



Australian Government



Australian Naval
Nuclear Power
Safety Regulator

Principles to Guide 'Meaningful Consultation' **guidance**



Contents

Contents	2
Amendment certificate	3
Amendment summary	4
Standards and recognised good practice	5
Context	6
Chapter one	7
Overview	
Chapter two	8
Meaningful consultation requirements and good practice	
Chapter three	9
Principles of meaningful consultation	
Chapter four	14
Record keeping	
Chapter five	16
Additional resources	
Glossary	18

Amendment certificate

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This initial document will be subject to regular review and amendment as required. Proposed amendments should be submitted to licensing@annpsr.gov.au.

Governance and version control

The following legislative documents and versions have been used to inform development of this artefact.

- [Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Act 2024 \(ANNPS Act\)](#) 
1 November 2025
- [Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulations 2025 \(Regulations\)](#) 
3 October 2025

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Amendment summary

July 2026

Standards and recognised good practice

Recognised good practice documents used to inform the development of this document include:

- A** Office of Impact Assessment, Best Practice Consultation, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (July 2023). See Additional Resources
- B** International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Nuclear Energy Series No NG-G-5.1 [part 2.3] See Additional Resources

Context

These considerations support the user in the application of this document.

Approach A

This document has been prepared to support the application of the Regulations. If the Regulations are modified or revised, the document will require review.

Approach B

The technical language used in this document has been prepared based on the definitions provided in the ANNPS Act, Regulations, Australian specific definitions where relevant, and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Nuclear Safety and Security Glossary (2022 Interim Edition).

Chapter one

Overview

- 1.1 The ANNPS Act establishes a framework for the regulation of activities associated with the Australian Naval Nuclear Power Safety Regulator (The Regulator).
- 1.2 The objects of the ANNPS Act are:
 - a. to promote nuclear safety of activities relating to AUKUS submarines; and
 - b. to promote public confidence and trust in relation to the nuclear safety of Australia's nuclear powered submarine enterprise; and
 - c. to promote the defence interests of Australia; and
 - d. to support the AUKUS partnership.
- 1.3 Supporting the objects of the ANNPS Act is of interest to all ANNPS licence applicants and licence holders.
- 1.4 Meaningful consultation is an important part of all licensed activities and a requirement of any kind of facility activity.
- 1.5 The Regulations set out specific requirements for licence applicants to undertake meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the broader public.
- 1.6 These requirements form part of the Regulator's assessment of whether to issue a licence for a facility activity, as outlined in paragraphs 24(3)(e) and 43(2)(b) of the Regulations.

Objective

- 1.7 The objective of this document is to provide clear guidance on how to meet the meaningful consultation requirements prescribed in the Regulations, and to more broadly support the objects of the ANNPS Act— specifically to promote of public confidence and trust in the nuclear safety of Australia's nuclear-powered submarine enterprise.

Audience

- 1.8 This guidance is intended for licence applicants and licence holders undertaking consultation activities in relation to an ANNSPR regulated activity.

Chapter two

Meaningful consultation requirements and good practice

Fundamental principles

- 2.1 As prescribed in the Regulations, for any facility licence, the Regulator must be satisfied that meaningful consultation has been undertaken with all relevant stakeholders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the public about the proposed facility activity in deciding whether to issue a licence (per paragraphs 24(3)(e) and 43(2)(b) of the Regulations).
- 2.2 The Regulator will evaluate the quality, scope and effectiveness of consultation when assessing compliance with consultation requirements under the Regulations.
- 2.3 As a matter of good practice, meaningful consultation can be undertaken beyond the requirements prescribed in the Regulations.
- 2.4 The Regulator encourages meaningful consultation to be undertaken across the lifecycle of ANNPS licensed activities (including planning, development and operation of a facility or material activity), in order to support the Objects of the ANNPS Act through promoting public confidence and trust in the nuclear safety of Australia's nuclear-powered submarine enterprise.

Chapter three

Principles of meaningful consultation

- 3.1 Consultation using the high-level principles in this guidance is to be considered on an individual basis, using a graded approach, commensurate with the hazard associated with the regulated activity.
- 3.2 The principles provided in this Guide align with the broader Commonwealth best practice for consultation¹ and the key principles of stakeholder engagement from an international nuclear best practice² perspective. Collectively, the principles are values, behavioral and procedural qualities, where the practical implementation and operationalisation of the principles can support engagement that is likely considered meaningful consultation.
- 3.3 The principles are:
- a. purposeful (identify relevant stakeholders)
 - b. structured (timing, frequency and form of engagement)
 - c. transparent
 - d. accessible
 - e. accountable
 - f. sustainable (local and continuing).

Purposeful (identify relevant stakeholders for the regulated activity)

- 3.4 A licence applicant or licence holder, should have a broad understanding of the objectives of the consultation to assist in identifying all the relevant stakeholders to be consulted during the consultation process.
- 3.5 A licence applicant should consult widely and understand the diversity of stakeholders who can provide required expertise, diverse perspectives or are affected by the regulated activity, facility or proposed facility; where engagement will likely support meaningful consultation being achieved.

1 Office of Impact Assessment, Best Practice Consultation, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (July 2023). See Additional Resources

2 IAEA Nuclear Energy Series No NG-G-5.1 [part 2.3] See Additional Resources

- 3.6 The relevant individuals and groups that may constitute a stakeholder includes (but is not limited to):
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - state, territory and/or local governments
 - peak bodies, businesses or unions
 - academics or experts
 - community groups, environmental groups and other interest groups
 - the general public.
- 3.7 It may also be appropriate to recognise that identified stakeholders within a group or body may have divergent points of view and so may not provide consistent views on all aspects of the proposed consultation.
- 3.8 By using this principle, licence applicants will be able to evidence their identified stakeholders for the Regulator.

Structured (timing, frequency and form of the engagement)

- 3.9 Consultation should be carried out in ways that respond to the needs and circumstances of identified stakeholders. This may include, but is not limited to considerations such as timing, frequency, and forms of engagement that are user-centric.
- 3.10 For licence holders considering the timing and duration of consultation, meaningful consultation will be more likely to be found to have occurred where enough time for consultation is provided. Timeframes should be realistic for stakeholders to engage, based on their capacity and availability. Timing will depend on a range of factors, including:
- the specifics of the proposal
 - availability of stakeholders
 - provision of sufficient time for stakeholders to be engaged before a consultation period commences
 - sufficient time for consultation to actually take place
 - sufficient time to receive and include feedback and provide a summary of feedback to stakeholders.
- 3.11 Limitations on timing of consultation may be unavoidable, but where possible there should be mitigations or alternative engagement channels available.

3.12 Consultation plan – channels. In looking at the frequency and form of the engagement channels to be used as part of consultation, development by the licence applicant of a Consultation Plan, identifying the risk, activities and resources of the consultation may assist. The frequency and form of engagement may involve a number of channels, including but not limited to:

- a. online (website)
- b. social media
- c. targeted meetings
- d. town hall or public meetings
- e. roundtables
- f. letter box/pamphlet drops
- g. printed materials
- h. pop up sessions
- i. engagement apps
- j. workshops
- k. digital (videos, augmented reality and so forth).

3.13 It may also be appropriate to distinguish between the most appropriate forms of engagement channel for particular identified stakeholders to support their engagement.

3.14 Resources. In looking at the form of engagement, consideration should be given to the resources required for the consultation structure. This includes identifying and having the right people available to lead and support the consultation engagement, with a quality process with focus on the activities.

Accessible

3.15 Inclusive and accessible consultation methods can help stakeholders to participate and contribute readily to consultation. This could mean that the mechanisms and channels for consultation are not limited to one particular consultation method.

3.16 The information provided by the licence applicant or holder as part of the consultation with stakeholders should identify key issues, be easy to understand, in plain language and in a format that is clear for the stakeholders.

3.17 While consistent consultation procedures may be easier for planning and participation, the strategies or channels that may be appropriate for the identified stakeholders may vary. Selecting the most appropriate consultation method should consider aspects such as the:

- a. nature of the topic(s) to be covered
- b. audience or expected stakeholders
- c. availability of stakeholders.

3.18 For example, consultation undertaken through a town hall may not be the most appropriate engagement channel for stakeholders for example professional groups, experts. An alternative could be to conduct the engagement online initially, to inform the stakeholders on the process for written responses, and/or opportunities for targeted conversations.

Transparent

- 3.19** Meaningful consultation should be transparent in its conduct and intended outcome. Providing clear information, including the parameters of the consultation (both scope and timing) and the options that are being considered are likely to support a stakeholder engagement strategy that achieves outcomes that enable transparency. This can include, but is not limited to, sharing information about:
- a. the consultation that is occurring
 - b. the objectives and context of the consultation and what action will be taken as a result of the consultation
 - c. how the licence applicant will undertake the consultation
 - d. what the licence applicant is hoping to achieve with the consultation
 - e. where and when information will be available and accessible and what information can't be shared for security reasons
 - f. how the licence applicant will take consultation responses into consideration, even if they do not ultimately adopt the feedback or responses received
 - g. if, when and how outcomes will be made publicly available.
- 3.20** A genuine opportunity to discuss concerns, responses and alternative outcomes as part of the consultation process aligns with a transparent approach to meaningful consultation.
- 3.21** Engagement should be reviewed and reported on, and, where appropriate, decisions, strategies, and outcomes communicated to stakeholders and the public as they progress.
- 3.22** Stakeholders who provided input will want to know how their input was received, considered and if changes were made as a result. Even if no changes were ultimately adopted because of input, stakeholders will look to see if feedback has been considered.
- 3.23** The availability of an outcome, recommendation, decision or benchmark as part of the consultation engagements is important for transparency with stakeholders and providing evidence to the Regulator.

Accountable

- 3.24** Being accountable involves looking at the engagement channel strategies and the messages used in the consultation processes and identifying opportunities to improve or adjust to make information more effective, focused and productive.
- 3.25** An ability to evaluate, review and adjust channels and information throughout consultation activities and for future engagement with stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of a regulated activity supports more focused consultation engagements and a likelihood of more meaningful outcomes and greater stakeholder trust.

Sustainable (local and continuing)

- 3.26** Consultation should not be viewed as a one-time activity, a one-size-fits-all or a set-and-forget activity. Consultation is ideally an ongoing and embedded process, characterised by repeated conversations and engagements, over the lifecycle of a regulated activity. Meaningful consultation requires a consistency of ongoing communication activities to ensure that a two-way dialogue is maintained with stakeholders.
- 3.27** Once a licence is granted, sustainable consultation for interested stakeholders ideally becomes business as usual for the licence holder.
- 3.28** Looking at the local context will be important for understanding whether the consultation is sustainable and appropriate with the identified stakeholders. For example, a routine town hall for local engagement with the public may be appropriate, with the expectation that if local issues impact the regulated activity, that the rhythm will be revisited.

Summary

- 3.29** A graded approach to meaningful consultation, commensurate with the regulated activity, should be considered through a case-by-case basis. A singular approach may not necessarily be suitable to all consultation circumstances and requirements. The Meaningful Consultation principles of being;
- a. purposeful (outcome and identifying stakeholders)
 - b. structured (timing, frequency and form of engagement)
 - c. transparent
 - d. accessible
 - e. accountable
 - f. sustainable (local and continuing).
- 3.30** Should all be considered in harmony, as opposed to individually, to ensure the values, behavioural and procedural qualities of consultation are embodied by a licence applicant or holder. As a result, the regime of demonstrable enduring engagement will likely be considered as part of meaningful consultation in any licence application.

Chapter four

Record keeping

- 4.1 As reinforced by the Australian National Audit Office, where public consultation is required to inform activities, it is important that this consultation is structured, targeted, and enables sufficient time to receive and consider submissions. Maintaining a complete record of public consultations, submissions and the resultant changes adopted supports accountability and transparency for decision making³.
- 4.2 As a part of demonstrating meaningful consultation, accurate record keeping should include records from:
- planning for consultation
 - during consultation
 - post consultation evaluations.

Planning for consultation

- 4.3 **Consultation plan.** Establishing and implementing a consultation plan may support the licence applicant to demonstrate meaningful consultation in their engagement approach, and address record keeping requirements at the outset. Such a plan may include information to:
- address the high level principles
 - outline resources including qualified, experienced and respected representatives to lead and support the consultation and an understanding of budget
 - detail how input will be collected and recorded, as well as used for a specific decision, recommendation, outcome or benchmark, and the anticipated timeframes for these actions or recommendations.

During consultation

- 4.4 Records should be made of all consultation undertaken, particularly when the engagement channel is not a written response provided by an engaged stakeholder. Records can be brief and simple but should cover sufficient details and outcomes as part of the consultation process. This may include:
- date and location of consultation
 - engagement channel used
 - stakeholder identified; (that is, who was involved)
 - key issues identified in the consultation
 - any decision made and why, or action/recommendation
 - if appropriate, who is to take action and by when.

3 Auditor-General Report No 26 of 2019-20 Management of Spectrum Reallocation to Support the Deployment of 5G services, paragraph 21 (Accessed 12 October 2025)

Example record:

At 2pm, 1 July 20XX, attended an informal consultation meeting with 10 members of special interest group, XY, at The Meeting Room, WA. As part of this consultation, Z provided a brief overview of the public consultation we were undertaking and provided information on the materials available on the website and form the basis of this consultation. Provided details of the website and the timeframe for submitting any written responses (by 30 August 20XX). As part of this consultation, a good conversation was held with questions from stakeholders covering the themes of: timeframes, costs and potential environmental impacts. Information provided as part of the discussion was consistent with the information available on the consultation website. A written response is expected to be provided by XY as part of the consultation period, which will cover the themes raised today. No decisions or actions taken in relation to this consultation.

Post consultation

- 4.5 The details of the post consultation record will vary depending on the scale and complexity of the engagement process, as well as the amount of input received.
- 4.6 A review should be conducted on the input that was received from stakeholders and the broader engagement/consultation activities that were undertaken. The review should document (positive, neutral and negative) considerations for future engagement activities. It may be appropriate to consider updating or modifying future engagements to account for and incorporate any learnings.

Chapter five

Additional resources

5.1 Further information, including other guidance on best practice for consultation and consultation plans, may be found by viewing the below resources:

Australian Commonwealth resources

The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

- a. Best Practice Consultation (July 2023)
- b. Best Practice Consultation Guidance Note (July 2023)

APS Commission

- a. First Nations Partnership Playbook (12 June 2025)

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

- a. Leading Practice Handbook for sustainable Mining: Community Engagement and Development

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

- a. Consulting the community in Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) referrals and assessments.
- b. Interim Engaging with First Nations People and Communities on Assessments and Approvals under the EPBC Act (February 2023)

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

- a. Stakeholder Engagement Framework (May 2017)

Safework Australia

- a. Work Health and Safety Model Code of Practice: Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination (August 2023)

Australian Human Rights Commission

- a. Principles for effective consultation and Engagement from the Native Title Report (2009)
- h. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
 - a. Principles for engagement in projects concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (December 2020)
- i. National Health and Medical Research Council
 - a. Public Consultation Guidelines

Other Australian resources

Government of New South Wales

- a. Exploration Code of Practice: Community Consultation under the Mining Act 1992 and Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 (May 2023)

Government of South Australia

- a. Best Practice Stakeholder Engagement Circular (November 2023)

WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

- a. Western Australia (WA) Planning Commission
- b. Guide to Best Practice Planning Engagement in WA
- c. Engagement Strategy Example Template Outcomes Report Example Template

Queensland Productivity Commission

- a. Best Practice Consultation (March 2025)

Business Chamber of Queensland

- a. Strategies for effective employee consultation in today's workplace (June 2025)

International resources

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

- a. Safety Fundamentals: Safety Standards Communication and Consultation with interested Parties: GSG-6 (September 2017)
- b. Nuclear Energy Services No NG-G-5.1 Stakeholder Engagement in Nuclear Programs (December 2021)

United Kingdom

- a. Public Engagement in the Nuclear Sector: A UK and EU Perspective , National Nuclear Laboratory UK (October 2016)

Guidelines International Network (GIN) Public Working Group [Health focussed]

- a. GIN Public Toolkit – Chapter 1: How to conduct public and targeted consultation (January 2024)

Glossary

ANNPS Act 1 November 2025

Legislation that establishes the regulatory framework for the safety of naval nuclear power activities in Australia.

Regulations 3 October 2025

Regulations is the supporting legislation that provides practical details for implementing and enforcing safety.

Authorised person

An authorised person, in relation to a licence, means a person authorised to conduct a regulated activity under the licence (ANNPS Act, subsections 27(a) and (b)).

AUKUS

A trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which includes cooperation on nuclear-powered submarines and other defence and security technologies.

Designated zone

Jurisdictional areas in which ANNPSR regulates. This is important as the jurisdictional boundary displaces other regulators and certain state and territory legislation, as laid out in the Regulations.

