

Climate Change Strategy for South Australia (DEWNR)



Community consultation

THE Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) plays a key role in helping South Australia prepare for climate change and is responsible for state-wide policy, the administration of climate change legislation, secretariat support for the Premier's Climate Change Council and for the delivery of climate change programs.

In September 2015, DEWNR invited feedback from the community and business on a series of climate change consultation papers to help inform the development of a new Climate Change Strategy for South Australia. Input from the community and business was critical, as climate change is an issue that will affect everyone.

The papers provided comprehensive background and history which set the scene for the current and future

issues that will affect the state, the actions already being undertaken by the Government, and some ideas for how we might respond to climate change in the future.

State-wide engagement was undertaken over a six-week period, using a mix of online and offline techniques. The community were invited to get involved by attending an event, taking part in an online discussion or sending a written submission during the consultation period.

Over 200 people participated in 13 public workshops held in metropolitan and regional locations across South Australia. The workshops were based on the themes identified in the discussion papers, again highlighting the background and history of the topic to date.

In addition, a workshop was held for stakeholders with a specific interest in adaptation, and a business-focused

What would we do differently?

The project was delivered by a very small team on a limited budget. It would have been good if it was possible to allocate more time and human resources to support and implement the engagement. This could have included engaging more widely with networks, early in the process; advertising events in local papers; and allocating specific resources to Aboriginal and youth engagement activity.

event was held in conjunction with the Department of State Development (DSD). DEWNR also worked with the Conservation Council of SA (CCSA) in the lead up to the public release of the consultation papers, and the CCSA held a workshop with their members to seek input into the process. The Local Government Association of SA also held a workshop and representatives from 18 councils attended. Throughout the consultation, DEWNR worked closely with the Department of State Development to align with their engagement on the Low Carbon Investment Plan for SA that was being undertaken concurrently. The Climate Change Unit also had a presence at the Adelaide Royal Show.

The Premier circulated a media release at the commencement of engagement and media alerts for events were also distributed. Radio interviews were conducted by the DEWNR Chief Executive, Executive Director Water and Climate Change and Premier's Climate Change Council members.

The engagement made use of a dedicated page as part of YourSay website, as well as social media channels. The YourSay page provided background and history to enable informed input to occur. From here, community could participate in an online discussion, responding to the same questions used at the face-to-face workshops.

A short animated film narrated by the Minister for Climate Change communicating the Government's vision for a low carbon, resilient future was also produced and shared online. This film helped to set the scene.

Another useful engagement tool was the development of a regular e-newsletter which provided communication to over 800 subscribers. **BT**

What worked well?

The Premier's Climate Change Council had a member attend most public events and one of the members undertook media interviews on regional radio to promote the events.

Travelling to regional locations was warmly welcomed by stakeholders. Stakeholders who attended regional workshops would probably not have participated had the team not travelled to them to seek their input.

Participants enjoyed the participatory style of the workshops which worked through the topics of leadership, climate change adaptation, emissions reduction, innovation and low carbon investment.

A member of the Premier's Climate Change Council provided background, history and general strategic direction at the start of each workshop. A member of staff from the Climate Change Unit would then talk through the general content of the discussion papers, before the group were invited to participate in small group discussions.

Having an independent facilitator meant that "things were kept on track and staff were able to fully participate in the conversations which occurred. Group sizes ranged from 7 people to 70 people, but lots of ideas were received no matter what the size of the group.

The online discussion forum had 46 participants and provided a good mechanism for people to contribute to the engagement process without having to attend in person, or provide a formal submission.

Benefits of involving the community

The main outcome of engaging with the community were the amount of ideas, support and enthusiasm received in support of the new Climate Change Strategy. The process helped to identify gaps in thinking, such as the connection with public health, the need for greater communications and engagement with the broader community and so on.

Unexpected outcomes included receiving a petition

from the Australia Youth Climate Coalition signed by 2097 people; and a photo petition organized by Clean SA, which included photos of people in their community advocating for solar thermal in Port Augusta; and the Conversation Council of South Australia also circulated a submission template to their members, which prompted over 130 people to return them to the Climate Change Unit as part of the engagement process.