

Member Consultation Policy

1. Context

The Australian Institute of Architects' (the Institute) Member Consultation Policy (the Policy) aims to achieve professional, respectful and constructive engagement with members and stakeholders. The Policy adopts a comprehensive and ethical approach, grounded in acknowledged best practice principles. The Institute aims to build confidence and trust within the organisation through implementing the Policy. The Policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure its approach remains relevant.

The consultative process implemented to develop the Policy, outlined in Schedule 3, reflects the way the Institute intends to consult in the future.

The Institute's constitution states, *"The management and control of the business and affairs of the Institute shall...be vested in the Council who may exercise all the powers, authorities and discretions of the Institute..."* [Article 39: Powers of the Council]. The Council is comprised of members directly elected by fellow members. Some of these 'authorities and discretions' may be delegated to various member committees or management. In particular, responsibility for managing Institute staff and operations is vested in the CEO.

This concept of representative governance is fundamental to the effective operation of the Institute – and it makes the Institute accountable to members. The Institute greatly values the views of members and aims to ensure members can contribute ideas to guide the organisation's strategic development, provide appropriate input to Institute decisions and offer feedback on services and events.

Balancing these objectives – direct member engagement and delegated decision-making by Council or Institute management – is generally straightforward. However, there can be situations where there is uncertainty and the interests of the Institute are best served by one approach or the other. The Policy's purpose is to establish a set of principles and guidelines that will enable Council, management and members to have certainty about the appropriate level, nature and purpose of member consultation in all relevant circumstances.

2. Scope

The Policy covers consultation with Institute members on developing, reviewing and communicating:

- **Governance policies and strategic direction**, including matters such as constitutional change, committee provisions, strategic planning, elections and representation, regulations and Chapter governance
- **Public policies and communication with all levels of government and the community**, including submissions to state and federal governments, advocacy, media presence, government relations, public policy formulation and community engagement programs
- **Organisational policies and operational planning**, including financial management, human resources, workplace health and safety, industrial relations, business planning, facilities management and service delivery.

3. Guiding Principles

Best practice principles adopted as the foundation for consultation with Institute members are to:

- **Seek input from members:** The Institute will engage with members to seek ideas or feedback on matters covered by the scope of this Policy.
- **Recognise the diversity of members:** The Institute will acknowledge and consider the diverse interests and circumstances of all members, taking account of factors including location, gender, age and practice configuration.
- **Target consultation topics to members' interests:** The Institute will endeavour to focus membership consultation on topics and issues of the greatest interest and relevance to members.
- **Clearly identify purpose and scope of consultation:** This Institute will clearly identify and inform potential participants of the purpose and scope of consultation – including what can and cannot be changed through the process.
- **Provide reasonable notice prior to consultation:** The Institute will provide members with reasonable notice and relevant information prior to a consultation process commencing to ensure that participants are appropriately informed.
- **Provide feedback and highlight outcomes:** The Institute will provide members with relevant and comprehensive feedback and findings from consultation processes in a timely fashion.
- **Inform members about key organisational outcomes and decisions:** The Institute will promptly provide members with information on significant Institute decisions and outcomes in a clear and transparent way.
- **Use varied and contemporary communication tools:** The Institute will engage and consult with members using a variety of tools and techniques, including email, online forums, social media and face-to-face interactions such as reference groups and workshops.
- **Provide clear channels for raising issues and concerns:** The Institute will provide effective and readily accessible channels for members to provide feedback or unsolicited suggestions, ideas, concerns or complaints.
- **Streamline communication with members:** The Institute will endeavour to optimise the number and frequency of membership communications and ensure communication is clear, concise and relevant.
- **Support members in determining their preferred level of involvement:** The Institute encourages members to be involved at all levels, but however recognises that some members may wish to limit their involvement, or opt out of consultation. The Institute will assist members to identify their preferred level of engagement.

4. Consultation spectrum and process

The consultation spectrum¹ shown below will be used to determine the appropriate level of participation:

- **Delegated decision:** Decisions are made under delegation by management, elected representatives or a combination of both. There is no consultation with members.
- **Inform:** The Institute distributes information about a specific topic or decision to members or a representative segment of the membership base.
- **Consult:** Members' views are sought via an appropriate data collection method, such as a survey (online, phone-based or written), forum, submission or vote.
- **Involve:** Members are invited to actively engage in a specific decision-making process through participation in a committee, task force, working group, reference group or similar.

This policy does not preclude consultation taking place at a higher level if the person or entity responsible considers it desirable to do so. An overview of the Institute's basic consultation process is shown below in *Figure 1*. Within any one key decision making activity, the process shown may be repeated multiple times.

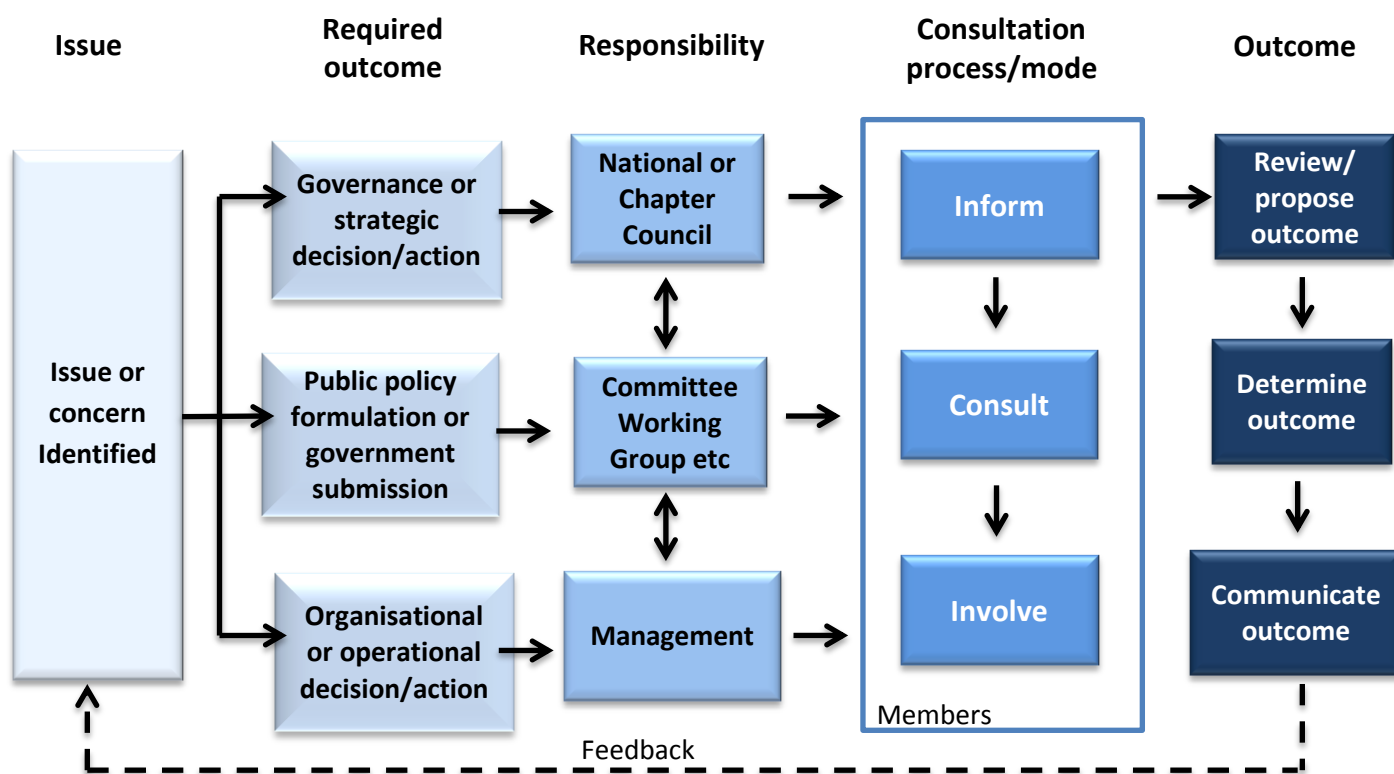


Figure 1: Overview of consultation process

¹ This list has been adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum.

5. Consultation approach and technique

Once the matter and level of consultation is determined, the Institute will apply the most relevant techniques to achieve that purpose. While different situations require different consultation techniques to reach particular audiences and outcomes, there are some features common to all techniques.

A consultation schedule can be found in Schedule 1: Consultation Schedule which sets out the likely matters that will arise for consultation, together with the appropriate level of consultation according to the spectrum, and the person or entity responsible for the process.

Examples of specific consultation tools and techniques typically used by the Institute can be found in Schedule 2: Consultation Approach and Technique. This list is indicative and not exhaustive.

6. Review

The Member Consultation Policy will be reviewed at three-yearly intervals or as directed by National Council.

Schedule 1: Consultation Schedule

Area	Matter	Members impacted	Responsibility	Spectrum level	Consultation approach	Process coordinator
Governance and Strategy						
Policy and regulation	Amend constitution	<i>All</i>	National Council	Consult	<i>Vote of members at AGM</i>	Company Secretary
	Create/amend regulations	<i>All</i>	National Council	Consult	<i>As determined by Council</i>	Company Secretary
	Create/amend organisation policy	<i>Dependent on policy</i>	National Council	Inform or Consult	<i>As determined by Council</i>	Relevant GM
	Consultation Effectiveness	<i>All</i>	COO	Consult	<i>Survey of all members</i>	GM Marketing & Develop't
	Membership structure and categories	<i>All</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>National communication to all members</i>	COO
	Create/amend Chapter policy	<i>Chapter members</i>	Chapter Council	Consult	<i>Chapter working group</i>	Chapter Manager
	Amend National Committee terms of reference	<i>All</i>	National Council	Delegated decision	-	-
	National Committee meeting minutes	<i>All</i>	CEO	Inform	<i>Accessible on website</i>	CEO
	University course recognition	<i>Student members</i>	National Education Committee	Delegated decision	-	-
	MOU with external organisation	<i>Dependent on MOU</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>As determined by Council</i>	CEO
Strategy	Review/revise organisation strategy	<i>All</i>	National Council	Consult	<i>Survey of all members</i>	COO
	Review/revise Chapter strategy	<i>Chapter members</i>	Chapter Council	Consult	<i>Chapter Member forum</i>	Chapter Manager
Representation	Appoint National President-elect	<i>All</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>Vote/consensus of Councillors</i>	National President
	Appoint members of Executive	<i>All</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>Vote/consensus of Councillors</i>	National President
	Elect Nationally-Elected Councillors	<i>All</i>	National Council	Consult	<i>Vote of eligible members</i>	Company Secretary
	Elect Chapter President	<i>Chapter members</i>	Company Secretary	Consult	<i>Vote of Chapter members</i>	Company Secretary
	Elect Chapter Councillors	<i>Chapter members</i>	Company Secretary	Consult	<i>Vote of Chapter members</i>	Company Secretary
	Elect National Committee Chair	<i>All</i>	National Committee	Delegated decision	-	-
Decision-making	Comment or complaint about decision	<i>Dependent on issue</i>	Dependent on issue	Inform	<i>As determined by Council</i>	CEO
Public and Government						
Advocacy	Develop public policy	<i>All</i>	National Council	Involve	<i>Expert working group</i>	CEO
	Submission to federal government	<i>All</i>	CEO	Involve	<i>Representative task group or committee</i>	Govt Relations Officer
	Submission to state or territory government	<i>Chapter members</i>	Chapter Council	Involve	<i>Chapter task group</i>	Chapter Manager

Area	Matter	Members impacted	Responsibility	Spectrum level	Consultation approach	Process coordinator
Media	National media release	<i>All</i>	CEO	Inform	<i>varies</i>	NMCM
	National public statement	<i>All</i>	CEO & National President	Inform	<i>As determined by CEO/President</i>	CEO
	State media release	<i>Chapter members</i>	Chapter Manager	Inform	<i>varies</i>	Chapter Manager
	State public statement	<i>Chapter members</i>	Chapter Manager & Chapter President	Inform	<i>As determined by Chapter Mgr & Chapter President</i>	Chapter Manager
Organisation and Operations						
Human Resources	Recruitment of CEO	<i>All</i>	National Council	Delegated decision	<i>President/ IPP/ President-elect</i>	National President
	Recruitment of COO or General Manager	<i>All</i>	CEO	Delegated decision	<i>CEO</i>	CEO
	Recruitment of Chapter Manager	<i>Chapter members</i>	GMPI	Involve	<i>Chapter President</i>	GMPI
	Recruitment of staff for existing position	<i>Dependent on position</i>	Relevant manager	Delegated decision	-	-
	New staff position or redundancy	<i>Dependent on position</i>	COO	Delegated decision	-	-
	Staff terms of employment	<i>Dependent on position</i>	COO	Delegated decision	-	-
Finance	Develop organisation business plan	<i>All members</i>	COO	Consult	<i>National Council Discussion Paper</i>	GM Finance
	Develop Chapter business plan	<i>Chapter members</i>	COO	Consult	<i>Chapter Council Discussion Paper</i>	Chapter Manager
	Develop business unit business plan	<i>Dependent on unit</i>	COO	Delegated decision	-	-
	Develop organisation budget	<i>All</i>	GM Finance	Consult	<i>Finance Committee Discussion Paper</i>	GM Finance
	Develop Chapter budget	<i>Chapter members</i>	GM Finance	Inform	<i>Chapter Council Discussion Paper</i>	Chapter Manager
	Develop business unit budget	<i>Varies</i>	GM Finance	Delegated decision	-	-
	Expenditure approval	<i>Varies</i>	See Delegation Policy	Delegated decision	-	-
	Investment of Institute funds	<i>All</i>	National Council	Delegated decision	-	-
	Setting membership subscription rates	<i>All</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>As determined by Council</i>	COO
Operational policy	Management policy creation or revision	<i>Varies</i>	CEO	Delegated decision	-	-
Facilities	Building or other major capital purchase, lease or sale	<i>All</i>	National Council	Inform	<i>As determined by Council</i>	CEO
	Facility refurbishment	<i>All</i>	National Council	Consult	<i>Working group</i>	COO
Subsidiaries	Board appointment	<i>Dependent on subsidiary</i>	National Council	Delegated decision	-	-
	CEO appointment	<i>Dependent on subsidiary</i>	Subsidiary Board	Delegated decision	-	-

Schedule 2: Consultation Approach and Technique

Technique	Description	Purpose
Consult	<i>There is a range of tools and techniques that allows the Institute to seek input and feedback from members.</i>	
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where the Institute seeks to broadly canvas an issue or understand the thoughts of members on a particular topic, a survey could be used. A survey is a structured method of gaining feedback about particular issues. Surveys are used to gain responses to a set of predetermined questions, usually from a large number of participants. Respondents can be selected or weighted to be a representative sample of a group or can be self-selecting. Surveys can be conducted via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face to face Paper based Telephone Social Media Online. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad-based feedback and/or Targeted to a particular constituency within membership
Online forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A topic or series of questions is posted online to a project website for comment and discussion. A moderated online forum allows users to post new comments or respond to the views of other users. The discussion forum may be available for a set period or may be open ended. Online forums can be conducted via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion forum Wiki (directly edit documents or provide comments on issues papers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad-based feedback and/or Targeted to a particular constituency within membership
Working Groups/ Committees/ Advisory Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Institute has a range of mechanisms by which it seeks detailed input by some members. These include working groups, advisory groups and committees. These groups will generally include representatives from different divisions of an organisation to ensure a cross-section of inputs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative
Reference group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference groups comprise representatives from the organisation and may also include experts or representatives from outside of the organisation. A reference group typically includes up to 12 members. It can provide advice and oversight to the development of policies, plans, programs or services, as well as to the engagement process itself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Institute conducts regular meetings that provide members with an opportunity to canvas issues. These meetings include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Council State Chapter Councils National committees and forums Chapter committees and forum Annual general meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad-based feedback and/or Targeted to a particular constituency within membership

Technique	Description	Purpose
Inform		
<i>There is a range of ways the Institute can inform members of consultation processes, activities and outcomes.</i>		
Information updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short written descriptions are an effective and timely way to distribute quality information. • The Institute can use short written descriptions to inform members throughout the consultation process. • Short written descriptions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – E-newsletter – Email – News feed or article on the Institute website – Social Media – Letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based
Discussion Paper/ Issues Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Discussion Paper is a document that broadly covers a particular issue(s) and is intended to generate conversation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based
Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A webinar (web-based seminar) is a presentation or seminar transmitted online. • Webinars allow online presentations to be shared between multiple participants in real time. • Webinars can include text, images, audio, video annotated whiteboards and screen/desktop sharing. • Webinars can use telephone conferencing, video conferencing or text chat to allow users to interact during the presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based and/or • Targeted
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Institute can use social media as a way to inform the membership on a range of matters including that a consultation process is underway and direct them to relevant information. • Consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of various social media tools to each issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based and/or • Targeted
Outcomes Report/Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation outcomes report can be an effective tool for understanding the key issues and concerns raised by members and articulating how these have been addressed or incorporated into decision making. • Outcomes reports/summaries also provide an opportunity for members to see the full diversity of perspectives across the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad-based

Schedule 3: Process to develop Member Consultation Policy

In 2011, the Australian Institute of Architects began a process to review how it communicates and consults with members.

Working Group

A working group was established to drive the process to create a Member Consultation Policy for the Institute. The working group comprised representatives from members and staff including Matthew Pullinger (NSW Chapter President), Emma Cayley / Daniela Crawley (National Manager, Communications and Marketing), Ross Clark (Chief Operating Officer) and Shelley Penn (National President). The group was also advised by Elton Consulting, an independent specialist in communication and consultation.

As part of the development of the Member Consultation Policy, the working group carried out a consultation process that reflected how decisions would be made with the Policy in place.

Online survey

This consultation process included an online survey which encouraged members to have their say about consultation.

Almost 1,000 people completed the survey, providing feedback about the Institute's current consultation practice and ways it could be improved. Key findings from this feedback included:

- Majority of respondents said better consultation would assist the Institute to fulfil its roles
- Overall positive response to the consultation process – members said the Institute was taking steps to implement change for the better
- Consultation will help to create a sense of inclusion within the Institute
- More streamlined communication is needed
- Providing feedback following consultation with members was important.

Reference Group

A reference group was then established to act as a sounding board for the development of the Policy. The reference group comprised 19 Institute members, representing each of the State and Territory Chapters. The group met virtually using teleconference and email correspondence.

Draft Consultation Policy

Feedback from the online survey and reference group was compiled to provide the basis for the draft Consultation Policy. The draft Policy was circulated within the working group to add more detail. It was reviewed by Elton Consulting and then provided to the Reference Group for comment and finalisation.

National Council

Following review by the Reference Group, the Policy was presented to and approved by the National Council in November 2012.