba, Townsville, Harbinger Consultants is preparing public art master plans. Articulating a sense of place, connecting with the landscape and heritage, and exploring community identity through integrated design and engagement processes is integral to community wellbeing. These plans are based on in depth consultations and cultural investigations of the sites and engage the unique opportunities presented at each locale, including military, natural, social and Indigenous history.

Corporate Social Responsibility in the Development Industry: Research Paper

This self-initiated project resulted in a preliminary study of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the development industry and produced a preliminary research paper that considers some industry specific tendencies in CSR. The paper has been published on Scribd. We studied the websites of eight medium to large development companies, operating across a spectrum of development and planning activity, to identify whether CSR initiatives are represented as corporate priorities. The research is not exhaustive and is intended to provide indications of CSR commitment in an industry about which a significant body of research is not available. Given current pressure points in affordable housing, urban sprawl, transport, social equity and sustainability, it seemed timely to consider the CSR engagement of an industry that plays such a significant role in shaping human settlements.

CONTACT

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