



NSW Police Force

Community Engagement Framework Condensed Report for Public Release

October 2016

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
2.	NSW Police force draft community engagement policy	3
3.	Understanding the context and scope of community engagement in law enforcement	5
3.1	Internal NSW Police workshop	6
3.2	Key community stakeholder focus groups	7
3.3	Online community survey results	9
4.	Conclusions and Recommendations	11
4.1	Guiding Principles	11
4.2	Recurring themes to be considered	12

1. INTRODUCTION

The New South Wales (NSW) Police Force (NSW Police) is one of the largest police organisations in the English speaking world, employing over 20,000 staff and serving a population of approximately seven million citizens. The Force plays a substantial role in crime prevention in NSW and community engagement is an integral part of this. NSW Police consider community engagement as a foundation for all local policing in NSW. When members of the community engage positively with NSW Police this results in more effective crime prevention and a safer community and quality of life for all. An overarching Community Engagement Policy has been developed to provide a more consistent approach to community engagement across the Force.

Community Engagement is a long term process through which NSW Police involve individuals or groups in identifying problems, and in shaping and implementing decisions and programs that affect them. Enabling community involvement in addressing community identified problems and police initiatives enhances trust in, and legitimacy of the police.

To assist in developing a Community Engagement Framework that is both relevant and meaningful for NSW Police staff and for all members of the NSW community, NSW Police undertook to work in consultation with key NSW communities, stakeholders and the broader community. This process facilitated co-design and active engagement as part of developing an overarching model to ensure that the Frameworks' implementation and activities that result at a local level are meaningful and therefore more likely to have an impact.

NSW Police believe that community engagement is a long-term process through which the involvement of police and individuals or groups identifies problems, shaping and implementing decisions and programs that will affect them. Community engagement is the foundation on which local policing should be built and the new community engagement policy means commands will be seeking to lift the level of engagement they currently have with their communities and make purposeful attempts to engage at the appropriate levels. This builds on a number of successful activities already undertaken by NSW Police including:

- ▶ **Community Awareness of Policing Program (CAPP):**

CAPP aims to develop a greater knowledge and understanding of modern policing and build confidence in NSW Police within communities. It is a tool to facilitate two-way communication between police and their communities.

- ▶ **Clean Slate Without Prejudice program:**

Clean Slate Without Prejudice has been running since 2008 and consists of a three times per week boxing and fitness program run through the gymnasium at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern for local Aboriginal youth. It

involves active participation of community leaders and police officers from Redfern LAC, and works closely with the Tribal Warriors Association who provide mentoring for troubled youth.

► **Kid's Fishing Workshops:**

Lake Illawarra LAC Kids Fishing Workshops have been used as a way of engaging the community and police in a positive environment. The workshops have been running since 2011 and teach children aged 8-14 about fishing safety, responsible fishing, fish habitats, rigging, baiting and casting techniques. The *Cops and Koori Kids fishing workshops* program is now a joint program run by Lake Illawarra LAC, Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Fisheries.

“ Community engagement is the foundation on which local policing should be built. ”

2. NSW POLICE FORCE DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

NSW Police make a commitment through the Community Engagement Policy to ensuring that:

- ▶ All commands have a detailed understanding of the demographics of the communities they serve.
- ▶ All commands facilitate, establish and strengthen ongoing dialogue with sections of the communities by regularly discussing, sharing information, listening to and acting on feedback from communities.
- ▶ All commands tailor engagement strategies based on understanding how different sections of the community feel most comfortable in interacting with the police.
- ▶ All commands provide ongoing feedback to communities about how their input has impacted on local policing.
- ▶ All commands identify and maximise opportunities to work in partnership with communities.
- ▶ All commands understand that engagement is not something to be done 'to' communities; they must participate in planning and choosing approaches.
- ▶ They will measure the effectiveness of community engagement activities.

The responsibility for operationalising the NSW Police Community Engagement Policy is shared across the command structure, from Senior Executive down through the staffing structures. It builds on the progression of community engagement work to date within the organisation and offers both processes and key component areas that can be used as standalone tools.

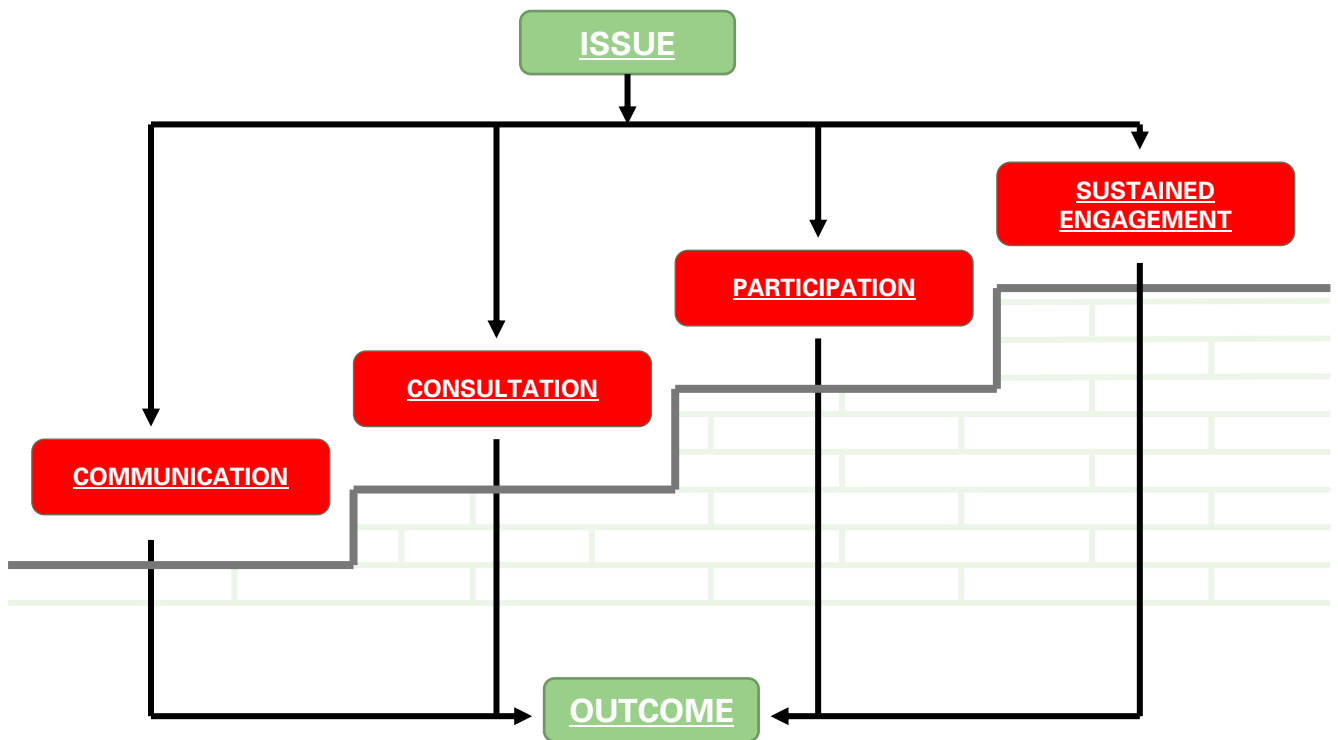
Commands will be seeking to lift the level of engagement they have with their communities and making purposeful attempts to engage at the appropriate level.

Central to the framework are four key pillars of engagement:

- ▶ Communication;
- ▶ Consultation;
- ▶ Participation; and
- ▶ Sustained Engagement.

These pillars set out levels of engagement that the NSW Police Force can adopt when interacting with the local community and addressing their needs. It provides a framework and guidance to assist in the identification of the level of engagement required for the specific issue or community of focus. The goal is to move forward towards sustained engagement where both the NSW Police Force and the community work in partnership in mutually agreed and respected.

Chart 1: Four pillars of engagement



“ Community engagement is the police out there in the community, talking to people, getting involved. ”

3. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT AND SCOPE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

NSW Police looked to current community engagement models used by comparative services such as law enforcement or emergency services. In particular the recent work undertaken by the West Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services in developing a new community engagement framework and the ANZPAA's Education and Training Guidelines for Community Engagement were considered as strong examples. While not a community engagement model, the long standing British model of community policing was also examined for its similarities in approaches. By identifying best practice examples and their commonalities, NSW Police were in the best position to build on their existing community engagement work.

The WA DFES developed a Community Engagement Framework to facilitate the expansion of approaches that foster community involvement and participation in achieving the goal of community safety. This framework was developed as a result of a national re-examination of emergency responses to major fire and flood emergencies from 2009 – 2012. For DFES the result was a complete rethink of its community engagement focus.

The main ways DFES changed their engagement methods were a move towards:

- ▶ Shared decision making;
- ▶ Two-way education and capacity building; and
- ▶ Building relationships and trust.

The DFES community engagement framework seeks to foster a more localised approach to its programs in order to embrace this more complex process, therefore enabling the community to become active participants in the process. This localised approach matches the existing community engagement approach of NSW Police. Having a deeper understanding of different community needs will determine the level of engagement, and what methods will be most successful in any given situation. Relationship building and trust are fundamental in this process.

The Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) Education and Training Guidelines for Community Engagement looks specifically at how community engagement is a core function of policing and an important aspect of all policing roles. The training guidelines look at the relevant theory and practical application police need to understand in order to improve their capability to effectively engage with communities.

The four practice domains it covers are:

- ▶ **Community diversity** – police to effectively understand the scope of social and cultural diversity within their communities.
- ▶ **Crime prevention/reduction** – focussing on the law enforcement aspects of community engagement and supporting policing in building community resilience against criminal activity.
- ▶ **Engagement** – methods used by policing to effectively engage and communicate with their communities.
- ▶ **Stakeholders** – police interacting with stakeholders and partners when undertaking community engagement activities.

While community policing is not community engagement, there are similar themes behind the principle that are complementary to the ideas underpinning the NSW Police draft community engagement framework and approach to community engagement. In summary these are the need for community buy-in, the need for police to have an understanding of local demographics, tailoring strategies for diverse sections of the community, and working in partnership with communities. With the ultimate aim to make the community safer, engagement with communities will increase individual community members' ability to participate and understand the context in which NSW Police operate. Similar to the principles of community policing, the community becomes a resource that can be instead of an adversary to be managed. consultation findings

3.1 Internal NSW Police workshop

An internal workshop was held with members of the senior command aiming to identify the definition and objective of police community engagement, as well as what is required internally by NSW Police to commit to genuine community engagement. The workshop took a broad view of community engagement, and is about all NSW Police interactions with the various communities in NSW, across the command hierarchy. The objective of community engagement was identified as working towards consistency and integrity across community engagement.

Barriers were identified as:

- ▶ The impact of individualised experiences with police;
- ▶ The current police approach to communicating and engaging with the public; and
- ▶ A lack of trust in police both from individuals and the collective.

The workshop nominated four key areas for internal consideration as follows:

1. Time considerations:

- The allocation of time as a consideration for task completion by police
- Allowance for time to develop capacity and programs.

2. Create meaning and benefit from good practice:

- Creation of a system that supports general duties officers to understand how good community engagement can assist them in their roles
- Allowance for internal feedback processes

3. Skills Development:

- Communications
- Stakeholder engagement/ability to network
- Community mapping

4. Creating a cultural shift:

- Building respect
- Improvement of the quality of instructions and expectations within the force
- Attitudinal change (described as 'leaving your egos at the door' by participants).

“ I know they've got a job to do but they can do that with respect. We have a job to do to, and we do it with respect, so you know. ”

3.2 Key community stakeholder focus groups

Six stakeholder focus groups were held with communities nominated as most relevant to existing community engagement work being undertaken by NSW Police. These distinct groups were: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Dubbo and Redfern), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), People with Disability and/or Mental Health issues, the LGBTIQ community and International Students. The six stakeholder groups were asked a series of questions in two components – how do NSW Police engage with you in the present, and how would you like them to engage with you into the future? Across the six groups there was remarkable consistency in response, and some community-specific issues raised.

The six stakeholder groups offered similar views of community engagement that included open-mindedness, being willing to learn from each other, being transparent and having positive relationships. Community engagement beyond formal methods were also raised regularly, with

all groups seeing engagement in a similar way to that of the police workshop – that it encompasses all dealings police have with community. Seven consistent themes arose:

- ▶ A current lack of any systemic best practice in community engagement across the LACs;
- ▶ A dependence on the attitude and level of engagement from senior management for a filter down effect in relation to community engagement activities;
- ▶ A lack of both communication and interpersonal skills within NSW Police;
- ▶ Distinct differences in how distinct communities or cohorts within communities' experience interaction with police;
- ▶ The need for mutual respect between NSW Police and the communities they serve;
- ▶ A desire to work formally in partnership with NSW Police; and
- ▶ A belief that current resourcing levels to support sustained and successful community engagement are low.

Two groups – International Students and People with Disability and/or Mental Health issues raised issues directly relevant to their communities. The International Student group was distinct in their positive attitude to NSW Police. This attitude was self-identified by the group of students from across Sydney metropolitan campuses as being due to living in a country away from their homes. While police were seen as generally very helpful and responsive, issues were raised around a lack of partnerships between universities and police, in particular around student safety. Difficulties in getting police to attend campus based activities or student council meetings was highlighted. There was strong support for more widely disseminated information about police to newly arrived students, either through pre-departure seminars offered by education providers in countries of origin or at orientation on campus.

Police were generally seen as not coping or not being equipped to cope with dealing with people with mental health issues, although there was acknowledgement that this is an area NSW Police are focussing on. However, the disability sector raised serious concerns with the way in which police approach dealing with people with disability. The following key issues were raised:

- ▶ Inability of police to communicate with people with disability often leading to situations escalating and getting out of hand;
- ▶ Inability of police to distinguish diversity within the disability community and the different ways people may communicate;
- ▶ Problems with intersection, for e.g. youth/ethnicity/disability/gender/mental health intersect in any way police are not skilled in nuanced approaches;

- ▶ Lack of any real interaction with the disability sector for expert assistance beyond some training, e.g. no formal advisory councils or networks; and
- ▶ Reluctance from police to engage formally, for example through Disability Justice Project.

Disability was described as the 'next big frontier' for NSW Police to operate on. The group view was that people with disability generally had concerns when having to deal with the police, fearing they would be misunderstood and end up in a serious situation. The Disability Justice Project was raised as an existing statewide program that NSW Police could immediately engage with. The aim of the Disability Justice Project is to build the capacity of Government and Non-Government agencies throughout NSW, to effectively assist people with cognitive disabilities at risk of, or in contact with the Justice System.

“ We know the police have a hard job but working with us, using our expertise, will make their jobs easier. ”

3.3 Online community survey results

In addition to the face to face consultations held with special interest groups, an online survey was conducted aimed at ensuring the wider NSW community had the opportunity to provide their feedback and share their perspectives on community engagement and the NSW Police Force.

The online survey ran from 12 September and 23 September 2016 and during that time was promoted widely through NSW Police social media platforms, and through those community organisations who had taken part in the focus groups. Almost 1,000 responses were collected for the five-page survey which was conducted in English. The majority of respondents were aged between 36-75 years, were born in Australia and spoke English at home. Eighteen per cent of people participating in the online survey identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Most had some history of contact with police and nominated this as positive. The majority wanted to engage with NSW Police and were comfortable doing so.

The online survey respondents firmly believe NSW Police should be engaging with communities, in an open, constructive way that involves open communication. The majority also believed police would both listen to them and seriously take community views into consideration when considering how to change their engagement methods. Respondents wanted a more visible police force with a high level of personal and communications skills, who are considered as an

integral part of the local community. Mutual respect and trust between the community and NSW Police was a consistent theme. One common minor theme throughout the online survey responses was the desire for police to work with children and young people, in school settings and through mentoring and other programs.

“ Three things I see in a good commander: Empathy, someone who has an understanding of their community. Someone who can separate from their power and authority in their community dealings. And cultural sensitivity and awareness.”

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The resilience of the NSW Police Community Engagement Policy will depend on the principles that underpin it, and the practical application of the Policy in terms of measurable success of its useability and outreach into communities.

4.1 Guiding Principles

The concept that cultural change is required in how the NSW Police engage with communities was agreed across all aspects of the consultation undertaken. Common themes emerged and are identified as the core, guiding principles of the NSW Police community engagement policy. These are:

Attitude: Respect, Equity, Integrity. Recognition among NSW Police of the benefits of engaging with community. A mutual recognition between police and community and the role of both in keeping NSW safe.

Knowledge: Awareness of communities and diversity, acknowledgement of distinctions across and within communities, understanding local needs and issues, seeking and utilising expertise from the community and its organisations through partnerships.

Consistency: Systemic good practice embedded across NSW Police, built in and transferrable skills, appropriate resourcing levels, using good and best practice.

Skills: Building the interpersonal and communications skills of NSW Police, investment in skills and knowledge development across and down the command structure.

Recommendations

- ▶ Develop a set of principles that underpin the community engagement policy that are based on the following areas – attitude, knowledge, consistency, and skills. Communicate these to the community.
- ▶ Commit to undertaking cultural awareness training for all levels of police staff in the NSW Police Force to coincide with the release of the community engagement framework, that demonstrates to the community (particularly diverse communities) that they are serious about a cultural change in the force with meaningful engagement with the community.

The Policy must exist as a living document that guides a new approach to active and genuine community engagement that can be both recognised by the community, and measured by both

police and the community in terms of success and accountability. The example of WA DFES is a highly relevant Australian example of a comparable service organisation re-evaluating its approach to community engagement and actively embedding community engagement at the heart of its service.

Measuring the resilience of the model against the core or guiding principles outlined below that arose from the public consultation process NSW Police undertook is a reliable methodology to implement to be able to gauge the success of their engagement processes.

Recommendations

- ▶ Develop a community engagement policy document like WA DFES as a public document to communicate NSW Police engagement approaches to the community.
- ▶ Pilot a series of engagement activities across the four pillars of engagement – Communication, Consultation, Participation, and Sustained Engagement and make progress and findings available to the public to demonstrate commitment to new ways of engaging.
- ▶ Develop key performance indicators or a set of measurable outcomes that hold the NSW Police accountable to new ways of engaging with communities and that demonstrates to the community their views and input have been considered.
- ▶ Adapt the community engagement policy as and when community needs and priorities change. See it as a living document that is flexible, adaptable and meaningful to both the NSW Police and the community.

4.2 Recurring themes to be considered

The following points were recurring across the consultation components:

Systemic capacity: that NSW Police must introduce a systemic approach to community engagement, to avoid a continuation of the geographic lottery. Good community engagement must be based on best practice and available tools need to be expanded across NSW, and able to be usable to be adapted in a localised manner according to local community needs.

Recommendations:

- ▶ Develop a systemic approach to community engagement that comes from the top down.
- ▶ Commit to developing best practice models of community engagement, developed in partnership with the communities themselves (based on successfully run

community engagement programs and/or developed post findings from pilot projects).

- ▶ Develop specific community engagement approaches based on local needs, rather than a one-size fits all approach.

Consultation

Genuine, two-way consultation was regarded as necessary in good community engagement. Current consultative practices are seen as having fallen into a pattern of 'information gathering' for police.

Recommendations:

- ▶ Approach consultation in a more collaborative way, co-designing approaches with the community.
- ▶ Demonstrate to the community that engagement is meaningful through designing engagement approaches with a two-way information exchange and that demonstrates the community has been listened to and their needs been taken into consideration.

Engagement

There is an expectation that NSW Police engagement will be proactive, flexible and able to adapt according to local community or cohort needs.

Recommendations:

- ▶ Underpin all engagement activities with strong interpersonal and communication skills. This includes speaking to all community members with respect and on a personal, more human level.
- ▶ Ensure engagement is flexible and adaptable in order to respond to varying local community needs.

Joint Decision Making

Allowing community into problem identification and solutions using skills and expertise of community leadership and sectors to address problem areas is viewed as beneficial to both parties. Successful engagement and joint decision making will ultimately make policing easier.

Recommendations:

- ▶ Involve community organisations and leaders in the engagement process, particularly when looking at creating solutions to current community problems.

- ▶ Commit to developing community forums and structures for meaningful information exchange that supports mutual benefit and joint decision-making where possible. This creates opportunities for empowerment, which ultimately leads to positive behaviour change.



Level 1, 93 Norton Street

Leichhardt, NSW 2040

Tel: +61 2 8585 1313

Fax: +61 2 8585 1325