

7 July 2020

Minister Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs

DELIVERED BY EMAIL: alexander.clark@dfat.gov.au

Dear Minister Payne

Calling for Australian Government support for a United Nations declaration for an International Year of Participation - 2022

As we take those first cautious steps on the roadmap to ease restrictions, a road that will take us to the next-normal – a life post COVID-19, it is clear that now, more than ever, we need to increase public participation (engagement), to improve social and economic outcomes for all Australians, including those who are ‘left behind’.

IAP2 Australasia, the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, believes that engagement (public participation), when done well, improves social, environmental and economic outcomes and increases trust in the democratic process.

IAP2 Australasia, representing almost 10,000 members, is advocating for a Member State to take forward a resolution at the 2020 General Assembly to have 2022 declared the International Year of Participation, which could promote action on three fronts:

1. Build awareness and focus attention on an enabling environment for engagement and public participation (such as legislation, institutional mandates, education, etc.);
2. Build capacity for engagement, benefitting from proven methods; and
3. Mobilise engagement and public participation to support the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. To contribute to the health and wellbeing of all and build peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.

What we are asking

IAP2 Australasia is requesting the support of both the Australian and New Zealand governments to take forward the required process, this year, for the **Draft Resolution for an International Year of Participation - 2022** (attached).

Evidence for increased engagement (public participation) includes:

- Better functioning cities and towns could deliver a \$29B increase in GDP in the long term.
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- Community opposition has contributed to the delay, cancellation or mothballing of more than \$20B of infrastructure projects in the last decade.
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- 80% of Australians indicate it is important that government considers the views of the community when planning of investing in major infrastructure
Source: The Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019
- 82% of businesses said “communicating and engaging with stakeholders openly was seen as the most critical factor for building trust”
Source: Creating value and balancing stakeholder needs (KPMG and AICD survey – 2019)
- License to operate is the No. 1 ranked risk – 2 years in a row.
Source: Top 10 Business Risks and Opportunities – 2020 (EY)

If you have any further questions, please do feel free to contact me directly at the contact details provided below.

Yours sincerely

Marion Short

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IAP2 is the international leader in public participation, a global member organisation with an affiliate structure. Other IAP2 affiliates will also be seeking the support from their respective governments for the United Nations to declare 2022 as the International Year of Participation.

About IAP2 Australasia

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a global member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement. The organisation incorporates individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest throughout the world.

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed tools that are widely used and acknowledged. These are the *Core Values for Public Participation* for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes; the *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum* which assists with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program; and, the *Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement* which is recognised as the international standard for public participation practice.

IAP2 Australasia is the largest IAP2 affiliate in the world and has almost **10,000 members**.

Policy position

As the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, IAP2 Australasia, believes that engagement, when done well, improves social, environmental and economic outcomes and increases trust in the democratic process.

We advocate for all communities to be authentically engaged in decisions that affect them through education and increasing awareness of authentic engagement and all its benefits, in alignment with the IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement.

Advocacy position

IAP2 Australasia advocates:

1. That communities are authentically engaged in decisions that affect them;
2. Authentic engagement recognises the six principles included in the UN Human Rights Council Guidelines on the effective implementation on the right to participate in public affairs;
 - Enabling environment
 - Safety
 - Equality
 - Empowerment
 - Openness
 - Remedies
3. for engagement to defined in legislation and/or policy; and
4. That education and awareness strategies are implemented so that communities increase their levels of participation, recognising it both as a right and a duty.