

# CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

## *What is required to strengthen citizen engagement in development and use of community wellbeing indicators?*

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Strengthening citizen engagement in identifying community concerns and priorities is a key objective in the development of local community wellbeing indicators. It not only ensures the indicators developed reflect community issues and priorities, it also ensures they will continue to be relevant into the future.

State and local government support for citizen engagement in community planning and community strengthening activities has increased in recent years in recognition that such initiatives are much more likely to be successful; if developed in conjunction with local communities, and if they enjoy local support.

Experience has shown there is no single approach to increasing community engagement. While some of the underlying principles of encouraging and sustaining community engagement are universal; to be successful, the approach needs to be tailored and designed for each individual community.

Community engagement should be part of the democratic life of local communities. It should grow from a commitment by local and state government to involve citizens in processes and activities that affect their lives; an integrated approach to decision-making



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that actively encourages and values input from the widest possible range of stakeholders.

While some innovative and well constructed actions have been taken to strengthen citizen engagement, more is required. The following actions are critical to the successful development of community wellbeing indicators.

► Ongoing actions to build the capacity and skills of the key participants and administrators of citizen engagement and community strengthening strategies: local government councillors and staff; state and commonwealth public sector staff; community sector staff and volunteers; and community members themselves;

► The development and publication of manuals, tool

kits and other resources to support citizen engagement and community strengthening;

► Funding of innovative pilot programs designed to support citizen engagement and community strengthening initiatives; and build up new models of good practice;

► Additional state, local government and community sector staff to support the development and implementation of citizen engagement and community strengthening initiatives; and

► A range of imaginative programs to broaden the involvement of groups frequently excluded from decision-making processes (e.g. indigenous communities, CALD communities, young people, people with disabilities etc.).