

Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Online Community Roundtable

1 September 2025, 5.30pm – 7.00pm

Summary Document

The Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee held several online community roundtables to talk to people about how consultation practices can be improved.

These roundtables were informal meetings of the Committee and therefore, not formally transcribed by Hansard. In lieu of Hansard transcripts, the Committee has summarised its discussions during the roundtable held on 1 September 2025 from 5.30pm – 7.00pm.

Attendees

This roundtable was attended by seven members of the public and eight Members of the Committee.

Discussion prompts

Participants in the roundtable were invited to respond to four discussion prompts. Their responses are summarised below.

Discussion Prompt 1 – What prevents people from participating in consultation processes?

Issues raised	What the Committee heard
A belief that consultations are a ‘tick-box’ exercise.	<p>This belief was in part, due to a lack of trust in governments and/or politicians:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a view that consultations are not genuine, and the outcome has already been decided prior to the consultation process.• Some are sceptical of the motivation behind consultations.• There is some uncertainty as to what issues are actually up for discussion in consultations.

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	<p>This belief was in part, a result of poor experiences with consultations in the past:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A lack of feedback from previous consultations made stakeholders feel it was a waste of their time. It also contributed to a perception that their feedback does not matter.• Some stakeholders found previous consultations difficult and exhausting. This made them reluctant to engage in future consultations.• Questions as to whether consultations are worth the time commitment.
Stakeholders are not aware of current consultations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders don't know where to look to find out about future consultation opportunities.• There is a lack of communication about upcoming consultations.• Advertisements are generally limited to English, which excludes people who experience language barriers.• Advertisements may not be made in a form of media stakeholders consume. For example, a younger demographic may not read local papers whereas an older demographic may not use social media.
The timing or location of consultations exclude people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholders have different technological literacy and access. Some stakeholders noted that online consultations can be challenging or exclude them entirely.• Consultation opportunities can be released on school holidays or long weekends, when people are not turning their minds to consultations.
A view that consultation material is a PR exercise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some considered that artist impressions can be misleading and do not accurately reflect the proposed project. This may foster a false understanding of what is proposed and deter people from participating in consultations.• Stakeholders want clear and reliable information about upcoming consultations.• Stakeholders were critical of letterbox drops that only contained a QR code, without contextual information on the flyer.

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Discussion prompt 2 – How can governments and non-government entities improve community awareness of consultations?

Issues raised	What the Committee heard
Better advertisement needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Questions as to whether advertisements in local papers are effective, due to declining readership.
Provide people with meaningful information about the consultation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consultation materials that explicitly explained both the pros and cons of the proposal are needed.If consultation materials were more honest, more people would want to engage.Some were critical of PR focused consultation materials.
Materials should be in plain language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consultation materials use language that is confusing, bureaucratic, complicated and technical.Some felt that this kind of language discouraged and intimidated people from participating in consultations, as they are made to feel not ‘smart’ enough to contribute.
Two-sided discussions should be encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Some were critical of closed surveys that prompt pre-determined answers.There should be more open discussions in larger groups, as it’s a good opportunity to listen to community views.Some consultations use a ‘divide and conquer strategy’ to avoid meeting with the community in large groups.

Discussion prompt 3 – Do you know how your input into a consultation factored into final decision making?

Issues raised	What the Committee heard
More transparency is needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consultations could be an opaque process.Some had experience of large volumes of objections during consultations, but nothing was

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	<p>ever published to acknowledge these objections or identify how they were considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was not clear whether their submission was considered, and by who. • There were mixed views on consultation reports. Some considered they were too brief and high level. Others considered they captured community input well. • There was a disconnect between the acknowledged community views that were received during consultations and the ultimate decision made. • There was criticism of confidentiality requirements imposed on community reference groups, which impeded their role.
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Discussion prompt 4 – How could consultations be improved?

Issues raised	What the Committee heard
Identifying and reaching relevant stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those running a consultation should understand who in the community is going to be impacted by the proposal. • Direct efforts should be made to reach relevant stakeholders by advertising in a way that's likely to reach them. For example, if its going impact an elderly demographic, consultation should not be advertised on social media or rely on QR codes. • Those running consultations should better utilise existing community and cultural groups, or community spaces, to access hard to reach stakeholders.
More opportunities for open input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those running consultations should aim to give people opportunities for open input. • Stakeholders were critical of consultations that were overly restrictive and only asked closed questions.
Issues raised	What the Committee heard

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Providing more information to clarify what is being proposed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some felt information was being hidden from them during consultations. They considered this lack of transparency bred mistrust.• More information to participants would improve trust in consultations.• Having to pursue FOI requests to get more information about a proposal as a failure in consultation and transparency.• Advocated for honest information that wasn't trying to 'sell' a proposal.
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