Civic engagement in Queensland: Participation in road system management

A Case Study of Main Roads’ Experience, Queensland

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Disclaimer: The views in this paper are those of the authors and are not the policy of the Queensland Government.
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ABSTRACT

Civic participation generally refers to citizen involvement in public decision-making processes. World-wide, citizens increasingly expect to participate meaningfully in the decisions made by their respective governments. Therefore, the decision-making process of government departments, such as the Department of Main Roads, Queensland, must consider the needs of citizens and communities in an open, collaborative and meaningful way and manage their expectations for meaningful outcomes.

By their very nature, roads can sever or unite communities and have very positive and some negative impacts on citizen's quality of life and livability. Roads serve many needs and decision makers must balance national, state and local road interests, often within a constrained fiscal environment.

Queensland is the fastest growing state in Australia in terms of population and economic growth. For the fifth consecutive year the state’s population’s growth has exceeded all other states and territories in Australia. Main Roads has an unprecedented road construction budget of more than AUD$11 billion over the next five years to meet the demands of this growth. However, the department faces many challenges in delivering the works program, providing opportunities for civic participation and managing the impacts of road construction and maintenance activities.

As a road system manager, Main Roads has invested significant time and resources establishing and maintaining connections with citizens and their communities through civic engagement. The department is one of the leading Queensland Government departments to have executive leadership support for citizen participation in decision making as well as policy, systems and processes to support this. With a large decentralised structure of 14 local district offices as the foundation to connecting with citizens, the necessary structural and policy frameworks are in place to work with citizens, communities, industry, business and other levels of government to strengthen relations and improve decisions - hallmarks of good governance. This framework includes the development of inter-agency partnerships and inter-government partnerships, such as the innovative, award winning partnership with Local Governments-the Roads Alliance. The Alliance is further example of decentralised decision-making and "power" sharing in the development of a vital public asset-Queensland's road network.

This paper examines Main Roads’ integrated approach of community engagement, governance and government to government relations as key strategies in assisting public participation in road decision making. The process acknowledges that public involvement must be an early and continuing part of decision making to understand and respond effectively to community and citizen values and avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts. Community engagement as practiced by Main Roads also provides opportunities for the public to understand the constraints and tradeoffs associated with road system management and to "buy-in" to the problems and solutions.

The paper documents the department's learnings and evaluation process for community engagement. The paper outlines on-the-ground experience in meeting the challenges of civic participation whilst simultaneously managing Queensland’s largest community-owned asset with an estimated replacement value of A$30 billion – the state-controlled road network - within broader land use, transport, land, social and environmental systems. Looking to the future, the paper provides an overview of research and development as part of the department's commitment to ongoing improvements to community-government relations.
INTRODUCTION

Citizen expectations to be involved in the decisions made by government are increasing world-wide. Citizen participation democratises decision-making with specific, tangible objectives and enhances knowledge, capacity, skills and expertise social goals, including public education and enhancement and incorporation of citizen values (Todman, 2004).

In response the Queensland Government’s policy commitment acknowledges the right of Queenslanders to have a say and get involved in government planning and decision making. This commitment extends to priorities and outcomes that all departments, such as Main Roads, Queensland, must demonstrably contribute to.

Roads are essential to support improvements in the standard of living of citizens. For government departments responsible for planning and managing roads as part of an integrated transport system, citizen participation presents considerable challenges as decision makers balance national, state and local road needs, often within a constrained fiscal environment and also the benefits to future generations against short-term costs. By their very nature, roads can sever or unite communities and have both positive and negative impacts on people's quality of life. It is fundamental, therefore, that the decision-making process of government departments such as Main Roads, Queensland, accounts for the needs and expectations of citizens in an open, collaborative and meaningful way.

This paper examines how Main Roads is working to achieve the goals of civic participation in road system management — management of the physical road asset within broader land use, transport, land, social and environmental systems. As a road system manager, Main Roads has invested significant time and resources establishing and maintaining connections with citizens, communities, businesses and other levels of government through community engagement.

The paper outlines concrete steps taken to 1) include government-citizen engagement across all phases of business and 2) encourage a values base and institutional framework that addresses leadership, managerial capacity and civil capacity to engage, elements of the model of engaged government proposed by Guthrie (2003).

The paper presents Main Roads’ integrated approach of public participation, governance and government-to-government relations as key strategies in assisting public participation in road decision making. This process acknowledges that public involvement must be an early and continuing part of decision making to understand and respond effectively to community and citizen values and avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts.

The paper outlines community engagement as a process practiced by Main Roads to provide opportunities for the public to understand the constraints and trade-offs associated with road system management and to ‘buy-in’ to the problems and ‘own’ the solutions.

The paper outlines experience in meeting the challenges of public participation whilst simultaneously managing Queensland’s largest community-owned asset with an estimated replacement value of AUD$30 billion — the state-controlled road network. With the sheer volume of road infrastructure development planned for Queensland, on any given day Main Roads’ staff will be working with hundreds of communities across the state. This presents new issues such as increasing public frustration with traffic/delays, public scrutiny of road budgets/estimates, perception of regular changes to project scope/briefs, and increased lobbying from industry, economic groups and others with a vested interest. This, in turn, exerts even more
pressure on Main Roads to build trust and confidence with key external stakeholders to engender support and ‘buy-in’ to ensure delivery of core business.

Within this environment, learning from experience and building capability to engage communities is ongoing. The paper looks at the department’s learnings and evaluation of community engagement.

Finally, looking to the future the paper provides an overview of the Roads Alliance, a world-class, innovative government-government collaborative relationship model as a contribution to reinventing government. The paper also outlines the department’s innovative research and development agenda to ensure ongoing improvements to community-government relations.

THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Khan (2006) provides a comprehensive overview of global and local forces impacting on citizens’ power in government-citizen relationships, empowering some and disempowering others. Khan discusses the engaged governance model as a construct for mainstreaming citizens at all levels of governance (legislative and executive) to ensure inclusiveness in decision making.

At the 2005 International Conference on Engaging Communities led by the United Nations and Queensland Government, a number of common issues were raised in respect to government-citizen relationships and engaged governance. Irrespective of whether nations/countries were developed or developing, these issues included:

- the universal challenges of trust, participation, legitimacy, accountability and efficacy in government
- the relational nature of governance and business in the public, private and community sectors
- the fundamental need for ‘community connections’ to achieve sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental development
- the lack of ‘engagement’ and ‘equity’ in the era of ‘New Public Management’ efficiency and effectiveness dialogue.

The Brisbane Declaration for Community Engagement was an important outcome of the conference, as it formalised an ongoing commitment to community engagement and participatory decision making by representatives from over 40 countries, international institutions, government, academia, business and civil society (see Attachment One). The intent of the Declaration is captured in Main Roads’ community engagement practice, as presented in this paper.

AUSTRALIA IN PERSPECTIVE

Australia comprises six states and two territories, as well as external dependencies such as the Australian Antarctic Territory, Cocos Islands, Norfolk Island and the Coral Seas Island Territory. Australia is the world’s largest island and smallest continent (see Figure 1). Australia covers around 7.6 million km² and represents just 5 per cent of the world’s land area (149.45 million km²), but is the sixth largest country after Russia, Canada, China, the United States of America and Brazil. It is also the only one of the top six that is completely surrounded by water. The nation’s land mass is almost as great as that of the
United States of America, about 50 per cent greater than Europe, and 32 times greater than the United Kingdom.

With an annual average rainfall of 465 mm, Australia is about one third drier than all other continents except Antarctica. Around 70 per cent of the nation is unable to support agriculture in any form and much of it can be used only for the grazing of a limited number of sheep or cattle. About one third of this area is classified as desert. The remaining area is split roughly in half, with a little more than 15 per cent falling in a temperate region between the arid zone and the coastal belt. This has played a significant part in the nation’s settlement pattern and development of a transport system to meet population and industry needs.

On 28 March, 2007 Australia’s population was estimated at 20.79 million. Australia's growth rate of 1.3 per cent at September 2006 was about the same as the overall world growth rate (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a).

The nation has one of the lowest population densities in the world at 2 persons per km². The nation's pattern of human settlement is characterised by particularly high rates of urbanisation, low-density cities. Around 85 per cent of the population live within 50 km of the coast in mainly in two crescents: the south-eastern coastal corridor between north of Brisbane and west of Melbourne, and the south-west of Western Australia centred on Perth (Newton, P, 2001) (see Figure 2). While the large capital cities dominate in population terms, many Australians live in smaller towns and remote areas. Many of these areas are where the nation’s lucrative, high export-earning mining and agricultural industries are located.

Irrespective of where people live and industry is located, all Australian's expect to have access to other places, people, goods and services. This presents considerable challenges for road infrastructure providers like Main Roads in providing fair and equitable access and safety.

**Government in Australia**

There are three levels of government in Australia — Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local¹.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for laws in relation to a range of specific subjects listed in the Constitution. Major areas include taxation, defence, external affairs, trade and immigration. Over the years, the power of the Commonwealth has also broadened, through its increasing capacity to raise revenue

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through taxation (including customs and excise duties, and income tax on individuals and businesses), as well as growing trade and commerce across state and national boundaries. More recently, the Commonwealth Government has taken an active role in transportation planning.

State Governments are responsible for state laws that regulate important areas such as education, health, roads and criminal law. Their parliaments can pass laws on a wider range of subjects than the Commonwealth Parliament, on any subject of relevance to the particular state. The Commonwealth Parliament is empowered by the Constitution to make laws for the government of any Australian territory.

A large measure of self-government has been conferred on three territories, namely the Australian Capital Territory (location of the federal capital city, Canberra), Australia’s largest mainland territory, the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island. The remaining territories, which include the Australian Antarctic Territory, are offshore and sparsely populated.

There are in excess of 673 local governments across Australia, all with varying rate bases, revenue streams, skills and capabilities. The constitutional responsibility for local government lies with the state and territory governments, therefore their roles and responsibilities vary. Examples of responsibilities include infrastructure and property services, recreation facilities, health services, community services, building services, and planning and development.

**Civic engagement responsibilities**

Responsibility for civic engagement sits with individual governments at all levels (the Queensland Government position is discussed below). While each state and territory has developed its own vision, policies and strategies and use different ways to describe the relationship between government and citizens, there is common ground in that all seek, to varying degrees, to incorporate citizens' views.

At a local government level in Australia, civic engagement is undertaken by individual councils. The Australian Local Government Association is the overarching body that guides local councils and its state/territory counterparts, with individual state/territory local government associations having a strong commitment to connecting communities and strengthening democracy.

**Working together**

With three levels of government in Australia, ensuring all representatives work together has always been challenging. One mechanism for providing this opportunity is the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), a body comprising the Australian Prime Minister and all state/territory Premiers and national president of the Australian Local Government Association, established as a forum to initiate, develop and implement national policy reforms requiring cooperative action between the three levels of national, state/territory and local government.

The Commonwealth and state/territory governments also cooperate in many areas where states and territories are formally responsible, such as education, transport, health and law enforcement.

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2 For more information about local government in Australia go to the Australian Local Government Association website at http://www.alga.asn.au/about/

Later in this paper, Main Roads' experience in inter-governmental relationships and collaborative decision making with local government will be highlighted to demonstrate meaningful ways to achieve better outcomes for communities and government.

QUEENSLAND IN PERSPECTIVE

Queensland is located in the north-eastern section of Australia (see Figure 1). The state has a sub-tropical climate in the south-east of the state, semi-arid and arid conditions in the western interior, and a tropical climate in the north. Queensland is the second largest of Australia's six states and two territories, covering some 1.7 million km². The state is four times the size of Japan and seven times that of the United Kingdom.

Population growth

At June 2006, Queensland's population reached just over 4 million, an annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent. Queensland’s population density is 2.34 persons per km² (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b).

To June 2006, Queensland recorded its fifth consecutive year as Australia’s fastest growing state (Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, 2007). While 19.7 per cent of Australia’s population lives in Queensland, by June 2006 the state gained 28.7 per cent of Australia’s population growth. Natural increase is the largest component of population growth, followed by interstate migration and overseas migration. The top ten birthplaces for settlers arriving in Queensland are New Zealand, United Kingdom, South Africa, Philippines, India, China, Sudan, Fiji, United States and Malaysia.

Around two-thirds of Queenslanders are concentrated in the south-east corner, which totals one per cent of the state’s land area.

The population is governed by the Queensland Government and 125 local government authorities. In the north-west the state's largest city in area is Mt Isa, covering some 43,000 km² but with a population of around 23,000. In contrast, there are 18 local government councils in south-east Queensland serving a population of 2.7 million covering an area of approximately 22,500 km². Queensland has the nation's most diverse industry sector, with industry supporting thriving cities, towns and communities across the state, making Queensland the most decentralised state in Australia in terms of industry and population.

While Queensland’s population growth continues to be strong, future growth will depend on the drivers of migration, specifically, employment opportunities, lifestyle/family reasons and house price differentials.

Meeting the demands of growth across Queensland

The Queensland Government has embarked on a significant infrastructure development program to meet the infrastructure needs of and demands by an increasing population and strong economic growth. Queensland-wide the state government is spending AUD$11 billion in 2006/07.

Over the next 20 years, the Queensland Government is also investing significantly in the south-east corner through the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program (SEQIPP)⁴. The SEQIPP outlines investment of AUD$27.7 billion to major transport infrastructure, of which AUD17 billion is allocated to roads⁵.

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⁵ The $ values for SEQIPP are expressed in 2006 values. A new SEQIPP is due for release mid-2007 and will be available on the above website.
THE VITAL ROLE OF ROADS IN AUSTRALIA

Australia has one of the most extensive road networks per capita in the world. Australian roads comprise a national network, state roads and local roads. Roads have a vital role in contributing to national, state, regional and local economies, linking people, goods and services across vast geographic distances in Australia. Roads also play a critical part in maintaining the social fabric of communities, as people may need to travel long distances to access basic services, see friends and family and meet work commitments.

While local governments are responsible for about 80 per cent of the nation's road network, but these carry mainly low traffic volumes. State and territory governments manage the majority of roads of national and state significance. Given that roads are managed across jurisdictions, how decisions are made about roads management is critical to maintaining the road system as part of an integrated transport system which ensures the social, economic and environmental well-being of citizens.

Queensland roads

Queensland has around 178,000 km of roads. At 19.8 person/km, Queensland has a more dispersed road network than the Australian average of 23.6 persons/km.

Main Roads, is responsible for almost 34,000 km of the state-controlled road network, the biggest in Australia (see Figure 3). This comprises 20 per cent of the state's total road network, but carries 80 per cent of the traffic. The remainder of the road network is managed by the state's 125 local governments.

State-controlled roads are a high-speed network connecting major centres across Queensland and interstate. This includes the Auslink National Network. Volumes of traffic on the state-controlled road network range from less than 50 vehicles per day to more than 140,000 per day.

The state-controlled road network is a valuable community asset owned by the Queensland Government, with a replacement value of approximately AUD$30 billion. Main Roads has responsibility for planning, designing and delivering this road network across 14 districts.

Maintaining network condition and enhancing network capacity to fulfil the state's emerging social and economic needs, while sustainably managing the natural environment, is an enormous undertaking, particularly as the road network ages. The challenge for both the state and local governments is to meet

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6 The Auslink National Network links major population and economic centres and facilitates the movement of people and freight internationally, nationally and between regions. The network also connects to major ports and airports.
community expectations of the road network by achieving the best possible network performance from available resources.

This requires us to:

- effectively plan and prioritise works on a network-basis, rather than the management by individuals in an uncoordinated manner to produce inconsistent outcomes
- achieve the most efficient and effective use from available resources across the state, including funding, plant and equipment and technical expertise, capability and capacity
- build high-quality road-management capability throughout the state, which is particularly critical in those regions where communities' size and resource-base may not be proportional to their network management responsibilities.

Most governments managing state-wide programs or providing services on a state-wide basis will recognise they face similar issues. Clearly, there is a need to establish ways that levels of government, communities, citizens and wider stakeholders can work together to consistently address concerns, expectations, issues and opportunities so that the road network best fulfils all stakeholders' needs.

**THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO ENGAGED GOVERNMENT AND ENGAGED COMMUNITIES**

The Queensland Government has adopted a Queensland Public Service Charter as a statement of commitment to the people of Queensland (Queensland Government, 2003). Within this Charter is a commitment to working across boundaries as a professional public service “...We will cooperate across structural boundaries to develop innovative multi-agency programs to address complex issues. Our actions and behaviours will foster public trust and confidence in the integrity of the public service”.

Recognising the importance of public participation in decision making, the Queensland Government has adopted the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) public participation continuum to involve communities and citizens on a range of policy, program and service issues (OECD, 2001):

- INFORMATION
- CONSULTATION
- ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.

The Queensland Government has seven key priorities as a guide to policy development, planning and reporting. These are endorsed by Cabinet, and all departments must contribute to these through their core business, or by working collaboratively across departments on integrated service delivery⁷:

- Improving health care and strengthening services to the community
- Realising the Smart State through education, skills and innovation
- Protecting our children and enhancing community safety
- Managing urban growth and building Queensland's regions
- Protecting the environment for a sustainable future

Growing a diverse economy and creating jobs
Delivering responsive government.

Under the priority "Delivering responsive government", engaging the community on the government's directions and processes is a key strategy to understand and respond to community needs.

In 2001, the Queensland Government provided an institutional basis for community engagement through:

- a vision – "Involved Communities – Engaged Government" is about communities and government working together to achieve better policy making, solutions for a sustainable future, enhanced trust in government and active citizenship
- a concept of engagement that refers to the "arrangements for citizens and communities to participate in the processes used to make good policy and to deliver on programs and services"
- a set of six principles incorporating inclusiveness, reaching out, mutual respect, integrity, affirming diversity and adding value (Guthrie, 2003:6).

A legislatively-based Charter of Social and Fiscal Responsibility (Queensland Government, 2004a) demonstrates the government's commitment to communities through whole-of-government outcomes. As with other countries, the Queensland Government recognises the need to deliver better social, economic and environmental outcomes for people in the long-term.

The Queensland Government is also committed to a "seamless" coordinated government approach to achieve better outcomes. This approach recognises that improvements to citizens' quality of life require the combined efforts of all departments. The government (2003b, 2004b) released Realising the Vision: Governance for the Smart State, a framework to guide this approach, along with Seamless Government: Improving Outcomes for Queenslanders, Now and in the Future. The approach requires state government departments to work together as a single entity and with federal and local governments to achieve the best possible outcome.

The Queensland Government has reaffirmed this commitment to whole-of-government outcomes for communities, and identified community engagement as a key priority for all departments. As previously mentioned, the government released a vision, concept and principles moulded on OECD work, along with a community engagement improvement strategy.

The Government emphasis is on:

- having a vision for governance that is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, following the rule of law (Queensland Government, 2003)
- implementing community engagement across departments
- building public sector capacity to engage communities and citizens.

MAIN ROADS' COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Main Roads is the Queensland Government agency responsible for managing Queensland’s road system as part of an integrated transport system. The department is part of the transport portfolio which includes Queensland Transport, Queensland Rail, state-owned ports corporations, and Queensland Motorways Limited, the latter responsible for tollways and their associated motorways.
The Queensland Government's priorities and outcomes guide road system planning and delivery to take account of external inputs. The *Transport Infrastructure Act 1994* and the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* both mandate consultation as the critical element in planning activities (Guthrie, 2003). As well, the *Transport Coordination Plan* (TCP) is a transport portfolio-level direction document guiding all modes of transport in Queensland.

Prior to the Queensland Government initiating institutional arrangements, Main Roads had developed its own vision, concept and principles for civic participation through the process of community engagement. This was due to the department having a number of highly sensitive road projects which encountered growing community concerns about impacts on their well-being.

For Main Roads, community engagement involves arrangements for citizens and communities to participate in the processes used to make good policy and to deliver on programs and services. Community engagement is defined as the many ways that government, communities and individuals connect and interact in developing and implementing policies, programs, services and projects. In this manual, community is defined as all relevant stakeholders including government, industry and individuals.

Main Roads recognises the many types of communities to be considered in decision making, including:

- communities of place such as a region, suburb, town, catchment area
- communities of interest such as government, special interest groups, regulatory bodies, industry and education
- communities that form around an issue such as environmental protection and community amenity.

These communities comprise the department's stakeholders — those individuals, groups and organisations who are likely to be affected by, and/or have an interest in, the department’s decisions and actions.

Since the 1980s, Main Roads has taken a forward-looking approach to engaging communities. Our learnings are that the civic participation road is sometimes 'bumpy' as hard decisions are made, not only for local communities but also for regional, state and national reasons. To address this, a number of interventions have been put in place over time, including policy, systems, processes and staff training and mentoring. These continue to be recognised by other state departments and levels of government as a critical level of individual and organisational capacity to work innovatively with diverse communities and collaboratively with other departments on complex, multi-faceted problems (Guthrie, 2003).

Based on past experience, Main Roads is moving towards a collaborative approach that focuses on outcomes, process and relationship building, accountability and community development.

**Districts, a key to successful relationships**

In a state as vast as Queensland, a decentralised department presence in local communities is essential for staying connected to community issues, being responsive to local needs and building trusting and meaningful relationships. Central to the success of the department’s relationship with Queenslanders are 14 district offices and their staff who live and work in their local communities. In regional and remotes areas, this local presence has underpinned community and citizen satisfaction with engagement processes and outcomes reached.

In more built-up areas of the state, especially the south-east corner where high levels of infrastructure development are taking place and communities can become blurred, the department has increased the level and type of information to communities and citizens as part of the engagement process.
Having a strategic long-term view

As outlined previously in the paper, the department faces significant challenges and tensions in managing Queensland’s largest physical asset within broader land use, transport, social, cultural, economic and environmental systems. Challenges include balancing community expectations in a high growth population environment while maintaining an ageing road asset, building new infrastructure, supporting Queensland’s strong economic growth, supporting traditional industries while responding to the transport needs of new and emerging communities, protecting Indigenous cultural heritage, and protecting the natural environment for now and future generations.

In response, in 2002 a long-term, stakeholder-focused strategic policy framework was developed for the Queensland road system and the organisation to respond to the challenges ahead, stakeholder needs and expectations and the impacts of integrated planning and service delivery. Main Roads released Roads Connecting Queenslanders (RCQ)⁸ to demonstrate the department’s response to external drivers and inputs and contributions to the Queensland Government’s priorities. Both the RCQ and TCP are supported and informed by Integrated Regional Transport Plans which provide a blueprint for how the transport system will be developed regionally, through an integrated method.

RCQ is the first of its kind in Australia and guides all strategic and business planning in Main Roads. It incorporates four outcomes to connect social, economic and environmental policy within an infrastructure context, and contribute to broader whole-of-government outcomes and priorities:

- safer roads
- efficient and effective transport
- fair access and amenity
- environmental management.

RCQ emphasises the need for integrated planning to achieve balanced decisions that will result in better outcomes, and where relevant outlines a shift from a single agency output to multi-agency outcome planning. RCQ is the road perspective within the broader integrated planning framework, as shown in Figure 4. Importantly, the policy framework prescribes that engaging stakeholders is an essential part of business from strategic planning to policy development, road system and corridor planning, business planning and program development, delivery of works, and monitoring and review.

The outcome areas in RCQ are incorporated into the department's annual strategic plan (see Figure 5) and in the department's business planning process and Roads Implementation Program (the department's rolling program of works). The Strategic Plan provides strategies to guide investment and operations over a five-year period to deliver the goals of the long-term planning horizon of the RCQ and TCP.

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⁸ A copy of Roads Connecting Queenslanders is located in Corporate Publications section of Main Roads’ website at www.mainroads.qld.gov.au
Figure 5: Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Main Roads Strategic Plan 2007–2012

Delivering responsive government

Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Building Queensland’s economy
- Creating jobs and growth
- Improving transport infrastructure

Strengthening Queensland’s communities
- Community involvement
- Improving public transport services

Protecting Queensland’s environment
- Protecting biodiversity
- Enhancing air quality

Efficient and effective transport network
- Supporting business growth
- Reducing traffic congestion

Safety and social mobility
- Improving road safety
- Enhancing public transport

Reliability and amenity
- Enhancing public transport
- Improving road safety

Environmental management to support environmental conservation

Main Roads strategic opportunities, priorities and challenges

Strategic Priorities
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Strategic Priorities
- Achieve sustainable development of the roads program
- Improve road safety and reliability
- Enhance the department’s reputation
- Increase the department’s strategic asset management
- Improve internal and external customer relationships

Business Priorities
- Achieve sustainable development of the roads program
- Improve road safety and reliability
- Enhance the department’s reputation
- Increase the department’s strategic asset management
- Improve internal and external customer relationships

Strategic Challenges
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Main Roads Key Result Areas

Effective Relationships
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 1: Be a leader in stakeholder engagement and community and industry relations

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Statewide System Planning
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 2: Lead integrated long-term government planning

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Program Development and Delivery
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 3: Develop and deliver the roads program effectively

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Corridor Land Management
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 4: Lead the sustainable management of road corridor land

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Road Operations
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 5: Provide a safe, efficient and reliable road network

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Capable Organisation
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Objective 6: Achieve excellence through the performance of our people, systems and practices

Key Result Indicators
- Main Roads’ Strategic Plan 2007-2012

Main Roads – Connecting Queensland
www.roads.qld.gov.au
Community engagement in Main Roads

Following the release of RCQ, a targeted state-wide evaluation was undertaken, involving senior management, middle management and staff with experience in community engagement. Stakeholder feedback from past community consultation was also reviewed, including the learnings from case studies of specific projects. This led to the development of a community engagement policy, standards and guidelines, resource guide, planner and toolkit. These apply equally to staff undertaking community engagement as well as contractors and consultants acting on behalf of the department. A new community engagement training program was launched to continue to build capability in this area, using a mix of theory, case studies, facilitation and relationship skills.

The department's approach is to have fit-for-purpose community engagement planning that considers when, how and the extent of engagement and on what issues, by looking at the negotiables and non-negotiables (see Figure 6):

- **Negotiables** are choices and options and outcomes that can be changed to reflect community input – for example, possible route options for future corridors, possible locations of interchanges, some visual and noise mitigation measures, and integration of state and local government transport issues.

- **Non-negotiables** are usually those things that reflect conscious policy decisions of government already set and which cannot be changed or negotiated by the department – for example, decisions that have already been made such as a pre-determined transport corridor linking community a to community b.

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9 A copy of the resources is available on the Doing Business with Us section of the Main Roads’ website at www.mainroads.qld.gov.au
technical standards to which the department has to adhere (especially for safety, cultural heritage and environmental issues), time and resources available, the available skill levels to implement, and the opportunities available for community input.

This approach assists in alleviating controversy resulting from poorly managed community engagement processes that result in a difficult climate for future road infrastructure projects. It is also important for meeting the increasing expectations of well-educated and politically-savvy communities demanding increased influence in decisions relating to infrastructure development.

Matching the level of community engagement to the issue

The type of interactions or engagement possible depends on a number of factors, including:

- the issue
- the decision to be made
- available resources
- the communities and citizens affected or involved
- any sensitivities (political, community)
- available time.

The extent of information, consultation or active participation undertaken depends on what is negotiable and the levels of sensitivity. When the negotiable aspects of a project increase, so do the possibilities for consultation and active participation (see Figure 7). The higher the sensitivity and impact, the more the department considers active participation, particularly if there are many negotiable aspects in a project.

![Figure 7: Negotiables and impacts](image)

Support for community engagement

Main Roads is unique in Australia in having 15 mandatory standards with supporting guidelines to ensure the principles of good governance are incorporated in engagement practice. The department's policy statement gives a clear message about what the public can expect from Main Roads (see Box 1).
Box 1: Community Engagement Policy Statement

The Department of Main Roads is committed to effective and appropriate community engagement, recognising that is essential to improve decisions and listen and respond to community needs. Main Roads will be valued for the way it works with communities, industry and across government, to deliver outcomes.

Main Roads’ commitment builds on legislative requirements, its strong public consultation experience and on-the-ground relationships, includes authority for local managers to make decisions about when and how to use Information, Consultation and Active Participation - the three levels of community engagement – to connect and stay connected with communities. Community engagement will vary in intensity and complexity as appropriate for the issue or task being addressed in each phase of business under the Road System Manager. Responsibility for any final decision is with the department and Minister.

The standards cover three broad areas which are incorporated into evaluation of community engagement objectives and outcomes (see Box 2).

- community values
- a commitment to better organisational practice
- a commitment to continued learning through evaluation and improvement.

Box 2: Main Roads Community Engagement Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard One</strong> – An appropriate engagement process will be undertaken for each phase of business to identify and respond to community needs and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Two</strong> – Engagement with a range of stakeholders is to occur early in decision making to identify their range of interests and issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Three</strong> – The decision-making process must be open, accountable and transparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Four</strong> – Stakeholders must be given sufficient time to participate in the engagement process in accordance with social justice principles regarding individual rights, equity, participation and access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Five</strong> – Engagement processes will give communities and individuals the opportunity to participate by helping facilitate people’s ability to contribute to the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Six</strong> – Information on the engagement activity will be easily and freely available and understandable so that people can be fully informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Seven</strong> – Feedback will be sought on the engagement process, outcomes and decisions, to acknowledge participation and encourage continuing involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Eight</strong> – All stages of the engagement process, including the final decision, must show respect for the needs, views and concerns of stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A commitment to better organisational practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Nine</strong> – Stakeholder databases will be continually reviewed and updated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Ten</strong> – Stakeholder privacy and confidentiality must be respected before, during and after engagement has taken place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Eleven</strong> – A written engagement plan must be developed for all engagement activities and be approved at the appropriate level before the activity commences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Twelve</strong> – Staff with decision-making responsibilities will be identified at the outset of the engagement activity and be available to participate in those activities to add credibility to, and understanding of, the process and to build and sustain relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Thirteen</strong> – The roles and responsibilities of stakeholders must be clearly defined, discussed and agreed to at the outset of engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A commitment to continued learning through evaluation and improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Fourteen</strong> – Community engagement activities will be evaluated with input from stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard Fifteen</strong> – Adequate training is to be provided for departmental staff involved in community engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the department embraces the OECD community engagement continuum of information, consultation and active participation, the planning, delivering and operation of roads means that community engagement is not a linear process, but is a 'cradle to grave' process. This means that connecting and staying connected with communities and citizens starts at the visioning stage some 15–20 years into the future when there are more negotiables in decision making, to on-the-ground delivery of road projects in communities when there are less negotiables. The intent of the policy is that community engagement is not an end in itself, but a way of doing business to get the best possible outcome for Queenslanders by revalidating, over time, community issues and responses.

The Road System Manager framework

Choosing priority projects in an environment where community expectations often exceed available dollars, presents an ongoing challenge. With a ‘cradle to grave’ approach to business, Main Roads has developed a consistent state-wide understanding of how the department conducts its business with communities over time within a Road System Manager framework (RSM) (see Figure 8). The RSM demonstrates the process used to make program choices.

Within the RSM, community engagement is a cyclical, linked process that takes place at the outset of departmental decisions and continues over time to ensure that the stewardship of the road system is integrated with the overall transport, land-use, social and environment systems and that ongoing and changing stakeholders' needs are responded to.

Phase 1 - outcomes and direction – this involves the choices and direction the department takes in terms of outcomes. It is informed by the external drivers, including legislation, whole-of-government priorities and outcomes, transport outcomes, stakeholder needs, land use and integrated transport planning and funding.

Phase 2 - road-system planning and stewardship (15+ years) - takes the policy directions, strategic choices and priorities from Phase 1 to guide plans of action for improving the state-wide road network. Visionary targets and implementation strategies are set for a 15-20 year period, for scenarios of funding and a total system view of the road network, including wider transport and land-use issues. Previous engagement in Phase 1 links to engaging stakeholders in the second phase to help understand the road needs into the future to guide our investments and planning.

Phase 3 - corridor planning and stewardship (<15 years) - involves forward plans and road investment strategies at the corridor level consistent with the state-wide view in the previous phase. Community engagement is undertaken to ensure corridor planning resolves alignment and future land requirements for routes and assesses wider impacts on stakeholders.

Phase 4 - program development (7 years) - involves prioritising a list of investment candidates across and within the categories that make up maintenance, operations and enhancement of the network. Long-term planning undertaken in earlier phases is integrated at this stage, along with relevant external and internal considerations. As the work program takes into account a total needs analysis, engagement is essential to identify priorities necessary for inclusion in the Roads Implementation Program, a plan for road-related infrastructure as required under the Transport Infrastructure Act 1994.

Phase 5 - program delivery - involves the efficient and effective delivery of the Roads Implementation Program to ensure that infrastructure projects and operations meet the standards identified in earlier phases. Engagement is undertaken to confirm and relay decisions in previous phases, and to understand and respond to impacts of roads on communities, including design, construction and maintenance.
In Phase 6 - program finalisation - involves a review of project and activity performance against targets in the Roads Implementation Program and other departmental policies and directions. This phase is informed by stakeholder evaluation to ensure concerns have been identified and addressed.

Phase 7 - review – measures the actual outcomes against desired outcomes identified in Phase 1. This phase is informed by market research targeted at stakeholders to gauge their needs on an ongoing basis. Performance is also informed by stakeholder evaluation of community engagement processes and outcomes.

**Embedding community engagement and building capability**

Main Roads has invested significantly in project management to achieve results through managing opportunities and risks and making the best use of resources. This is to ensure that the outputs from each project will deliver outcomes that are consistent with government policy and departmental strategic objectives. Community engagement is embedded in project management methodology, recognising that it will ensure projects are delivered on time and in scope and contribute to stakeholder confidence in the decisions made by the department.

Building capability continues to be a priority for Main Roads. As mentioned, the department's public consultation training program was revised with inputs from staff around the state, taking into consideration stakeholder feedback about the way the department does its business. The new program includes the government's direction in community engagement as well as in RCQ to help build skills and capability. It is delivered as an introduction to community engagement, a refresher course for past participants, or just-in-time training for new staff with real-time projects used as case studies in the phases of the RSM. These assist staff working in the field in developing a community engagement strategy tailored to their specific needs. To date, over 400 staff have completed the course.

Importantly, the department understands that working with communities requires complex processes that do not readily translate into discrete competencies that fit easily into a standard training format (Guthrie, 2003). It is recognised that people need to be systems thinkers and strategic managers; they need to be able to understand and respond to community dynamics. As such, community engagement training is enhanced by on-the-ground experience on real time projects. Meta level skills that may be needed in engagement include understanding community dynamics, how communities learn, how to match managerial style to engagement strategy, how to assess when there has been ‘enough’ engagement and how to integrate conceptually distinct community and technical inputs.

Figure 9 demonstrates how Main Roads has framed community engagement practice.

**Building and sustaining strategic stakeholder relationships**

With multiple strategic stakeholders, many with vested interests in the department’s service and who can potentially impact or influence business operations, the department is taking a more proactive approach to strategic stakeholder relations and management. The approach involves Key Account Managers. The senior management group will have responsibility for building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders relevant to individual manager’s area of business delivery. It is expected this approach will ensure Main Roads is more responsive to strategic stakeholder needs/views, that stakeholder views are understood and reflected in the planning and delivery of the road system and the department’s reputation and performance are enhanced.
Figure 8: Road System Manager Framework
Figure 9: Community Engagement Practice in Main Roads

Knowing the community
This involves understanding that communities bring diverse expectations, needs and values, experience, knowledge and skills to the engagement process. This understanding leads to increased sensitivity to community and the impacts of projects on communities.

Knowing self and government
This involves understanding community dynamics, the skills needed to engage communities that may reside with one or more staff members, and the departmental and political context of decisions.

Building capability
This involves department training that together build meta- and micro-level skills, supported by values and behaviours and real-time learning environments.
EVALUATING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MAIN ROADS’ DECISIONS

As an infrastructure builder and manager, Main Roads faces considerable support as well as some opposition for its work. Even with the best systems and processes in place, there are times when communities and citizens express dissatisfaction with their participation in department decision making and the solutions reached. With the best of intent, ‘win-wins’ are not always possible. As Irvin and Stansbury (2004) contend, dissent is not rare. They provide strategies that lead to meaningful outcomes, arguing that these are locale dependent. Strategies include careful selection of representative groups of stakeholders, transparent decision making, clear authority in decision making, competent and unbiased facilitators, regular meetings, and adequate financial support to the group process (Irvin and Stansbury, 2004:61).

The Key Account Manager approach to strategic stakeholder management is an important step to mitigate the impacts of the department’s business and address stakeholder concerns, by building and maintaining long-term stakeholder relationships.

Evaluation is also an integral element of community engagement practice to learn and share experiences and improve stakeholder satisfaction with the department and its activities. Evaluation is undertaken at two levels:

- State-wide annual market research – undertaken by an independent social research organisation to glean stakeholder perceptions of the department and satisfaction with their involvement in community engagement activities.

- Project-based evaluation:
  - Formative evaluation. This is about what we do better and is used for incremental, continuous improvement as part of total quality management and to achieve better organisational practice from what was learned.
  - Summative evaluation. This is about how successful the engagement process was and is used for accountability and performance evaluation, evaluation against the department’s 15 standards, and evaluation against community engagement objectives.

In the evaluation process differentiation is made between satisfaction with process of community engagement versus the outcomes achieved. Table 1 gives an example of some methods and approaches used.

**Table 1: Methods and approaches used**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria (What is needed to be known)</th>
<th>Measure (Quantitative or qualitative)</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>% of stakeholders who are aware of the project</td>
<td>Random telephone survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with type and amount of information provided</td>
<td>Response form included in information kit and random telephone survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Level of satisfaction with mix of consultation methods</td>
<td>Response form from information kit and random telephone survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent to which stakeholders were consulted</td>
<td>Number of stakeholders who provided feedback</td>
<td>Record number of stakeholders participating or responding to methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE ROADS ALLIANCE: AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ROAD SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The Roads Alliance is a joint initiative between Main Roads and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). It is an example of two government 'communities' (state and local) working collaboratively in a coordinated approach to manage Queensland's roads. The Alliance is about more than working together to build and maintain roads. It is a new way of thinking about governance, including but not limited to roads, and represents a commitment by Main Roads and 124 local governments in Queensland to get better value out of all available roads' dollars through improved planning, better purchasing and resource sharing, and investment in and improvement of our capability.

The Roads Alliance is recognised nationally and internationally as a genuine shift in emphasis from a functional approach, based on ownership, to an outcomes approach. The Roads Alliance is about skilled people, using advanced technology and information to make better decisions to contribute to better community outcomes.

For the broader community, this results in improved consistency in road standards across Queensland. Through this partnership, Main Roads and local government jointly address issues of increased demands on roads' budgets and greater expectations from motorists, while continuing to provide a safe and reliable road network for the community.

How the Roads Alliance functions

Queensland's road managers know collective action is needed to achieve systemic, state-wide improvement in planning, resource-use and capability if they are to deliver the outcomes required by their stakeholders. A consistent state-wide improvement is not possible if parties act individually, regardless of their individual excellence, but instead requires effective collaboration by all parties. Accordingly, the Roads Alliance builds on the existing relationships between local and state governments.

Significant features of the Alliance include that it:

- builds on the strengths of an existing relationship between Main Roads and local government
- has voluntary membership (124 out of 125 Queensland local governments are members)
is based on 17 "political" groups of council representatives, Regional Road Groups (RRGs), deciding road priorities and funding priorities at a regional level, with each group supported by a Technical Committee which makes recommendations.

shifts emphasis from a "road ownership" approach to a network-function approach to achieve best network outcomes through improved planning, better purchasing and resource sharing and investing to improve delivery capacity, all of which serve to make the best use of available dollars.

provides a vehicle for setting 20-year road investment strategies that span state and local election cycles.

takes a joint management approach to network planning of road works to ensure sustainable employment in rural and remote areas.

enables agreed visions when planning to meet communities diverse expectations across a regional road network servicing both high growth and low growth environments (population, economic).

takes a flexible approach, recognising that 'no one size fits all'.

is guided by a state-wide framework for investment decision making and road management strategies.

goes well beyond normal collaborative approaches – control of priorities for state government expenditure is transferred to Regional Road Groups (currently around AUD$200 million) where Main Roads is only one voice/vote and 8-10 mayors.

Roads Alliance critical issues and success factors

Since its inception, the Alliance has successfully addressed some critical issues, generating learnings that will help with future collaborations of this type (see Table 2).

Table 2: Roads Alliance Issues and Success Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical issues</th>
<th>Success factors (Learnings)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The need to establish and embed a strong Alliance culture and working relationship to enable participants to continue to collaborate and work in parallel on a range of issues and challenges</td>
<td>High-level up-front commitment from partners’ leaders to agree a governance structure, a clear Alliance vision outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement and a set of guiding principles to which members can subscribe (Diverse partners will more readily commit to a tangible arrangement where the obligations and benefits are clearly articulated) Linking the Alliance to the business strategies of the Main Roads and LGAQ stakeholders' business strategies (Joint ventures will be better supported when they align and link to the strategies of participating partners) Developing joint Alliance strategies as one entity across Main Roads and the LGAQ. (Joint planning ensures that new knowledge is effectively shared across Main Roads, local government and others) Fostering a professional relationship that clearly defines and sets future parameters. (Clear professional relationships create trust and long-term commitment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alliance comprises 125 different partners, each with differing circumstances, individual strengths and weaknesses and facing a mix of challenges and opportunities. Establishment arrangements will need to effectively accommodate their diverse situations, while achieving consistent outcomes.</td>
<td>Willingness to design roll-out that accommodates diverse situations in achieving a common objective, rather than trying to force diverse stakeholders to “fit” into a single implementation timetable and approach. Enabling a range of flexible approaches to achieve an outcome is more effective than preoccupation with a single, often-mandated approach to an outcome Understanding and responding to time factors in the relationship. (An awareness of partners’ time constraints enhances elements of the relationship, for example, communication and information sharing.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical issues</td>
<td>Success factors (Learnings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This &quot;relational approach&quot; requires commitment to invest time and resources</td>
<td>Establishing a framework of desired capabilities and working closely with and investing with each partner on an individual basis to achieve that capability outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in establishing and embedding arrangements over a period of time.</td>
<td>(Assistance, guidance and advice needs to target individual, rather than &quot;generic&quot;, needs.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Managing partners as individuals requires an investment of time and</td>
<td>Agreed common road network asset management approach, systems, standards and capabilities, with associated systems development and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources but is more likely to achieve a strong and understanding</td>
<td>(Sponsors of change need to identify and make available practical tools to achieve that change if they want that change to be consistently achieved, particularly where individual partners may not have the resources to develop those tools on their own)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant difference in individual partner's capacities and</td>
<td>Better joint-funding applications, joint purchasing and resource-sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capabilities.</td>
<td>Transparent group decision making and prioritisation of works throughout a region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because roads are owned by different governments, there is inconsistent</td>
<td>Agreement of Main Roads and local government to a minimum level of funding to the Local Roads of Regional Significance (LRRS) network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of the condition and performance of all roads throughout the state</td>
<td>(Collective planning, open and integrated decision making and aggregation of resources significantly improve network investment outcomes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– an obstacle to robust prioritisation of network-wide investment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistently achieving the best possible regional road infrastructure from</td>
<td>Piloting initiatives with appropriate support has helped to test implementation approaches, generating reference sites and credible champions among the stakeholders themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Roads and the Local Governments' available funds.</td>
<td>(Examples of successful implementation can generate support and ownership of an initiative and provide a credible source of knowledge upon which other partners can draw. It is also advisable to test concepts through piloting them before wider implementation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners coming from different positions may not consistently understand,</td>
<td>A willingness to tackle issues and challenges together – collaboratively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see value in or commit to particular initiatives.</td>
<td>(Two tiers of government can work very successfully as partners to build capacity and improve their collective and individual performance,)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and asset management on a region-wide basis often encounters issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beyond the scope of individual participants to manage.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Roads Alliance outcomes and achievements

Notable outcomes to date include:

- that the Roads Alliance has gained national recognition as leading the way through extensive collaboration, capability building and engagement to develop an innovative model for smarter delivery and management of Queensland’s road network
- establishment of a robust mechanism that enables communities to build better cases for road funding
- a safer, more effective and consistent road network for all road users across Queensland
- a coordinated asset-management approach and uniform arrangements for collecting, analysing and reporting data on the state's road assets, supporting better investment decisions
- increased efficiency in delivery through resource sharing and group purchasing, producing better value in planning, design, construction and maintenance
- funding certainty and longer-term commitment through a rolling four-year works program
• capacity building in Main Roads’ districts and local government through knowledge sharing and experience

• strengthening of the local government role in regional decision making and economic development

• identification and reduction of capability and capacity duplications and gaps

• improved skill-base and capability contributing to the sustainability of rural and regional communities.

Application of the Roads Alliance model

Although focused specifically on roads, the Alliance approach may suit other planning and service delivery situations. Opportunities exist in the areas of transport planning, water, sewage and waste infrastructure planning, financial and contract management, technical support and advice, environmental management, disaster management and so on. The model also has potential for replication across many areas of public policy.

OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL, CROSS-AGENCY INITIATIVES

There are many other examples of cross-agency, intergovernmental initiatives of community engagement and capacity building in which Main Roads has a role. These include:

• Community engagement index - trial of a whole-of-government community engagement activities in south-east Queensland. The trial involves identifying opportunities for joined-up, collaborative community engagement. Current and future community engagement is input to a database to give an index that all departments can access to plan and coordinate engagement. The aim is to minimise uncoordinated agency consultation in communities and, in turn, reduce over consultation and consultation fatigue¹⁰ experienced in some communities.

• Integrated Regional Transport Plans (IRTPs) — the department is actively involved in the development of IRTPs which are plans to help meet emerging transport needs for a given region. An example is the Capricornia IRTP which was developed by Main Roads and Queensland Transport in partnership with Livingstone, Mount Morgan and Rockhampton City Councils to address population growth, employment and industry in the Capricornia region¹¹.

• Community Renewal Program — Community Renewal is a Queensland Government initiative, delivered in partnership between the state and local governments, business, residents and the community sector to deliver projects that improve people's lives in selected Queensland communities¹². The program includes community centres and youth arts projects, to traineeships and family support services, bringing communities and governments together to find new solutions to local needs. Main Roads works with its portfolio partner Queensland Transport on access and mobility issues in these socio-economically and locationally disadvantaged communities.

• Engaging Indigenous Queenslanders — Indigenous Queenslanders are some of the state’s most socio-economically disadvantaged people. Working with Indigenous Queenslanders is a high priority for the department. The approach taken is to go beyond the identification of Indigenous communities’ priorities, to resolving their issues while simultaneously building community capacity and skills.

¹⁰ Consultation fatigue is where people feel over consulted. This can place an unfair burden on citizens and communities and diminish the likelihood of good participation.

¹¹ For more information about the Capricornia IRTP go to http://www.transport.qld.gov.au/qt/tpSite.nsf/index/capirtp

¹² For more information about the Community Renewal Program go to http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/initiatives/cr/index.htm
Indigenous reconciliation and capacity building play a significant part in the way Main Roads manages the road system. Main Roads has an obligation to manage the impact of roadworks, work closely with Indigenous people and, in doing so, help alleviate disadvantaged communities and protect the cultural heritage of Australia's oldest culture. The department does this within the context of whole-of-government priorities, programs and policies. This includes nationally with COAG and the Australian Transport Council, along with other state departments and local government. The department has developed nationally-recognised Cultural Heritage Guidelines and Procedures that demonstrate commitment to embracing and building sustainable relationships with Indigenous Queenslanders. In addition to this the department has actively embraced capability development for Indigenous people so they can gain employment and improve their quality of life:

- The department established a Remote Communities Services Unit to provide training and mentoring to Indigenous people across Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait\textsuperscript{13}. On offer is an accredited training program that helps local Indigenous councils increase their capacity to undertake infrastructure maintenance in their community.
- The department established an annual Education to Employment Scheme in 1999 to provide practical work experience, financial and employment assistance to at-risk young Indigenous Queenslanders, generating self-sufficiency and greater self-confidence. The scheme has grown to include 17 departments across government. In 2007, 97 students were awarded grants bringing the total to 258 students currently involved in the scheme. Main Roads currently sponsors 40 students.

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Interagency partnerships and collaborating with other levels of government are not without their problems. More needs to be done, especially in such a large and regionally diverse state, with multiple systems, processes and views of dealing with regional issues. There is a growing interest in governance mechanisms for regional areas stemming from perceptions that the current system could be improved, and from recognition that a variety of different approaches to regional governance are being trialed in Queensland. For example, there are efforts to involve communities in planning approaches, to devolve some governance to regional or local bodies, or to consult and collaborate at a range of levels with communities in the provision of services. These initiatives occur across different departments and groups, and across a spectrum of government services and roles, so that the matrix of different activities is complex.

At the same time the Roads Alliance was established, the department began work with a group of other state government agencies and the LGAQ on the Engaged Government Project\textsuperscript{14}. The project involves two stages:

- A scoping study investigating barriers and enablers to joined-up decision making. The findings showed strong similarities to elsewhere, nationally and internationally, including:
  - Barriers at the regional level relate to fragmentation of purpose amongst departments, lack of integration in structures and systems and poor capability for working in new ways. Specific

\textsuperscript{13} The Remote Communities Services Unit has offices and training facilities in both Cairns and Thursday Island. The training aims to increase the skill level of council employees. Main Roads encourages participation in this program by offering culturally and technically appropriate competency based training. By participating in this training program councils will increase their capacity to undertake infrastructure maintenance in their own community.

\textsuperscript{14} For more information about the Engaged Government Project go to \url{www.griffith.edu.au/projecteg}
examples of barriers include ‘silo-based’ objectives and budgets and associated judgments about what is not ‘core’ business, bureaucratic accountabilities, and risk aversiveness (Guthrie, 2002).

- Enablers, the opposite of the barriers, relate to the adoption of a common purpose, aligning structures/systems with regional needs and priorities. Developing capability for innovation within the public service leadership and culture and amongst the sectors in the regional system is also important. Specific themes include the need for Ministerial support for collaborative agendas in Queensland’s regions, a strengthening of the articulation between government priorities and outcomes, departmental programs and budgets, and a budgetary system that supports shared regional objectives and planning processes (Guthrie, 2002).

- A three-year (2004/05-2006/07) Australian Research Council (ARC) linkage study "Engaged Government: A Study of Government-Community Engagement for Regional Outcomes", exploring sociological, public policy and economic dimensions of collaboration. The United Nations is the peer reviewer for the project which focuses on addressing the barriers and enablers, outlining recommendations necessary for an engaged government focused on regional outcomes. The project team has worked closely with the Central Queensland Regional Managers’ Coordination Network as a regional decision-making mechanism.15

The research findings are relevant to governments world-wide and include a number of paradoxes that give conceptual form to the barriers and enablers to engaged government. Some paradoxes are related and may be viewed as conceptually linked:

- The paradox of competing expectations and demands: the role of public service managers is to meet the competing and often contradictory expectations and demands created by:
  - hierarchical systems of organisation and governance within their departments
  - a public service culture that is economically rational, departmentally (core business) focused, risk-averse and politically sensitive
  - expectations of community, industry and politicians that departments from all tiers of government will work collaboratively with each other and engage with community, industry and politicians to meet identified needs and expectations
  - a rhetoric of whole-of-government policy statements that lack legislative authority.

- The paradox of whole-of-state regional planning and service provision: public service managers should plan and provide services from a whole-of-state perspective while also ensuring that competing regional needs and expectations are met.

15 Regional Managers’ Coordination Networks (RMCNs) were set up by the Queensland Government with a mandate to play a stronger role in delivering on government priorities. The RMCN is a key coordinating committee which brings together state government managers from a range of portfolio areas to assist agencies in achieving economic, social and environmental benefits for Queensland regions by coordinating priority cross-agency initiatives. The RMCN aligns services with government priorities and community needs by supporting collaboration across government agencies and with local government, businesses and communities. The RMCNs are part of a three-tiered approach to improving outcomes in regional areas. The networks have a strong involvement in Ministerial Regional Community Forums as well as links to the new Regional Queensland Council, a Ministerial advisory committee made up of 10 members of parliament from regional areas across Queensland.
• The paradox of regional and local planning and services provision: public service managers must plan and provide services regionally while also ensuring that competing sub-regional and local issues are addressed.

• The paradox of silo/place and issue: public service managers must provide services at regional, sub-regional and local scales while also ensuring they meet competing demands of a departmentally organised, silo-based, centralist system of government.

• The paradox of ideological/instrumental motivation: The engaged government approach is underpinned by an ideology of the public sector working collaboratively to provide improved service to citizens. However, the decisions and actions of public service managers can at times be driven primarily by the core business interests of a department.

• The paradox of participative/associative democracy - representative democracy: the ideals of participatory and associative democracy can sit uncomfortably within governance systems based on the ideals of representative democracy (Oliver, 2005).

The researchers found examples of rejecting the paradox or recognition and legitimisation of only one side of the statement, working to solve or use that portion of the paradox at the expense of the other. Within this environment, it is the role of elected government and its agents to balance and manage the tension caused by the competing demands of its citizenry.

Outputs from the research which will be discussed in the workshop at this forum, include:

• an ideal collaboration model: a tool to help stakeholders with a common issue to think about and discuss the process of working together

• Issue, Context and Stakeholder (ICASA) System: a tool to assess whether or not stakeholders should collaborate to address a common issue and, if so, how they may best work together

• Collaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (EMEF): a tool to help those involved in an existing or planned collaborative activity to review and evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts

• three PhD dissertations: based on sociological, economic and public policy dimensions of engaged government and governance

• four discussion papers on aspects of the research: focusing on regional budgeting, institutional structures for engaged governance, agency culture and engaged governance, and human resource management policy and engaged government.

CONCLUSION

The department’s vision "Main Roads — Connecting Queensland" outlines our promise to Queenslanders. With a record road budget in excess of AUD$11 billion over the next five years, balancing the needs and expectations of an engaged citizenry with the volume of works planned and taking place must be carefully managed.

The public continually expects more from us and a say in what Main Roads does as an organisation. There will be times when agreement between all involved will not possible, as the department grapples with meeting local, state and national priorities for roads.

Community engagement is therefore an ongoing priority and normal part of business for Main Roads as a road system manager, to ensure that diverse viewpoints and concerns are part of decision making. This
commitment is embraced at the executive management level, recognising that leadership is essential to successful policy implementation.

The department has a long history of community engagement and connections with local communities. With the large road construction task ahead, this will remain a strong focus. In future, there will be more emphasis on opportunities for citizens and communities to be involved much earlier in decision making. This recognises that communities and citizens are a rich repository of knowledge and can actively contribute to state, regional and local transport futures. Early involvement will also thwart negative effects and give a real sense of ownership to issues and solutions.

The department will also continue to work across government structures, recognising that the delivery of improved economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes require integrated and innovative responses. The findings from the Engaged Government Project will assist in this regard and will be disseminated widely for discussion across government, academia and in the public domain.

REFERENCES


Queensland Government (2003a) Queensland Public Service Charter

Queensland Government (2003b) Realising the Vision: Governance for the Smart State, Office of Public Service Merit and Equity


ATTACHMENT

Brisbane Declaration

We, representatives of countries and communities, including Indigenous peoples, international institutions, national, state and local governments, academic institutions, and business and civil society organizations from across the world, participating in the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held at Brisbane, Australia, from 15 to 17 August 2005,

1. **Acknowledge** the universal interest and importance of community engagement, founded in the inherent dignity of people and the values, rights and responsibilities of all people expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. **Welcome** the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance\(^{16}\) in its call for all actors\(^{17}\) in societies to work together to expand and promote participatory, transparent governance for the benefit of their people.

3. **Underscore** that community engagement is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Declaration including the Millennium Goals for Development.

4. **Express appreciation** for the efforts of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in helping to advance the practice of community engagement and support of greater participatory and transparent governance.

5. **Express appreciation** to the Government of the State of Queensland, to the Indigenous peoples for their welcome to country, and to all the people of Queensland, Australia for hosting the inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.

6. **Express appreciation** to the other Australian governments, tertiary institutions and organisations that have sponsored and partnered in the organisation of this gathering, to the staff and volunteers, and to all those who have through participation shared their expertise and experience to build greater understanding, capability and commitment to the practice of community engagement.

**Community Engagement**

7. **Affirm** that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors.

8. **Recognise** that community engagement is a two way process:

   • by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and

   • by which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.

9. **Affirm** that effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.

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\(^{16}\) The Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance made at the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government at Seoul, Republic of Korea, 24-27 May 2005.

\(^{17}\) The ‘community’ or all ‘actors in society’ are all those who are potentially affected by or have an interest in an issue, decision, service delivery or evaluation, and include government, businesses, trade unions, civil society organisations, non-Government organisations and individual citizens.
10. Also recognise that effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities, and creates more inclusive and sustainable communities.

11. Further recognise that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised.

12. Further recognise that inclusive engagement requires that Indigenous peoples and the poor and marginalized, are adequately resourced to participate meaningfully in the broader community and that they have a stake in the outcome and benefit equitably as a result of being involved.

13. Endorse the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence in community engagement:

- **Integrity** – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement.
- **Inclusion** - when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard.
- **Deliberation** – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities.
- **Influence** – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.

14. Recognise the availability of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement.

15. Affirm the value of education, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing about active citizenship and community engagement processes and outcomes.

16. Draw attention to the materials and recommendations of the specialised panels and workshops which supplement this Declaration.

**Next steps**

The participants from all over the world at this conference:

17. Request the Host Country to bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the Declaration of this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities so that it may provide leadership globally for its promotion and implementation.

18. Further call on international institutions as well as national, provincial and local governments to give effect to the values and principles of this Declaration.

19. Express support for more dialogue between international institutions and others with the people of the world about issues of global interest, and the availability of digital and other means to support such interaction.

20. Encourage the tertiary sector and other public and professional organisations to facilitate research and teaching, policy and practice development, organisational development, evaluation and networking to sustain the learnings and connections created at this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.

21. Further encourage the private sector and civil society organisations to implement practical and meaningful ways to be responsive to, representative of, and enabling of the participation of citizens, clients, communities.
22. Note with appreciation the willingness of the Queensland Government to support knowledge sharing and capacity building for community engagement and to be involved in the follow-up to this Conference.

23. Request the United Nations, building on the success and legacies of this Conference, to assist countries and communities to foster effective community engagement practices by supporting research and training, and documenting successful outcomes and disseminating these widely.