

Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA)
& Waste Education Strategy Integration Group (WESIG)

PRO-ACTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY FOR IRR IN WA

PART 1 – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) – through the Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) and the Waste Education Strategy Integration Group (WESIG) – sought to develop a Public Education & Communication Strategy for Integrated Resource Recovery in Western Australia. Nolan-ITU, with Mr Les Robinson, was engaged to assist the strategy development process.

According to the initial brief developed by WESIG, the nominated aim of the strategy was *instilling an understanding and support within the community of waste management principles including Integrated Resource Recovery (IRR)*.

A key requirement of the strategy development process was to undertake a comprehensive analysis of international and Australian best practices in terms of public engagement in waste management decision-making processes. That analysis has revealed that best practices focus on government agencies genuinely engaging and collaborating with the public in IRR decision-making, rather than trying to ‘educate’ or ‘communicate’ about concepts and technologies to residents and community-based stakeholders. Indeed, it has become clear that attempts to purely ‘sell’ or ‘influence’ the public about IRR in a one-way fashion could actually increase the probability of IRR project failure.

Fundamentally, a greater level of community understanding of and support for IRR, including resource recovery systems and technology, can only be achieved by creating the opportunity for members of the public to play an integral and valued role in the IRR decision-making process from initial planning through to system implementation.

Therefore, what is put forward here is the more appropriately named *Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in WA*.

The *Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR* seeks to:

- ensure a high level of public participation in IRR processes;
- conform to State Government policy and international best practices;
- promote greater inter-agency co-ordination; and
- promote greater consistency in agency philosophy and approach.

In doing so, the *Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR* aims to improve resource recovery outcomes in Western Australia by facilitating:

- increased legitimacy for IRR decision-making;
- increased technical competence in IRR decision-making; and
- reduced risks associated with IRR.

The *Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR* is presented in three parts:

Part 1

The Strategic Framework

A summary of the strategy rationale, the strategy context, the strategic opportunity, vision, goals, implementation path and evaluation for public participation in IRR in Western Australia;

Part 2

The Strategic Rationale:

Why Should Communities Participate in Waste Management Decisions?

A full detailed assessment of international best practices in public involvement in waste management aspects, including analysis of different communication means and methods.

Part 3

Principles for Public Participation in IRR Processes in Western Australia

The 'shared rules of the road', including roles and responsibilities, for government agencies involved in public participation aspects of IRR decision-making.

2 STRATEGY RATIONALE

2.1 The Public's Role: A Challenge for Western Australian IRR

Western Australian government agencies are now facing complex questions about the design of future waste management systems. In particular:

The IRR design question

What is the optimum design of an IRR system for any particular region? That is, what is the preferred mix of waste prevention initiatives, recycling and green waste systems, educational programs, and secondary resource recovery capabilities to match the social, environmental and economic needs and constraints of a given region?

The Resource Recovery system / technology question

Within a local or Regional IRR strategy, what is the appropriate Resource Recovery system, technology or mix of technologies and where should it or they be sited?

While the use of residual waste treatment technologies is likely to deliver overall environmental outcomes that are preferable to landfill disposal of rubbish, it is important to note that Resource Recovery technologies are costly industrial facilities, often seen as novel in design and with a wide range of potential impacts. They may involve significant financial and/or contractual risks for government agencies. They can have heavy vehicle traffic impacts. They may involve difficult-to-dispose residues. They may require significant changes to established recycling and green waste systems. They may also require original regulatory and monitoring frameworks.

Decisions about such facilities are therefore amongst the most complex and potentially contentious that governments involved in waste management, particularly local Councils, can undertake.

Western Australia is not alone in having a history of at times bitter conflict over the siting of waste management facilities. This is a global trend in developed countries where publics are increasingly alerted to environmental risks and intolerant of remote and apparently unaccountable decisions which affect their interests.

As a result of these conflicts, a range of responsive and trust-building community participation processes have replaced the traditional 'DAD' strategy (Decide, Announce, Defend). This has been fundamentally recognised by the Western Australian State Government, which has recently affirmed its commitment to increasing participation in all aspects of government policy.¹

¹ Department of Premier and Cabinet, Citizens and Civics Unit, 2002

2.2 International Best Practice

There is an extensive peer-reviewed literature that evaluates community education and involvement in the siting and choice of technologies for new waste facilities. This literature focuses particularly on the experiences of government agencies in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom over the past decade.

After reviewing these studies, and considering the situation in Western Australia, the following comments are made.

a) Marketing change may be a high risk activity

There is strong support for the proposition that agencies which rely on marketing or public relations approaches to shape public attitudes to new technologies run the risk of losing their reputation as *honest brokers* between technology proponents and the public good.

The experience in many siting processes shows that once public trust in the agency is lost, social conflict tends to become intractable, and the siting process may face intense, protracted community opposition. This frequently leads to the failure of siting processes after considerable expenditure of time and public money.

b) Educational or information-centred approaches alone may be inadequate

'Educational' approaches that rely on assumptions about the ignorance of the public and the primacy of managerial knowledge tend to be ill-suited to technology choice and siting processes because:

- simple information does generally not exist which can satisfy basic public questions such as 'What will the impact be?', 'Is it safe'?
- the public have valuable kinds of knowledge which needs to be legitimised and injected into the deliberations on technology choice and siting;
- the public tend to be distrustful of scientific and managerial data, which they know is subject to distortion and manipulation;
- the credibility of agencies is just as important as their expertise, and the one-way communication of simplistic, unsatisfactory information tends to damage agency credibility when there is public conflict over the facts; and
- communicating *information* is not ultimately as important as communicating *credibility*, and the best way to do this is through shared decision-making with the public.

c) Participative approaches often result in better processes, and better risk management for agencies

The weaknesses in traditional consultative techniques have come to be widely recognised as authorities throughout the developed world faced intense, costly and frequently successful public campaigns, particularly against native forest logging, waste facility siting and the nuclear industry.

This has led to an increased interest in extending public consultation from relatively passive consultative processes, towards 'deliberative' processes which involve the public and stakeholders in two-way discussions and decision-making from an early stage.

There is now strong evidence from many jurisdictions that well run participatory techniques can be effective in introducing public values into decision-making processes, in reducing conflict between stakeholders, in building trust in government agencies. By allowing experts views to be challenged and tested, open public participation processes can also result in technically competent results.

d) Successful public participation processes

Successful public participation in technology choice and siting processes have tended to include the following elements:

- communications included a mix of educational, consultative and participative approaches in an integrated program that provided opportunities for the whole of the affected community;
- there were forums for two-way discussions between representative members of the affected public, community activists, the proponents and technical experts, preferably with a degree of shared decision-making (e.g. consensus-based stakeholder forums);
- the process responded to the public's requests for new information, including the conduct of additional research;
- the forums were independently chaired, were responsive to the needs of participants, involved a degree of shared control over the agenda, and built good interpersonal relationships;
- there was a generous allocation of time for the community engagement process;
- there was early public involvement, well before a final decision was to be made;
- the agency was not the proponent of a particular technology or site, or if the agency was the proponent, then the process was seen to be independent of the agency; and
- the agency was genuinely committed to community participation.

2.3 Spectrum of Public Engagement Approaches

Public engagement covers a spectrum of possible approaches, with associated capabilities. It is often presented as a 'ladder':

EMPOWER				
↑				
PARTNER	↑	↑	↑	↑
↑				
INVOLVE	Increased capacity for information processing and learning	Increased capacity to elicit values	Increased capacity for problem solving	Increased capacity for resolving conflict
↑				
CONSULT				
↑				
INFORM				
↑				
INFLUENCE				

Table 1: Public engagement ladder

Note that, in practice, most public engagement programs consist of an *integrated mix* of approaches. For instance, the waste strategic consultation processes in UK counties such as Hampshire and Cheshire involved distribution of information materials to the community ('Inform'), consultative surveys with the broad community ('Consult') and community workshops ('Involve').

Another useful way of illustrating the different engagement methods is to compare the *inherent risk* in the situation with the *complexity of information* that needs to be understood by the participants for informed decision-making to occur. This allows us to map some of the wide variety of engagement processes that are currently in use. See Figure 1.

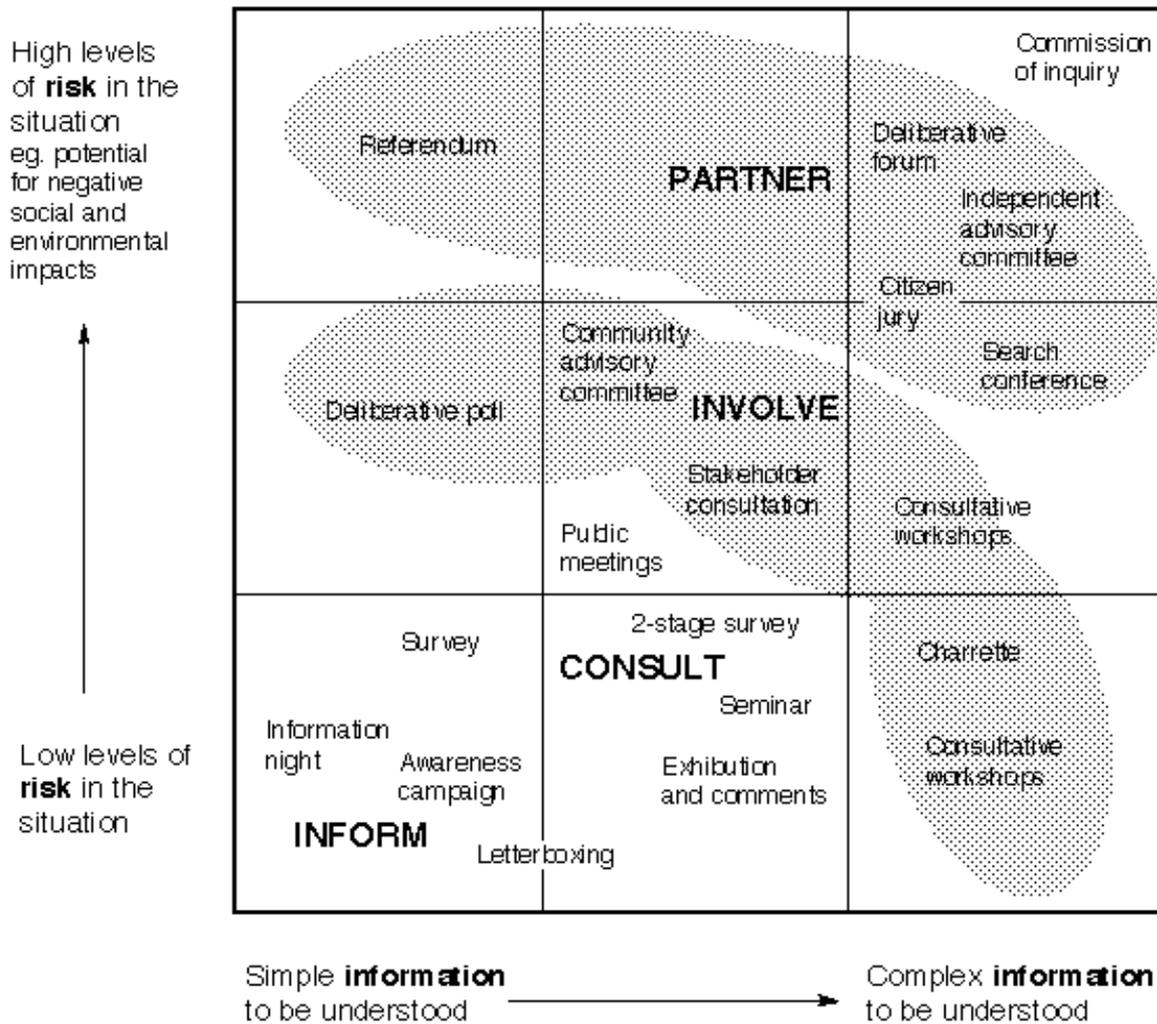


Figure 1: Public Participation Matrix. © Les Robinson 2002

2.4 Limitations of 'Influence' Techniques

There is a concern amongst decision-makers that the public are not well equipped to understand the reasons for a shift to Resource Recovery technologies, nor to comprehend the consequences of the different technologies available. There is a fear that public ignorance may lead to unreasoned conflict, and that better understanding is essential.

Therefore, authorities have expressed an interest in *community education*, *public relations* and *social marketing* approaches to fulfilling this educational need. The following definitions should be borne in mind in this discussion.

- *Community education* seeks to answer the public's need for information.
- *Public relations* seeks to influence the public's attitudes towards a brand or product.
- *Social marketing* seeks to promote socially beneficial behaviours.

The literature suggests a number of reasons to be wary of these *one-way* communication approaches.

a) The public's concerns are not the same as waste managers'

While waste managers tend to be concerned with efficient and sustainable systems, the public is primarily concerned with potential health and amenity risks and the alternatives, with potential unfairness in the distribution of costs and benefits of the new technology, and with the immediate day-to-day convenience of systems.

Further, waste managers talk in a highly codified, jargon-laden, assumption-rich language which reflects their own professional and technical concerns. This language may require considerable interpretation before it can be meaningful to lay people.

These issues suggest that the kind of information which managers think is important may not be the kind the public is liable to find relevant or meaningful.

b) Managers may lack appropriate information

The process of establishing a new waste system is replete with uncertainties and unknowns. Even if and when the technical data can be agreed, managers are unlikely to be able to answer the public's most salient questions, like 'What is the risk?', 'What is the impact on my life and lifestyle?', 'How could this affect my family's health?'

It is possible that the information may simply not exist which can form the basis of a meaningful education campaign. It is also possible that purely information-based campaigns may raise concerns which managers have no way of answering. Educational programs, based on simplified, incomplete and unsatisfying information, may work to damage the credibility of authorities, leading to potentially unsolvable conflicts. Therefore interactive processes may be required which create and shape new information that responds sensitively to public concerns.

c) An agency's credibility is as important as it's expertise

The choices required for a new waste system are unlikely to be simple matters of balancing logic or data. They require *judgements* on incomplete information, informed by local *values* and concerns: hence they are inherently moral endeavours, which are as much about policy as facts.

Significantly, there is strong evidence that the *credibility* or *trustworthiness* of authorities is central to the resolution of public concerns over waste management facilities.

The credibility of authorities is based on a perception that those authorities share desired *values* such as honesty, openness, lack of bias, fairness and overriding concern for the community's well-being.

The effect is that new technologies introduced by trustworthy institutions are perceived to be less risky and more beneficial than those introduced by untrustworthy institutions. This effect is strongly supported by empirical research.

Honesty is essential in building trust in relationships. Hence, hidden agendas or vested interests may damage credibility. Attempts to deceive or manipulate the public also destroy credibility.

These conclusions suggest that the use of public relations 'spin' to manipulate public attitudes or gloss over the potential risks of proposed waste facilities runs the risk of damaging an institution's credibility and exacerbating public conflict.

d) The public have their own legitimate forms of knowledge

Far from being 'ignorant', the public are likely to be rich in relevant knowledge, experiences and values which managers need to make sound decisions. Several studies have gone further, questioning the utility of value-free technical knowledge, and point to the fact that many conflicts are between different kinds of knowledge.

A number of researchers also point out that one-way communication processes which do not legitimise and explore the public's store of knowledge may reduce the *competency* of decision-making by denying managers valuable forms of information.

2.5 Four Reasons for Participative Approaches

On the basis of the literature review, there appear to be at least four compelling reasons for waste management authorities to involve their publics in more *participative* kinds of decision-making.

These are State Government policy, government legitimacy, managerial competence and risk management.

a) State Government policy

In Western Australia, increased community involvement in decision-making is strongly promoted at State Government level. The Gallop Government has established a Citizenship and Civics Unit in the Premier's Department to drive this change. The Premier recently launched *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide*². This move accords with emerging practices in government throughout the developed world.

Additionally, the Waste Management Board of Western Australia has recently commenced its operations. While its ultimate role and influence are still to be determined, its very creation signals the Government's commitment to improved performance and outcomes in waste management activities.

b) Legitimacy of government

There is strong support for the contention that the *credibility* of government agencies is the single most important factor in the successful communication and resolution of technology siting issues. This credibility of agencies is closely linked to perceptions of fairness, lack of bias and consistent pursuit of public interest in the decision-making process.

It follows that an organisation should not be both a proponent and a trusted player in a technology siting issue. Where a government body is a proponent, care should be taken to ensure to that the decision-making process itself is independent of that body.

The literature supports the contention that the *perceived* legitimacy, credibility and neutrality of government are best assured by direct involvement of members of public in *shaping* and *deliberating* in decision-making processes that affect their interests.

'Credibility must be grounded in sharing power with the public. Nothing undermines it more quickly than a manipulative approach.' (Rowan 1996)

c) Technical competence

A number of studies have suggested that deliberative decision-making processes result in better technical decisions.

'The public are not information-poor: they can capitalise upon a range of cultural and experiential resources.' (Petts 1997, p378)

² The guide can be downloaded from <http://www.ccu.dpc.wa.gov.au>

'A decision arrived at through inclusive communicative democratic procedures is likely to produce the wisest decision, in that it grasps the consequences and has considered alternatives.' (Hunold and Young 1998, p87)

'Participation and deliberation are not only a matter of political expediency but also promote analytical robustness.' (Petts 2000, p830)

Importantly, the studies do not support the frequently expressed fears of managers that the public are not competent to comprehend complex data or balance risks:

'Contrary to expert fears, it is evident that when scientific uncertainty or lack of expertise is openly acknowledged, and when management mechanisms to deal with the situation are explained, demands for zero-risk options are not forthcoming from the majority, and experts are not rebuked. Members of the public who have an opportunity to address issues in an informed manner are willing and able to balance risk and benefits.' (Petts 1997, p 378)

d) Risk management

There is evidence that public participation provides a degree of assurance against two significant risks faced by waste managers: political risks and technical risks.

Public *outrage* is the result of technology and siting decisions which are perceived to be uncontrolled, unfamiliar, involuntary, non-beneficial, or unfairly distributed (Rowan 1996).

Once public outrage commences it can be difficult to contain, with the media playing spoiling role, enhancing and sustaining the perceptions of conflict and unfairness (Sandman et al 1993, Seigrist and Cvetkovich 2000).

The literature consistently asserts the importance of participatory processes in minimising conflict.

'For the most part, siting processes do not fail because of inadequate environmental or technical considerations, but because of the adversarial decision-making strategies employed by the proponents.' (Kuhn and Ballard 1998)

A number of studies have asserted the value of community involvement in minimising the technical risks for decision-makers by allowing the proponent's technical assertions to be challenged and tested.

'There is evidence in the information shaping in the Hampshire process that members of the public can act as quality assurers in the risk management process.' (Petts 1997)

'Well-conducted public participation, stakeholder consultation and deliberation procedures can enhance the policy process and improve the robustness of strategies dealing with high-stakes investment and risk management challenges.' (O'Connor, M., and S. van den Hove 2001)



Moreover, official risk management standards ³ require appropriate communication and consultation activity to take place as part of the overall risk management process. The standards documentation is strongly advocates two-way communication approaches:

‘Communication and consultation involve a two-way dialogue between stakeholders with efforts focused on consultation rather than a one way flow of information from the decision maker to other stakeholders.’ (AS/NZA 4360:1999 Risk Management)

³ AS/NZS 4360:1999 Risk Management and Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand guidelines for environmental risk management.

3 STRATEGY CONTEXT

As identified during the project, and confirmed at a WESIG strategy workshop, several factors currently influence the public aspects of IRR in Western Australia.

3.1 Rate of IRR Development & Stakeholder Implications

The rate of development of IRR in Western Australia is comparatively more rapid than in any other State. Several Resource Recovery projects have taken or are taking place in metropolitan Perth. This is likely to deliver a waste management situation that is environmentally preferable to landfill disposal.

The primary focus of IRR development in Western Australia has been of a technical and financial nature. As a rule, social aspects and the role of the community in IRR development have generally not featured as high on the agenda for all projects. This reflects the nature and cost of Resource Recovery technologies themselves, time imperatives and the training and backgrounds of project managers. What appears to have resulted reflects the international experience: a degree of apprehension and conflict about IRR in some quarters of the community, as individuals and groups grapple to understand the need for and performance of different Resource Recovery technologies. This apprehension has, in turn, been exacerbated by waste management media controversies that are not directly associated with IRR.

It should also be strongly borne in mind that IRR development is at different stages in different parts of metropolitan Perth. While some organisations are undertaking their initial strategic planning for IRR development, others have commissioned and implemented Resource Recovery technologies. Each stage in the IRR 'continuum' – ranging from the development of a local or Regional IRR plan to the evaluation of Resource Recovery options to the implementation of Resource Recovery technology to the full operation of an IRR system in a community – has different characteristics in terms of public engagement.

3.2 Broader Community Attitudes

IRR are relatively new concepts in the Australian context. As a result, the body of work aimed at understanding community attitudes to them – particularly Resource Recovery technologies – is limited. It is even more limited in the Western Australian context; the project did not have access to some Regional research that has been undertaken. Moreover, media reportage is not particularly helpful in this regard as it generally seeks to only represent the dynamics and players in a particular IRR situation, rather than overall public opinion.

Having said that, the following insights can be drawn from the existing body of work (which includes quantitative research performed for the Hunter and Southern Sydney Waste Boards in NSW, the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, and the City of Stirling, and qualitative work performed for WALGA's Decision Support System project and the City of Stirling), as well as the combined overall experience of the consultants:

- A majority of the public appear to support the idea of environmentally sound alternatives to the continued landfill disposal of rubbish;
- While the public has reasonable knowledge about the day-to-day operation of waste management as it affects them, general public awareness and knowledge of strategy-level IRR concepts (such as the importance of green and residual waste) and their technical application is low;
- Accordingly, there is no clear public preference in terms of Resource Recovery technology types or product outputs;
- General public interest in IRR only strongly manifests itself in situations where tangible technologies are being proposed for tangible sites; and
- Once given an overall understanding of IRR, the general public's primary area of concern in considering Resource Recovery technologies is their environmental (as opposed to technical, financial and/or social) performance.

3.3 Strategy User & Audience Expectations

IRR has many stakeholders in Western Australia, including different levels of government agencies, community/advocacy groups, the general public, directly affected residents, the media, and technology proponents.

The primary focus of the strategy development process was to gauge the needs and expectations of potential strategy users (decision-makers in local, Regional and State Governments) and potential strategy target audiences (community/advocacy groups, the general public and directly affected residents).

To that end, consultation was undertaken with a cross-section of potential strategy users and strategy target audiences. The directly consulted organisations were the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, Town of Kwinana, City of Stirling, City of Gosnells, the Mirrabooka Action Group, Contaminated Sites Alliance and Swerve the SWERF. There was also some preliminary input by officials of the newly created Waste Management Board. The Southern Metropolitan Regional Council participated in the deliberations of WESIG. Representatives of Mindarie and Western Regional Councils attended a consultative meeting of the project.

The following themes emerged from the consultation process:

- When IRR in Western Australia is viewed systemically, there is general consensus that 'we could have done it better or we could be doing it better' in terms of the public aspect of IRR projects;
- There is general consensus that an overall framework is needed to guide decision-makers in undertaking the public aspects of IRR projects in Western Australia;

- There is very strong concern among government stakeholders about a current lack of definition of roles and responsibilities for public interaction on IRR and the potential for duplication and contradictory messages;
- Among government stakeholders, there is general consensus that more training and resources are necessary for the effective conduct of the public aspect of IRR projects; and
- There is a strong consensus among community/advocacy groups that the public has something to offer and a significant role to play in IRR decision-making.

3.4 International Best Practice

As pointed out in Section 2 above and fully outlined in Part 2 of the Strategy, it is clearly emerging on an international basis that successful waste management policy and infrastructure projects put a significant emphasis on ensuring that their public aspects are strongly addressed. Responding to both the inherent risk and complexity of IRR type projects, decision-making bodies are increasingly recognising and claiming the benefits of initiatives that seek to genuinely engage the community.

Additionally, and as part of the global move to sustainable development, an emerging emphasis in international waste management is being put on the holistic assessment of strategies and technologies from environmental, economic and social perspectives. Using tools similar to WALGA's software-based Decision Support System, non-government stakeholders and members of the public are being increasingly brought to the table to substantively contribute to the formulation and assessment of future strategies.

3.5 Government Policy

As pointed in Section 2 above, the Western Australian State Government is putting a strong emphasis on the need for and value of public participation in decision-making processes. It is probable that in future there will be a stronger scrutiny of agency performance in this regard.

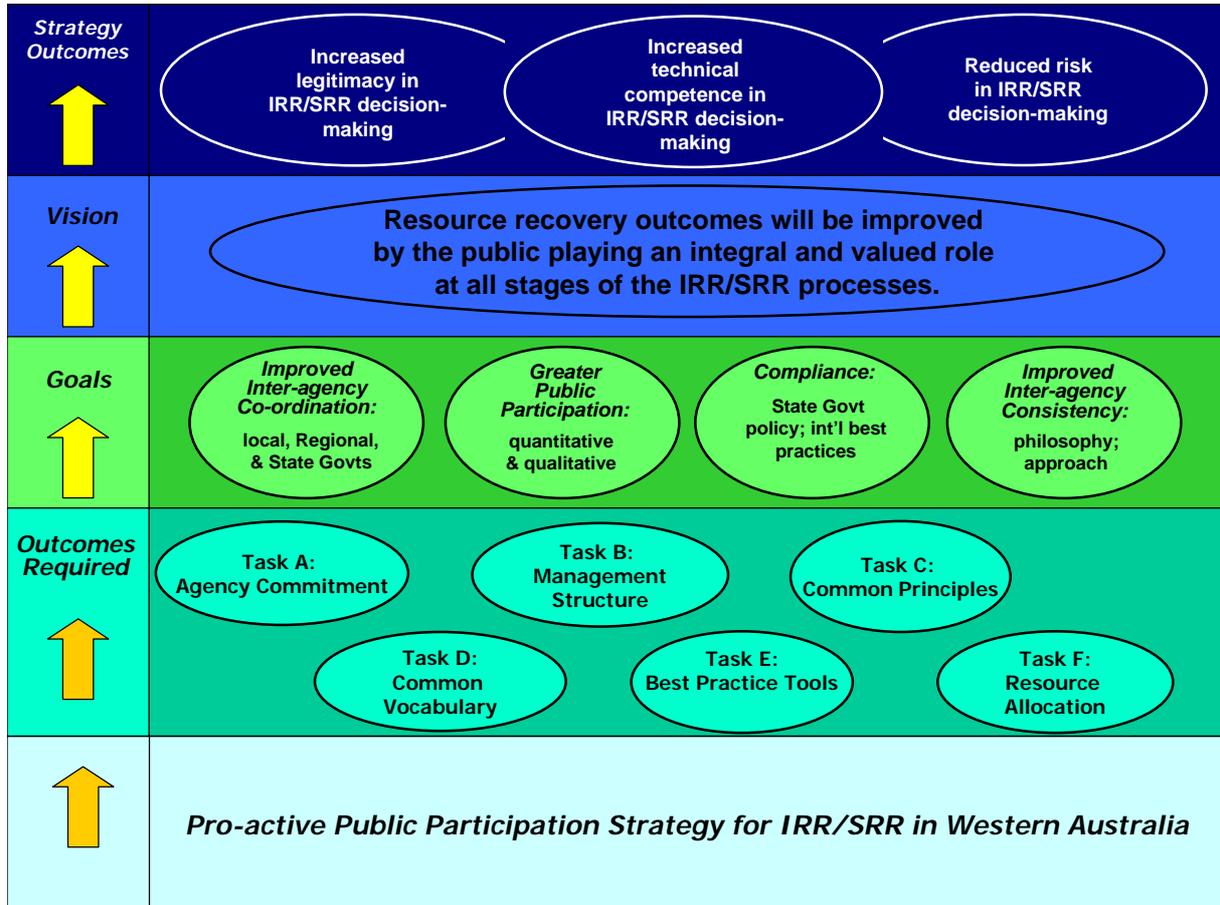
4 STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

A significant strategic opportunity for IRR decision-makers emerges from the above context of factors. What is clearly needed is an approach that:

- Addresses apprehension held in some stakeholder quarters as a consequence of the rate of IRR development;
- Deals realistically with the broader public’s general and understandable ‘lack of engagement’ on the strategic concepts of IRR;
- Meets the needs and expectations of primary strategy users and primary strategy target audiences;
- Recognises and then adapts international best practice to suit Western Australian circumstances; and
- Conforms to the Western Australian State Government’s policy emphasis on public participation in decision-making.



5 STRATEGIC VISION & GOALS



6 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To achieve the vision and goals of the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR, several implementation tasks are required. They are listed below in sequence order below and then addressed in detail.

Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR: Implementation Plan

Task A: All relevant decision-makers to recognise and commit to the benefits of public participation in IRR processes.

Task B: Appropriate management structures to be created to promote effective public participation in IRR processes.

Task C: All relevant decision-makers to adopt and adhere to common principles for the conduct of public participation in IRR processes.

Task E: All relevant decision-makers to adopt a common lexicon in terms of IRR terminology and concepts.

Task F: Government practitioners of public participation in IRR processes to select and use ‘best practice’ tools.

Task G: Appropriate resources to be allocated to support effective public participation in IRR processes.

Much of the resource allocation associated with the implementation plan has been predicated on a ‘dollar for dollar’ arrangement between the combined funds of the Regional Councils (for educational and communication purposes in the IRR arena) and funds to be allocated via the Waste Management Board. It is believed that a ‘dollar for dollar’ arrangement between local and State Government in this regard ensures mutual commitment to shared objectives and increased capacity for co-operation through joint accountability. Programs and/or initiatives that are recommended for ‘dollar for dollar’ funding are indicated with an asterisk.

In terms of prioritisation and timings, the following system applies:

<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Short Term</i>	<i>Medium Term</i>	<i>Longer Term</i>
Essential to success of Strategy	Important to success of Strategy	Worthwhile for success of Strategy	Within 2 months	Within 6 months	Within 12 months

Task A: All relevant decision-makers to recognise and commit to the benefits of public participation in IRR processes.

Performance indicators: all relevant stakeholders sign Memorandum of Understanding; Ministerial endorsement of Strategy; relevant motion adopted at WALGA State Council

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority/Timing</i>
Develop a multi-stakeholder Memorandum of Understanding committing to the Strategy (WALGA, Regional Councils, and Minister for the Environment for Waste Management Board and DEWCP)	WESIG to facilitate	In-kind (WESIG)	High; Short term
Organise announcement of Strategy and MOU by Minister for the Environment at WA Waste Management Conference	WESIG to facilitate	In-kind (WESIG) with \$1,500 for publication costs*	High; Medium term
Adopt relevant motion supporting Strategy at State Council of the Western Australian Local Government Association.	WALGA to facilitate; WALGA to promote following conference	In-kind (WALGA)	Medium; Medium term

Task B: Appropriate management structures to be created to promote effective public participation in IRR processes.

Performance indicators: completion of 90% of projects assigned to Committee under Strategy

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<p>Create an IRR Facilitation Committee.</p> <p>Role: to facilitate the development of IRR in Western Australia; to encourage information sharing between all members of the IRR value chain; to promote 'best practices' in public participation in decision-making.</p> <p>Membership: to be determined and addressed through a pending WESIG briefing paper to Waste Management Board.</p>	<p>WESIG to facilitate initially; potentially under auspices of Waste Management Board thereafter</p>	<p>In-kind or \$40,000 per year for secretariat, research and internal communications support*</p>	<p>High; Medium term</p>

Task C: All relevant decision-makers to adopt and adhere to common principles for the conduct of public participation in IRR processes.

Performance indicators: number of personnel to undergo training; feedback form results from training sessions; agency satisfaction levels with inter-agency co-operation

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<p>Develop and implement IRR public participation training series for local government, Regional and other relevant officers.</p> <p>Two sessions should cover: a) understanding IRR concepts; b) theory of public participation in waste management decision-making; c) familiarisation with WA principles and their meaning; d) practical aspects of public participation; and e) application of skills in scenario situations.</p>	<p>WESIG pending creation of IRR Facilitation Committee is formed</p>	<p>Year 1: \$40,000 to organise and conduct; \$5,000 to promote to potential attendees*</p> <p>Year 2: need to continue training series to be assessed by Committee</p>	<p>High; Medium term</p>
<p>Develop IRR Public Participation Tool Box as training manual for local and Regional personnel.</p>	<p>WESIG pending creation of IRR Facilitation Committee.</p>	<p>\$5,000*</p>	<p>High; Short term.</p>
<p>Develop and promote a training video based on training sessions below.</p>	<p>IRR Facilitation Committee</p>	<p>\$10,000*</p>	<p>Lower; Medium term</p>

Task D: Government practitioners of public participation in IRR processes to select and use ‘best practice’ tools.

Performance indicators: number of residents and stakeholders participating in IRR decision-making processes; extent of participation based on ‘Influence/Inform/Consult/Involve/Partner/Empower’ spectrum

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Promote ‘Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide’ to IRR chain.	Department of Premier and Cabinet in conjunction with IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (Committee)	Medium; Medium term
Undertake qualitative and quantitative social research to determine community attitudes with regard to IRR.	IRR Facilitation Committee	\$50,000*	High; Medium Term
Promote resources of International Association for Public Participation to IRR chain.	IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (Committee)	Medium; Medium term
Develop and make available a list of public participation practitioners servicing Western Australia through an Expression of Interest process.	IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (Committee)	Lower; Medium term
Create a library of materials on public participation in waste management; promote its availability to stakeholders.	IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (Committee) with \$5,000 in consultancy support*	Medium; Medium term
Develop evaluative measures for conduct of public participation programs.	IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (Committee) with \$5,000 in consultancy support*	High; medium term

Task E: All relevant decision-makers to adopt a common vocabulary in terms of IRR terminology and concepts.

Performance indicators: Use of common terminology and concepts in Council, Regional and State publications, policy statements and legislation; budget savings from use of template materials

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Accept WALGA's 'Background Report on Integrated Resource Recovery and Secondary Resource Recovery' (following revisions earmarked by WESIG) as general guide for terminology and concept definition.	WESIG (as part of Ministerial announcement) and IRR Facilitation Committee thereafter	In-kind (WALGA & Committee)	High; Medium term
Promote 'Background Report' (and IRR generally) through briefings aimed at local government officials.	IRR Facilitation Committee	In-kind (WESIG)	Medium; Medium term
Compile and make available a compendium of previously utilised IRR public participation implementation materials – based on the WA and other Australian past experience. Materials should include key messages, social research, educational / informational material aimed at community, advertisement copy etc for each stage of the IRR process. The materials would be used by Regional Councils in their public participation efforts.	WESIG; IRR Facilitation Committee	\$20,000* Note: Costs associated with Regional / Council implementation of materials in local situations is not included.	High; Medium Term
Develop and promote a website with objective	WESIG; IRR Facilitation Committee	\$15,000 for development; \$5,000 for promotion*	Medium; Medium term

information about IRR.			
Develop and promote an video with independent environmental, technical and social experts for use with stakeholder groups covering IRR theory and practice.	WESIG; IRR Facilitation Committee	\$50,000 for development; \$5,000 for promotion*	Medium; Medium term
Conduct a State-wide community education campaign focused on sustainable consumption and waste avoidance.	DEWCP in consultation with Waste Management Board	Funding not sought under Strategy	Medium; medium term

Task F: Appropriate resources to be allocated to support effective public participation in IRR processes.

Performance indicator: Innovative grant applications, greater community input into IRR at Council level

<i>Sub-Tasks</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Resource Required</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Create a Grant Category in the Waste Management & Recycling Fund to support the conduct of public participation by Regional Councils.	Waste Management Board	\$100,000*	Medium; Medium term
Create a Grant Category in the Waste Management & Recycling Fund to support the conduct of public participation by local Councils. Role: to promote 'best practices' in IRR public participation by local Councils operating outside Regional frameworks.	Waste Management Board	\$125,000*	Medium; Medium term
Allocate funds in line with programs and initiatives outlined above.	Waste Management Board; Regional Councils	\$481,500 (total of above programs and initiatives exclusive of in-kind support)	High; Short term

7 EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy should become one of the accountabilities of the IRR Facilitation Committee (see Section 6). Twelve months from the announcement of the Strategy, the Committee should – via an independent expert - compile a report to the Waste Management Board and the Minister for the Environment that assesses the Strategy’s performance at both the micro and macro levels. The evaluation methodology should consist of a series of questions based on the Strategy’s goals. These questions are outlined below together with reporting techniques.

Evaluation Criterion	Reporting Technique
<i>Participation - is the public playing an integral and valued role in IRR decision-making?</i>	<p>Survey relevant State Government agencies, Regional and local Councils to determine number, type, nature and effect of programs undertaken to involve residents and stakeholders in IRR processes.</p> <p>Survey key stakeholders who have participated in IRR processes to get their feedback.</p>
<i>Co-operation - is there improved co-operation between agencies in terms of IRR public participation aspects?</i>	<p>Survey relevant State Government agencies, Regional and local Councils undertaking IRR public participation programs to gauge satisfaction with co-operation levels.</p> <p>Review number of personnel that have undergone training sessions and workshops conducted by IRR Facilitation Committee; review feedback form results from sessions.</p> <p>Review agenda and minutes of IRR Facilitation Committee; review number and nature of inquires to IRR Facilitation Committee; review completeness and efficacy of IRR Facilitation Committee projects under Strategy.</p>
<i>Consistency – is there greater consistency in the delivery of IRR public participation aspects?</i>	<p>Review external publications of organisations conducting IRR processes.</p>
<i>Compliance – is there compliance in IRR decision-making to State Government policy for public participation?</i>	<p>Review survey responses against provisions of ‘Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide’.</p>

Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA)
& Waste Education Strategy Integration Group (WESIG)

PRO-ACTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY FOR IRR IN WA

PART 1 – STRATEGIC RATIONALE

Why Should Communities Participate in Waste Management Decisions?

July 2002

Ref: 4070-03

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: WA'S WASTE COMMUNICATION CHALLENGE

Western Australian local governments and other agencies are now facing complex decisions about the design of future waste management systems. Recent State Government waste management policy, set out in *Towards Zero Waste*¹ is driving a shift in emphasis away from landfill-focused disposal systems, towards Integrated Resource Recovery (IRR) approaches which aim to balance prevention, recycling, and Resource Recovery, that is, the processing of waste to produce usable resources, including energy and compost-type products.

This policy is explicitly based on principles of environmental, social and economically sustainability. It aims to move Western Australia towards a 'Zero Waste society' which:

*'... does not borrow resources from future generations nor leave a legacy of unmanaged, unreclaimed waste. A society reflecting nature, in which all products are produced and consumed not in a 'cradle-to-grave' mentality but in a 'cradle-to-cradle' mentality. Where reduction, re-use and recycling are a natural part of life for everyone and waste as we now know it no longer exists.'*²

In most cases, Regional Councils, acting on behalf of their member Councils, are taking responsibility for leading these changes. The shift involves two inter-related planning challenges:

A) *The IRR design question*

What is the optimum design of an integrated resource recovery system for a particular region? That is, what is the preferred mix of waste prevention initiatives, recycling and green waste systems, educational programs, and Resource Recovery capabilities to match the social, environmental and economic needs and constraints of a given region?

B) *The Resource Recovery question*

Within a regional IRR strategy, what is the appropriate Resource Recovery technology or mix of technologies and where should it or they be sited?

It's important to note that Resource Recovery technologies are costly industrial facilities, often novel in design and with a wide range of potential impacts. They may involve significant financial and/or contractual risks for local government. They can have significant heavy vehicle traffic impacts. They may involve difficult-to-dispose residues. They may require significant changes to established recycling and green waste systems. They may also require original regulatory and monitoring frameworks.

Decisions about such facilities are therefore amongst the most complex and potentially contentious that local government can undertake.

¹¹ West Australian Government, 2001, *Towards Zero Waste* – the report and recommendations of the WASTE 2020 TaskForce

² *ibid*, Preamble, p6.



The decision-making processes for such ventures necessarily require:

- a) High levels of environmental and social assessment;
- b) High levels of transparency;
- c) Demanding technological assessments;
- d) High levels of financial analysis and accountability;
- e) Responsiveness to community values and aspirations; and
- f) Attention to issues of social equity and justice (especially where an affected community may perceive that it is bearing an unfair burden of risk).

Western Australia is not alone in having a history of often bitter conflict over the siting of waste management facilities. This is a global trend in developed countries where publics are increasingly alerted to environmental risks and intolerant of remote and apparently unaccountable decisions which affect their interests.

As a result of these conflicts, the traditional 'DAD' strategy (Decide, Announce, Defend) has gradually been replaced by a range of responsive and trust-building community involvement processes. This has been fundamentally recognised by the WA Government which has recently affirmed its commitment to increasing participation in all aspects of government policy. (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Citizens and Civics Unit, 2002)

It is important to note that this greater public input into decision-making in the UK, the United States, Canada and Australia, is not necessarily being driven solely by considerations of transparency, democracy or social justice. As the literature on risk management attests, the change is also driven by the demands for higher levels of technical competency and improved risk management. That is, waste authorities are choosing to involve their publics in waste management decision making because this leads to more technically competent and defensible decisions that reduce the risks for government.

This report - the first part of an overall project to develop a Public Education and Communication Strategy for IRR / RR in WA - reviews the relevant literature on communication, education and community engagement in environmental management and critically assesses the various approaches for communication and community involvement in new waste management systems. It seeks to provide the theoretical and conceptual basis on for the further development of a strategic approach by WESIG members together with the consultancy.

The report is primarily based on a review of published, peer-reviewed studies, which examine community engagement in environmental management and in waste and hazardous facility siting processes. The articles are for the most part published in journals in the fields of sociology, science and society, waste management, and risk management. The consultancy also reviewed a number of standard risk communication texts and carried out a wide Internet search focusing on community engagement in waste facility siting.



FOUR REASONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Numerous evaluative studies have examined community engagement in government decision-making in environmental management, waste management and hazardous site selection processes in the USA, Canada, and the UK over the past decade.

After reviewing these studies, and considering the situation in Western Australia (particularly the experiences of Southern Metropolitan Regional Council and the City of Stirling), we conclude that there are at least four compelling reasons for waste management authorities to involve their publics in decision-making. These are state policy, government legitimacy, improved managerial competence and better risk management.

1.1.1 Increased legitimacy for government

In Western Australia, increased community involvement in decision-making is strongly promoted at State Government level. The incoming government established a Citizenship and Civics Unit in the Premiers Department to drive this change. The Premier recently launched *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide*³ that reiterates many of the principles discussed below. This move accords with emerging practices in government throughout the developed world (OECD 2001).

Trust in government is low throughout the developed world. Publics tend to be highly sceptical of government decisions and often unwilling to accept the judgements of technical experts. Publics are especially dubious of close relationships between industry and regulators, suspecting that economic interests may dominate the unbiased assessment of environmental and social impacts.

There is strong support for the contention that the *credibility* of government agencies is the single most important factor in the successful communication and resolution of technology siting issues (Kasperson 1986; Fewer 1999; Siegrist and Cvetkovich 2000; Siegrist, Cvetkovic and Roth 2000; Siegrist 2000; Sandman et al 1993; Petts 1994; McComas 2001).

This credibility of agencies is closely linked to perceptions of fairness, lack of bias and consistent pursuit of public interest in the decision-making process (McComas and Trumbo 2001).

This is the case even when those decisions are adverse to the interests of an effected community's (Lind and Tyler 1988).

It follows that an agency should not be both a proponent and a trusted player in a technology siting issue. Where a government body is a proponent, care should be taken to ensure to that the decision-making process itself is independent of that body.

The onus is on governments to establish decision-making processes, which are transparent, incorporate public values and avoid perceptions of unfairness. In such decisions, government needs to be seen to be an umpire or honest broker.

³ The guide can be downloaded from <http://www.ccu.dpc.wa.gov.au>



The literature supports the contention that the *perceived* legitimacy, credibility and neutrality of government are best assured by direct involvement of members of public in *shaping* and *deliberating* in decision-making processes that affect their interests (Weiderman and Femers 1993, Petts 1997, Vasseur et al 1997, Kuhn and Ballard 1998, Tuler and Webler 1999, Hunold and Young 1999, Beierle and Konisky 2000).

1.1.2 Technical competence

A number of studies have suggested that deliberative decision-making processes result in better technical decisions. (Fischhoff 1983, Petts 1997, Hunold and Young 1998, Petts 2000).

'The public are not information-poor: they can capitalise upon a range of cultural and experiential resources.' (Petts 1997, p378)

'A decision arrived at through inclusive communicative democratic procedures is likely to produce the wisest decision, in that it grasps the consequences and has considered alternatives.' (Hunold and Young 1998, p87)

'Participation and deliberation are not only a matter of political expediency but also promote analytical robustness.' (Petts 2000, p830)

Importantly, the studies do not support the frequently expressed fears of managers that the public are not competent to comprehend complex data or balance risks:

'Contrary to expert fears, it is evident that when scientific uncertainty or lack of expertise is openly acknowledged, and when management mechanisms to deal with the situation are explained, demands for zero-risk options are not forthcoming from the majority, and experts are not rebuked. Members of the public who have an opportunity to address issues in an informed manner are willing and able to balance risk and benefits.' Petts 1997, p 378)

1.1.3 Risk management

There is evidence that public participation provides a degree of assurance against two significant risks faced by waste managers: political risks and technical risks.

Public *outrage* is the result of technology and siting decisions, which are perceived to be uncontrolled, unfamiliar, involuntary, non-beneficial, or unfairly distributed (Rowan 1996).

Once public outrage commences it can be difficult to contain, with the media playing spoiling role, enhancing and sustaining the perceptions of conflict and unfairness (Sandman et al 1993, Seigrist and Cvetkovich 2000).

The literature consistently asserts the importance of participatory processes in minimising conflict.



'For the most part, siting processes do not fail because of inadequate environmental or technical considerations, but because of the adversarial decision-making strategies employed by the proponents'. (Kuhn and Ballard 1998)

A number of studies have asserted the value of community involvement in minimising the technical risks for decision-makers by allowing the proponent's technical assertions to be challenged and tested.

'There is evidence in the information shaping in the Hampshire process that members of the public can act as quality assurers in the risk management process.' (Petts 1997)

'Well-conducted public participation, stakeholder consultation and deliberation procedures can enhance the policy process and improve the robustness of strategies dealing with high-stakes investment and risk management challenges.' (O'Connor, M., and S. van den Hove 2001)

Moreover, official risk management standards⁴ require appropriate communication and consultation activity to take place as part of the overall risk management process. The standards documentation is strongly advocates two-way communication approaches:

'Communication and consultation involve a two-way dialogue between stakeholders with efforts focused on consultation rather than a one way flow of information from the decision maker to other stakeholders.' (AS/NZA 4360:1999 Risk Management)

⁴ AS/NZS 4360:1999 Risk Management and Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand guidelines for environmental risk management.

WHEN SHOULD INFLUENCE BE EXERCISED?

This project arises from concerns about finding the best way for local governments to engage with their publics over complex and potentially vexed issues of waste management technology choice and siting.

There is a concern amongst decision-makers that the public is not well equipped to understand the reasons for a shift to RR technologies, nor to comprehend the consequences of the different technologies available. There is a fear that public ignorance may lead to unreasoned conflict, and that better understanding is essential.

Therefore authorities have expressed an interest in *community education*, *public relations* and *social marketing* approaches to fulfilling this educational need.

All three use similar tools: media stories, advertising, direct mail, print products etc., however they have different purposes which affect the content of the communication. In essence:

- *Community education* seeks to answer the public's need for information.
- *Public relations* seeks to influence the public's attitudes towards a brand or product.
- *Social marketing* seeks to promote socially beneficial behaviours.

While education campaigns deal primarily in facts, the other approaches seek to influence choices and may have only token educational content, relying instead on *selling* an idea by selectively reporting facts, manipulating fears and desires, and creating unconscious associations with comfort, ease, popularity, opulence, sex, success, celebrity or power.

How useful are such approaches in the field of waste management technology choice?

The literature on risk communication, in particular, provides decisive guidance. It suggests there may be a number of weaknesses in the assumption that primarily educational or marketing approaches are appropriate in this context.

To summarise a number of studies, the literature tells us that:

1.1.4 The public's concerns are not the same as waste managers.

While waste managers are concerned with efficient and sustainable systems, the public is more likely to be concerned with potential health and amenity risks and the alternatives, (Weidemann et al 1991), with potential unfairness in the distribution of costs and benefits of the new technology, (Smith and McDonough 2001) and with the immediate day-to-day convenience of systems.

Further, waste managers talk in a highly codified, jargon-laden, assumption-rich language which reflects their own professional and technical concerns. This language requires considerable interpretation before it can be meaningful to lay people. (Fischhoff et al 1983)



These issues suggest that the kind of information which managers think is important may not be the kind the public is liable to find relevant and meaningful.

1.1.5 Managers may lack appropriate information

The process of establishing a new waste system is replete with uncertainties and unknowns. Even if and when the technical data can be agreed, managers are unlikely to be able to answer the public's most salient questions, like 'What is the risk?', 'What would be the impact on my life and lifestyle?', 'How could this affect my family's health?' (Kasperson 1986)

This suggests that the information may not currently exist which can form the basis of a meaningful education campaign. It is also possible that purely information-based campaigns may raise concerns which managers have no way of answering. Therefore interactive processes may be required which create and shape new information that responds sensitively to public concerns. (Petts 1997, Rowan 1996)

1.1.6 Credibility is vital

The choices required for a new waste system are unlikely to be simple matters of balancing logic or data. They require *judgements* on incomplete information, informed by local *values* and concerns: hence they are inherently moral endeavours (Garvan 2001, p449), which are as much about policy as facts (Fischhoff et al 1983).

Significantly, there is strong evidence that the *credibility* or *trustworthiness* of authorities is central to the resolution of public concerns over waste management facilities.

Research demonstrates that lay members of the public trust their experience and tend to distrust scientific information which they know is open to manipulation and misuse.

Where the public have no direct experiences allowing them to make judgements about a technology, they rely on the judgements of authorities. The credibility of those authorities becomes the most important determinant of how the public perceive the risks and benefits of new technologies.

'The believability of risk information is closely related to institutional credibility and trust.' (Kasperson 1986)

'Results indicate that social trust is a key predictive factor of the perceived risks and benefits of a technology...' (Siegrist, Cvetkovic and Roth 2000)

Educational attempts, based on simplified, incomplete and unsatisfying information, may therefore work to damage the credibility of authorities, leading to potentially unsolvable conflicts. (Kasperson 1986)



Messages that involve propaganda and manipulation - to a media-savvy and alert public - may be even more damaging to an authority's credibility. The public legitimacy of such messages by government tends to be limited to matters of obvious health and public safety, such as cigarette warnings, seat belt advertising, and AIDS education. (Committee on Risk Perception and Communication 1989, p90)

Honesty is essential in building trust in relationships; hence, hidden agendas or vested interests may damage credibility (Frewer et al 1996). Attempts to deceive or manipulate the public also destroy credibility (Leiss 1995, Rowan 1996, Kuhn and Ballard 1998).

These conclusions suggest that the use of public relations 'spin' to manipulate public attitudes or gloss over the potential risks of proposed waste facilities runs the risk of exacerbating public conflict and damaging the institution's credibility.

The US Committee on Risk Perception and Communication summarised the state of knowledge in 1989, warning that agencies exercise great care in the use of influence strategies, notably when 'there is unresolved public controversy over the issue, particularly if there has been no public forum at which relevant voices have had their say' or when the influence strategy involves a degree of deception. (Committee on Risk Perception and Communication 1989, p169)

'Those who prepare risk messages, and particularly those in government organisations, need to be circumspect about using 'influence strategies' in their risk messages to influence recipient's beliefs or actions, and they should expect their audiences to suspect attempts to influence even when the intent is simply to inform.' (Committee on Risk Perception and Communication 1989, p168)

This again points to the unsuitability of one-way information processes, which rely on assumptions about the ignorance of the public and the primacy of technical knowledge.

1.1.7 The public have their own legitimate forms of knowledge

Technology choice and siting involve complex and subtle matters of policy with strong political dimensions.

Far from being 'ignorant', the public are likely to be rich in relevant knowledge, experiences and values which managers need to make sound decisions. Several studies raised doubts about the utility and unquestioned legitimacy of value-free technical knowledge, and point to the fact that many conflicts were between different, equally valid, kinds of knowledge. (Petts 2000, Kasperson 1986, Garvan 2001, Rowe and Wright 2001).

It is clear that one-way communication processes which do not legitimise and explore the public's store of knowledge may reduce the *competency* of decision-making by denying managers valuable forms of information, especially about potential social and environmental impacts which inherently involve community perceptions and values.



1.1.8 Conclusion: communication is more than just information

The risk management literature conceptualises these problems through the idea that risk communication has three dimensions: *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos*.

- *Pathos*: understanding and respecting the audience's mindset, including emotions, beliefs and values;
- *Ethos*: focusing on the character, reputation and credibility of the organisation;
- *Logos*: careful attention to the content of the message.

'Experts should understand public concerns (pathos), express a commitment to dialogue and power sharing (ethos), and develop accurate risk assessment information (logos). If we focus only on the last, or even the first and the last items, we may miss what is very important in risk communication: the credibility of the speaker. That credibility must be grounded on sharing power with the public. Nothing undermines it more quickly than a manipulative approach.' (Rowan 1996 p28)

The explicit conclusion from the literature is that all three dimensions benefit from intimate, two-way *involvement* with the audience.

This is supported by recent guidelines by Standards Australia for environmental risk management:

'Consultation is not the same as public education or public participation. Public education or public awareness programs are generally a one-way process to present information and to increase understanding of certain issues, and are about getting information out to audiences... In contrast, consultation is a mutual process, where information is provided to participants and new information and views are fed back in... (It) is aimed at involving the community in a process of decision-making. It is premised on the right of the public to know what decision-makers are doing on their behalf, and to be involved.' (Standards Australia / Standards New Zealand 2000)

The methods used to elicit this involvement have rapidly evolved through trial and error in Europe, the USA, Canada, and more recently, in the UK and Australia. The last decade in particular has seen a notable shift from more passive kinds of *consultative* processes, to more collaborative and *deliberative* processes, which shift the community's involvement closer to the centre of the decision-making process. This shift is discussed below.

Summary of common communication problems in environmental management

There are a number of problems in communicating with the public over environmental management, technological choice and siting issues, all of which have been borne out in recent waste facility siting disputes in Western Australia.

- a) the public often feels powerless, fearful and outraged upon hearing of a newly disclosed threat to it's health or amenity;
- b) many risks are unprovable, and the public is aware that risk statements are influenced by the values and self-interest of the proponents;
- c) information is often communicated by industry spokespeople, managers or politicians who lack credibility with the public (Seigrist et al 2000);
- d) the news media promote conflict and sensationalise stories; once outrage starts it can be hard to contain (Sandman et al 1993);
- e) once a mind-set is formed – whether amongst politicians, the media, or the public - that a facility or process is hazardous, it is extremely difficult to overcome (Garvan 2001);
- f) the languages of science and management are codified, jargon-laden and rarely provide straightforward answer the questions like, 'Is it safe?' (Garvan 2001);
- g) the general public frequently has little faith in scientific statements about the safety of facilities or processes; (Petts 1994; Garvan 2001);
- h) industries under attack often resort to defensive public relations, ranging from the inept to the deceitful.⁵

⁵ This listing is based on Ford Rowan's summary of risk communication issues in Rowan 1996.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION-MAKING

1.2 The rise of community consultation

The concept of 'community consultation' is now a central feature in environmental management and policy-making.

Community involvement in government planning and policy became firmly established in Australia in the 1980s. A range of well-known and now traditional consultative mechanisms are in wide use. For example:

- a) exhibition of draft documents and calls for submissions;
- b) community consultative committees;
- c) community values and visioning workshops;
- d) surveys;
- e) public information meetings.

There is now evidence that well run participatory techniques can be highly effective in introducing public values into decision-making processes, in resolving conflict between stakeholders, and in building trust in government agencies. (Beierle and Konisky 2000)

Meanwhile educational tools, such as educational and social marketing campaigns, which use a range of advertising and public relations techniques have been applied to encourage participation in waste systems (e.g. recycling, green waste collections, hazardous household waste collections), and to encourage more sustainable personal behaviours (e.g. anti-littering, home composting, and 'green cleaning').

1.3 The shift to deliberative forms of participation

During the 1990's the weaknesses in traditional consultative techniques came to be widely recognised in the UK, Europe, the USA and Canada as authorities faced intense, costly and frequently successful campaigns by the public, particularly against native forest logging, waste facility siting and the nuclear industry.

This led to an increased interest in extending public consultation from relatively passive consultative processes, towards 'deliberative' processes, which involve the public and stakeholders in two-way discussions and involvement in the decision-making process from an early stage. (Petts 2000; Beierle and Konisky 2000, Weideman and Femers 1993, Vanderwal 1999).



In the USA these frequently took the form 'stakeholder' forums that sought consensus between the public, government, experts and proponents over contentious issues, especially in watershed management, forestry management and hazardous facility siting. In Canada the well-resourced 'Round Tables' (1993) process provided national leadership promoting in consensus-based decision-making at all levels of government. In the UK, the Blair government created a nationwide citizens panel for Cabinet decisions and provided a supportive environment for the introduction of European deliberative models such as citizen juries and consensus conferences.

This shift to more *deliberative* forms of consultation was principally driven by two perceived failures of conventional government planning (Beierle and Konisky 2000; Petts 2000):

- a) rigid expertise-based managerial approaches which often produced outcomes opposed to community values and opinions, resulting in a loss of trust in government;
- b) chronic conflict between community, stakeholders, proponents and government which led to paralysis of the planning system and excessive resort to the courts.

It is clear that Australia has lagged behind other developed nations in the use of more innovative deliberative approaches. Only in the recent years have citizen juries and deliberative forums been used in Australia e.g. The Citizen Jury into Container Deposit Legislation in NSW 2001, and Search Conferences into Genetically Modified Foods and the Republic. The NSW Department of Planning is now strongly involved in promoting deliberative planning processes, especially Search Conferences, through its *Plan First* initiative. (Carson and Gelber 2001)

Importantly, the current Western Australia government is at the leading edge in introducing these techniques. Leadership is being provided by the Citizenship and Civics Unit in the Department and Premier and Cabinet. The Department of Planning is actively applying deliberative techniques in solving some of the state's most contentious development and planning issues (e.g. the Freight Review, Road Train summits, NE Corridor Employment Node, Reid Highway Extension, and proposed re-developments of the Scarborough High School site and Leighton Beach, Fremantle (pers. comm. Dr Janette Hartz-Karp March 2002)

The Australian mining industry is also leading this change. The Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development (MMSD) Australia project brought together mining companies, Government officials and environmental and other stakeholders over the course of two years. Its objectives were to identify the means by which the minerals sector could best contribute to society's transition to sustainable development and to build trust and credibility between stakeholders.

The MMSD's final report was issued in May 2002. It suggests further consideration of a 'rights-based approach' to stakeholder engagement. This 'rights-based approach' would formally recognise that stakeholders have fundamental rights to participate in decisions that impact their lives and interests. Such an approach would fundamentally shift the traditional power relationship in a typical government/community decision-making process. (MMSD Australia Project 2002)



1.4 Deliberation and conflict resolution

Participatory approaches have been shown to be effective in resolving conflict between competing interests. It has been argued that collaborative, participatory decision-making is more likely than adversarial decision making to result in lasting and satisfying decisions. This may be partly attributed to the injection of shared community values into the decision making process (Beierle and Konisky 2000).

In their study of siting processes for four Canadian hazardous waste facilities, Kuhn and Ballard 1998 conclude that 'For the most part, siting processes do not fail because of inadequate environmental or technical considerations, but because of the adversarial decision-making strategies employed by the proponents'.

Kuhn and Ballard noted that proponents who seek to impose facilities are creating a conflictive process (win-lose), whereas communities that are able to make their own decisions make siting a voluntary and cooperative process.

Where proposals are seen to be imposed, public involvement processes become adversarial, as the public may feel the process is intended simply to placate their concerns.

In their empirical evaluation of 29 case studies, Beierle and Konisky 2000 concluded that 'Even when existing relationships were poor, many [participative] processes were able to resolve conflict and even increase trust.' (p598)



THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT METHODS

Engagement between government and citizens takes a range of forms. US academic, Sherry Arnstein, developed perhaps the best known categorisation of community involvement approaches with her 6 step Ladder of Participation:

non-participation,
manipulation/therapy,
information,
consultation,
collaboration, empowerment. (Arnstein 1969)

The Office of Public Management in the United Kingdom has developed a similar 5 step model:

giving/listening,
consulting/listening,
exploring/innovating/visioning,
judging/deciding together,
delegating/supporting/decision making. ⁶

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) uses a widely adopted 5-step ladder:

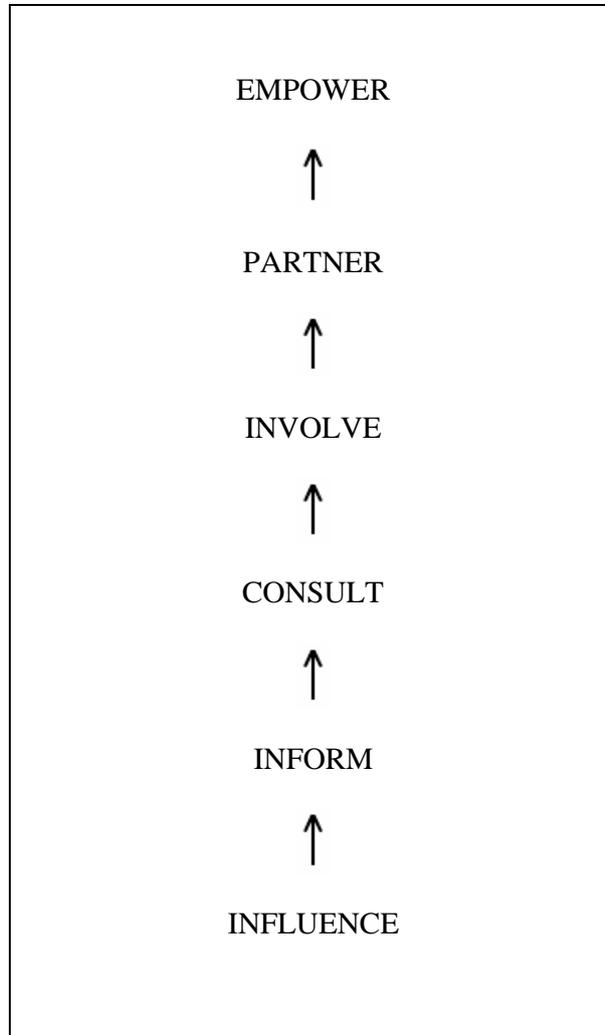
inform,
consult,
involve,
collaborate,
empower. ⁷

For the purpose of this study, we adopt a modified ladder which combines the Arnstein and IAP2 models.

⁶ See *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide*, launched in April this year by the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet's Citizens and Civics Unit, page 6.

⁷ International Association for Public Participation 2000: www.iap2.org

Table 1: Community Engagement Ladder



It's important to note that in practice a public campaign will consist of an *integrated mix* of initiatives. The waste strategy campaigns in UK counties such as Hampshire and Cheshire, for instance,) involve distribution of information materials to the community ('Inform'), consultative surveys with the broad community ('Consult') and community workshops ('Involve').

The six approaches are described below.

1.5 INFLUENCE (public relations, marketing, social marketing)

- *Objective:* to alter the opinions and attitudes of an audience in favour of a proposal, product or brand.



- *Example tools:* media management, publicity, direct mail, advertising, letter-writing and talk-back campaigns, and, sometimes, the creation of front groups. 'Public Relations' involves the promotion of brands. 'Marketing' involves the promotion of products. 'Social Marketing' involves the promotion of beneficial behaviours.
- *Output:* altered community attitudes and choices.
- *Discussion:* Influence techniques are recommended only in cases that involve the disinterested promotion of public health and safety, such as sun screen advertising, cigarette warnings, or road safety campaigns. (Committee on Risk Perception and Communication 1989, p90) Risk communicators warn against the use of manipulative techniques on the basis that perceptions of manipulation, deception or vested interests can damage or destroy the credibility of government agencies and exacerbate distrust, often resulting in intractable disputes with the public. In particular, influence techniques should be avoided where public conflict already exists.

1.6 INFORM (education, awareness campaigns)

- *Objective:* To provide the public with information, to increase understanding and awareness about a particular strategy, proposal or system.
- *Example tools:* brochures, fact sheets, media stories, advertisements, stalls, web sites, seminars, public information nights.
- *Output:* improved public understanding.
- *Discussion:* One-way information campaigns are appropriate where information gaps are a problem and knowledge is relatively certain. Complex environmental proposals however involve uncertainty, conflict about alternative 'truths', and gaps in expert knowledge. Hence 'inform' techniques may be inappropriate where there is a need for processes that gather, shape and interpret new knowledge. Siting issues usually involve questions of social values, justice, equity and trust - these require *judgements* rather than information.

1.7 CONSULT

- *Objective:* To obtain feedback and constructive comments from the public on a draft strategy or proposal.
- *Example tools:* exhibition of documents for comment, surveys, workshops, public meetings, precinct committees.
- *Output:* critical comments and alternatives for a particular proposal.



- *Discussion:* Community consultation has been a mainstream government practice for over 20 years in Australia. The widespread use of tokenistic consultations however has led to increased community scepticism and resistance. Conventional consultation methods are now being superseded by deliberative methods in cases where the potential for agency-community conflict is high and decisions have not yet been made.

1.8 INVOLVE

- *Objective:* to work directly with the public, constructively discussing issues and eliciting views, with the aim of ensuring that public concerns and values are fully understood, and public knowledge gathered.
- *Example tools:* workshops, community consultative committees, deliberative polls, citizen juries, search conferences.
- *Output:* a detailed understanding of community knowledge, perspectives, values, and preferred options.
- *Discussion:* Intensive, facilitated, workshop-style processes are valuable wherever community knowledge or values need to be gathered and interpreted, for instance in urban planning where community visioning processes and Charrettes⁸ are widely used. 'Involve' processes are about extracting complex and subtle data from the public as a form of advice to decision-makers.

(This is a *deliberative* approach).

1.9 PARTNER (Collaboration)

- *Objective:* To establish genuine collaboration between public representatives, technical experts and decision-makers. The aim is to resolve conflict over evidence, interpret expert knowledge, understand and explore opposing perspectives, solve problems, and find common ground.
- *Example tools:* deliberative forums, collaborative project committees, consensus decision making processes.
- *Output:* locally-sensitive decision-making, conflict resolution, with increased legitimacy and public trust. Often a set of authoritative recommendations for decision-makers.

⁸ The Charrette is an intensive one or two day planning process widely used in the planning profession. The public are involved in workshop-style deliberations to find answers to immediate challenges of a particular development.



- *Discussion:* these processes bring together a mix of views and often opposing interests into a single ‘round table’, under a neutral chair, to explore common ground and attempt to resolve conflicts in an informed, rational atmosphere. Long used in Canada, where they are called Round Tables,⁹ (Doering 1993) and the USA, where they are called stakeholder committees or Consensus Based Decision Making projects (Pellow 1999). They are now widely used in Australia. In NSW, for example, they are used by Government agencies in regional water use allocation, native vegetation management, forestry conflict resolution, and catchment planning. The ‘partner’ concept involves mixing activists, experts, agency reps, and sometimes neutral members of the public, in committees which meet over several months to find solutions to complex management problems or resolve entrenched conflicts over land management or siting issues.

(This is a *deliberative* approach).

1.10 EMPOWER

- *Objective:* to devolve decision-making to a community-based body or to the community-at-large through a referendum.
- *Example tools:* management committees, referenda.
- *Output:* locally-sensitive decision-making with a high level of legitimacy.
- *Discussion:* referenda have been widely used by Australian local governments to resolve difficult planning or policy issues. Management committees are commonly established by government for many purposes. These typically involve a degree of devolved power to spend money and make decisions, usually about the on-going management of community facilities or projects. Standard meeting rules, however, generally prevent management committees from being effective forums for conflict resolution.

⁹ Canadian Round Tables is a nationally-led program run by The National Round Table for the Environment and the Economy: The Round Tables are based on well-conceived Guiding Principles - see Appendix 3.

1.11 Summary of communication methods

As a broad generalisation, the literature suggests that the more open, inclusive and deliberative the process, the greater the capacity to deal with complex information, elicit community values, solve problems, and resolve conflicts.

Table 2: The capacities of different community engagement methods. © Les Robinson 2002

EMPOWER ↑ PARTNER ↑ INVOLVE ↑ CONSULT ↑ INFORM ↑ INFLUENCE	↑ Increased capacity for information processing and learning	↑ Increased capacity to elicit values	↑ Increased capacity for problem solving	↑ Increased capacity for resolving conflict
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Another useful way of illustrating the different engagement methods is to map them against the level of potential risk in the situation and the complexity of information which needs to be understood by the participants for informed decision-making to occur. See Figure 1 below.

SELECTION TOOLS FOR WASTE MANAGERS

Waste managers require tools to confidently select the appropriate depth and style of public involvement for each stage. This is no simple matter, since the choice is highly contextual. It depends on purpose, politics, history and local sensitivities.

Furthermore there are at least five different situations that require waste management communication. Each has a different purpose and each will require a customised engagement strategy. These stages are described in Table 3.

Table 3: Five strategic situations for waste management communication.

STAGE	1) Developing a Regional IRR plan	2) Siting and technology choice	3) Implementing RR	4) Educating the public on using the new system
PURPOSE	Design of an integrated w.m. strategy that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • triple bottom line sustainable; • regionally specific; • locally sensitive; • internat'l best practice. 	A transparent, defensible process which develops performance criteria that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technically appropriate; • socially sensitive; • locally sensitive; • financially sound; • best practicable environmental option; and • meets or exceeds international benchmarks. 	Public trust is engendered through a process of independent, transparent monitoring of performance of facilities.	Residents understand and participate in the new system, as typically measured by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high participation rates; • low contamination rates; • high diversion rates; and • adoption of more sustainable lifestyle practices.



To make sense of the numerous methods of engagement that exist, we propose two dimensions, common to all contexts, which help determine the suitability of a community involvement approach: the level of risk in the situation, and the complexity of information needing to be understood before an informed judgement can be made by the participants.

1. *Level of risk inherent in the decision:* this includes the potential for environmental damage, for social dislocation, or for political and social conflict inherent in the decision, based on the best judgement of the management team.
2. *Complexity of information:* this includes the volume of information, and the level of abstraction, technicality and jargon which needs to be comprehended and processed before *members of the lay public* can be expected to make informed judgements on the risks of different options.

With these two dimensions in mind, we have devised a simple decision tool, *The Public Involvement Matrix*, to assist managers to select an appropriate level of public involvement – see Figure 1. The full tool is given as Appendix 1(A).¹⁰

¹⁰ The assessment questionnaire is inspired by a similar tool developed by the International Association for Public Participation.

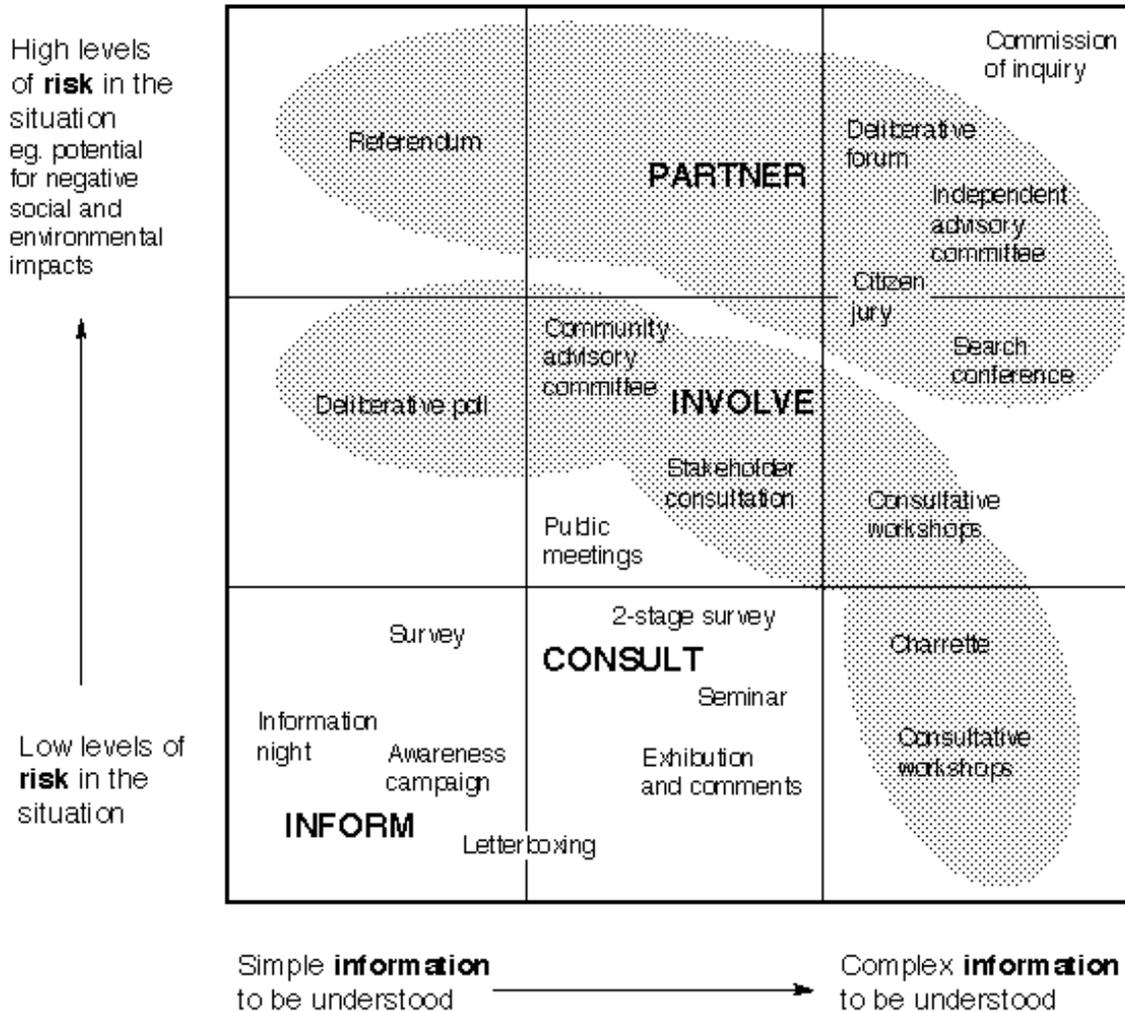


Figure 1: Public Participation Matrix. © Les Robinson 2002

The Public Participation Matrix provides managers with a tool to select the appropriate *approach* to be followed. In practice, this becomes the highest level of community engagement within an integrated public involvement strategy. However, the exact *method* of public involvement (for instance, whether an advisory committee, or a citizen jury, or a survey) cannot be determined by a simple tool. It is partly a matter of taste, partly a matter of experience. In any case, there is evidence that the exact choice of method is less a determinant of success than the perceived fairness of the process (Smith and McDonough 2001), and the achievement of underlying quality criteria such as those listed below under *Qualities of effective participatory processes*.



A second tool, *The Vroom-Yetton Decision Tree*, was originally developed to assist business managers to determine the appropriate level of involvement by subordinates in decision-making. It has since been adapted to government-community relations and appears to be well-suited to the waste management context. See Appendix 1(B).

1.12 Multi-faceted programs

Note that the splitting of involvement programs into different levels is a little abstract, since in practice, multi-faceted programs are the norm. These mix a range of techniques in order to maximise the extent of community involvement:

‘Implement a public participation program with various forms of public participation. A program that seeks to involve as many individuals but also strives for extended discussions to develop alternative solutions might use a Community Advisory Committee for sustained interactions, workshops to develop options, and any number of techniques - public meetings, interactive technology, various types of polls and surveys - to involve larger numbers of people.’ (Chess and Purcell 1999, p2691.)

As a guide, we recommend the following *minimum* levels of involvement in the 5 stages of waste management:

Table 4: Recommended *minimum* levels of community engagement in different waste communication situations.

STAGE	1) Developing a Regional IRR plan	2) Siting and technology choice	3) Implementing RR	4) Educating the public on using the new system
<i>Minimum recommended level of public involvement</i>	An integrated program of: INVOLVE + CONSULT + INFORM	An integrated program of: PARTNER + INVOLVE + CONSULT + INFORM	An integrated program of: INVOLVE + INFORM	An integrated program of: INFLUENCE + INFORM



ISSUES IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN TECHNOLOGY CHOICE AND SITING

The literature focuses on a number of key themes in the design of public participatory processes. These are discussed in detail below in order to guidance for program managers.

1.13 Agency commitment

A number of researchers emphasised the importance of having an agency committed to public involvement (for instance Beriele and Konisky 2000, Curtis and Lockwood 2000).

In Kuhn and Ballard, in their 1998 examination of four Canadian hazardous waste facility siting processes, found that the commitment of the agencies to open decision-making processes was the key element in retaining public trust which in turn made the difference between success and failure.

Aronoff and Gunter 1994 examined seven studies of locally based technological hazard disputes and identified three factors that contributed to better outcomes: the first of these was the agency-community relationship '*reflecting the agency's willingness to negotiate collaboratively with lay persons.*'

Petts 2000 concluded that this is a key challenge for government:

'It will also require change in the procedures of governance, in particular a need to break down the barriers of compartmentalised decision making by different authorities and groups.' (p830)

1.14 Risk perception, outrage and fairness

All waste facilities involve a degree of environmental risk, and public concern about the inequitable distribution of risk is a major factor in siting conflicts. This concern is magnified by perceptions of unfairness and exclusion in the decision-making processes. (Kuhn and Ballard 1998, Hunold and Young 1998). Where novel technologies are proposed, public concerns are further heightened (Kasperson et al 1988).

Risk communicators have identified a number of factors which influence how individuals perceive risk, including (Rowan 1996):

- 1) risks that are judged to be *controllable* by individuals are deemed less risky than those which are uncontrollable;
- 2) risks that are *familiar* to the individual and well known to science seem less risky than those which are unfamiliar and unknown;
- 3) risks that are *voluntarily accepted* appear less risky than involuntary exposures;



4) risks with a direct *benefit* to affected individuals are deemed less risky than those which lack a clear and direct benefit; and

5) risks which are *evenly distributed* across society are perceived as less risky than those which inequitably burden certain individuals or communities.

The typical response of communities to apparently uncontrolled, unfamiliar, involuntary, non-beneficial, or unfair risks is *outrage*.

There is a highly political dimension to outrage: as Rowan points out, these perceptions are expressions of various types of power: informational, decisional, and distributional. When people feel deprived of facts, unable to control their lives, and forced to bear the costs but not the benefits of change, outrage is a natural response.

Hence, risk communicators have long agreed that power-sharing is an inherent aspect of effective risk communication.

Justice and fairness is also an aspect of risk communication. Where processes are perceived to be just and fair, public satisfaction increases, even when outcomes are unfavourable (Lind and Tyler 1988).

Webler et al 2001 included fairness as one of five public-identified perspectives about good process. Smith and McDonough 2001 interviewed participants in a natural resources management consultation and concluded that perceptions of fairness in decision-making were more important than the choice of the particular participation method. Elements of fairness included:

- Access to the process for affected groups;
- Voices being heard;
- Serious consideration of participants views; and
- Decisions based on logic.

Hunold and Young 1999 derived related conditions for 'procedural justice' in hazardous siting decisions:

- Inclusiveness
- Consultation over time
- Equal resources and access to information (to help overcome power imbalance)
- Shared decision-making authority
- Authoritative decision-making.



1.15 Trust and credibility

Where the public have personal experience of a risk, they make up their own minds. However, where they lack experience, they necessarily rely on experts. The credibility of agency spokespeople is therefore a central issue in effective risk communication.

This is because the public tend to judge risk not only on the basis of the *information* itself, but on the *credibility* of experts and spokespeople who interpret and make judgements on the basis of the information. This relationship between expert credibility and risk perception has been affirmed in numerous studies (Kasperson 1986; Fewer 1999; Siegrist and Cvetkovich 2000; Siegrist, Cvetkovic and Roth 2000; Siegrist 2000; Sandman et al 1993; Petts 1994; McComas 2001).

'Results suggest that the lay public relies on social trust when making judgements of the risks and benefits when personal knowledge about a hazard is lacking.' (Siegrist and Cvetkovich 2000)

'Results indicate that social trust is a key predictive factor of the perceived risks and benefits of a technology...' (Siegrist, Cvetkovic and Roth 2000)

The effect is that new technologies introduced by trustworthy institutions are perceived to be less risky and more beneficial than those introduced by untrustworthy institutions.

Following her intricate examination of the advisory committee process for Hampshire County Council's waste strategy, Petts 1997 concluded:

'It is the credibility of the expert that is at least as important, or more important, than his or her knowledge. Credibility is gained by personal and organisational performance, by evidence of independence, and by evidence that the expert is acting with the interests of the public in mind.' (p378)

A number of studies in the fields of communication research and risk management have attempted to unpack the public's understanding of 'trustworthiness'. These studies variously suggest that the public perceives trustworthy authorities as possessing (McComas and Trumbo 2001):

- competence and expertise
- dynamism
- lack of bias
- fairness
- concern for the community's well-being
- honesty and openness
- consistency and predictability



It follows that an organisation should not be both a proponent and a trusted player in a technology siting issue. Where a government body is a proponent, care should be taken to ensure to that the decision-making process itself is independent of that body.

The role of the media is also a factor in risk perception. Sandman et al 1993 carried out risk perception experiments with members of the public and concluded that news stories filled with distrust and outrage increased the reader's perception of risk compared to stories without distrust or controversy, irrespective of the informational content.

Counter-intuitively, there is evidence that public may perceive bad news stories to be more trustworthy than good or neutral stories (Seigrist and Cvetkovich 2000).

Yet conflict and conflict-focused news stories are a virtually inevitable fact wherever a new waste facility is proposed. This underlines the importance of government agencies remaining, wherever possible, unbiased mediators and umpires dedicated to the public interest, rather than interested proponents of new technologies.

Openness and credibility

The risk communication literature strongly recommends that communication be open and demonstrate respect and trust in the community. The US Committee of Risk Perception and Communication summarised the state of knowledge in 1989:

‘In many cases risk communication efforts have foundered because public trust and credibility were damaged because risk management was conducted behind closed doors or because of a patronising attitude towards interested outside groups. Risk communication is a two-way street. Organisations that communicate risks should ensure effective dialogue with potentially affected outsiders. This process should exhibit a spirit of open exchange in a common understanding, not a series of canned briefings; discussions should not be restricted to technical ‘non-emotional’ issues; and early and sustained interchange, including media and other message intermediaries.’



QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Numerous deliberative methods are described in the literature, and in practice these are further adapted to suit particular situations. It is fair to say that designing a deliberative process is likely to be more an art than a science, and the input of experienced practitioners should always be sought.

What makes a participatory process successful? The literature suggests that a successful process depends less on the formal method of involvement than on the underlying qualities of openness, trust, respectful interaction, shared control and agency commitment.

Chess and Purcell 1999 concluded that the success of a participation program does not depend on the particular *form* of participatory process chosen. The factors affecting success or failure instead included the history of the issue, the context of participation, the expertise of those planning the effort and the commitment of the agency.

Beierle and Konisky 2000 identified qualities of successful processes: the quality of the deliberative process; the quality of communication with government; the commitment of the lead agency; and the degree to which jurisdiction over the process was shared.

- Poisner's 1996 evaluation of participatory processes suggested seven criteria for the effectiveness of community involvement processes:
 1. Do the participants represent all significant sectors of the community?
 2. Does the process focus on the common good?
 3. Does the process engender critical reflection of the values underlying the discussion?
 4. Do the participants communicate in person, face to face?
 5. Does the process involve citizens, as opposed to individuals hired to represent citizens?
 6. Does the participation process encourage dialogue?
 7. Does the process inculcate civic virtue?

Tuler and Webler 1999 interviewed participants in a major US forest management consultation process and derived seven 'normative principles' for effective community consultation processes:

1. Access to the process: physical access at times and places that suited the participants.
2. Power to influence the process and outcomes: participants could influence the agenda and consultative process.
3. Access to information: participants requests for information where satisfied.



4. Structural characteristics to promote constructive interactions: e.g. neutral facilitator, sensitive seating arrangement.
5. Facilitation of constructive personal behaviours ie. the process promoted respect, openness, honesty, understanding, listening and trust.
6. Adequate analysis: process goes beyond assertions, and tries to empirically verify facts.
7. Enabling social conditions necessary for future processes:
 - resolving conflict not heightening it;
 - building better relationships between different participants and interest groups;
 - promoting a sense of place; and
 - being aware of public concerns about the cost and effort of such a process.

Compare these with the conditions of procedural justice in hazardous siting decisions set out by Hunold and Young 1999:

- inclusiveness;
- consultation over equal resources and access to information (to help overcome power imbalance);
- shared decision-making authority; and
- authoritative decision-making.

Similar evaluative criteria have been developed by other researchers (Duffy, Halgren et al 1998; Beierle and Konisky 2000).



1.16 Advice for designers

A number of studies provide useful advice for those who design public involvement processes.

Chess and Purcell 1999 concluded that empirical research supports 'rules of thumb' that are based on the accumulated experience of practitioners:

1. Clarify goals (e.g. ensure the agency's underlying goals don't contradict its public support for participation).
2. Begin participation early and invest in advance planning.
3. Adapt traditional participatory forums (e.g. precinct committees) to meet desired process and outcomes goals, and involve experts from outside agencies to provide technical assistance.
4. Include a mix of participatory methods eg. community advisory committee for sustained interactions, workshops to develop options, polls to involve larger numbers of people.
5. Collect feedback on the public participation effort, so you can demonstrate that it 'worked'.

Lyn Carson 2000, in her work for Planning NSW, proposed a four-step process, which built on the work of Ortwin Renn in Germany (Renn et al 1993).

1. *Visioning*: a randomly selected group of community members, that is demographically representative of the affected community, is brought together to establish visions, values and the criteria against which the process can be evaluated.
2. *Operationalising*: 'experts' who may be knowledgeable members of the community, advocates, or technical experts, are brought in to assist the first group to form an action plan and test it against the stated values.
3. *Testing*: the plan is put to the community as a whole, typically through a survey.
4. *Evaluation*: if the proposal is approved, a firm recommendation is made, the result is communicated to the whole community, and the participant group evaluates the consultation process against the criteria established in step 1.

Carson suggests this structure can be adopted to suit a range of deliberative methods including consensus conferences, citizen juries and Charettes.

Dr Janette Hartz-Karp in the WA Ministry of Planning, is utilising *community consensus forums* to seek solutions to some of Perth's most difficult land use conflicts. This model mixes community activists, randomly selected community members, agency staff and technical experts in intensive one-day consensus seeking events. The participants are broken into work-groups under the guidance of facilitators, who are specially trained for the event.



She simultaneously utilises *deliberative polls* to consult with the community (where subjects a mailed an information pack with the survey) in order to test the broader public's views. (pers. comm. Dr Janette Hartz-Karp March 2002)

Specifically concerning facility siting processes, Kuhn and Ballard 1998 in their analysis of the siting of Canadian hazardous waste facilities proposed a generalised 'Open approach' with seven steps:

1. establish general environmental criteria;
2. broad public consultation;
3. invitation to participate;
4. consultations with interested communities;
5. site investigations;
6. community referendum;
7. site decision.



CASE STUDIES

Three case studies have been developed to illustrate the use of high-level public participation processes in waste management decision-making.

1.17 United Kingdom: County Council strategic waste consultations

Over the last decade county councils in the United Kingdom have found themselves in closely analogous situations to WA's regional councils.¹¹ The decline of landfill space and more recently EU environmental policies have driven the development of integrated waste management strategies with increasing emphasis on incineration of waste with energy recovery.

Consultative processes have ranged from exhibition of a waste management strategy for public comment (Dorset Country Council¹², Durham County Council¹³), to the distribution of attractive full-colour booklets, which included a survey to all residents, and the publicising of the results (Lancashire County¹⁴, Cheshire County¹⁵).

The **Lancashire County Council** consultation process lasted for 3 years from 1997 to 2000. It aimed to develop a 20-year waste management strategy and did not involve contentious siting issues. The consultation process included:

- a four page colour newspaper supplement and survey distributed to 450,000 households;
- a 34 page consultation document which asked for answers to 7 key questions, 1,750 copies were distributed to interest groups;
- a major technical report, 225 of which were sent out on request;
- public forums;
- a Citizens Jury which focused on the issue of incineration. (The county council accepted the recommendation by the jury that a decision on incineration be deferred for 3-5 years until the effectiveness of concerted reduction, recycling and composting alternatives had been monitored and evaluated.)

The final strategy was published last year as 'A Greener Strategy for a Greener Future.'

¹¹ The European Union Landfill Directive requires member states to develop national strategies to reduce the biodegradable content of waste going to landfill, and to treat waste to recover value and prevent environmental harm. The UK Waste Strategy provides the policy framework for implementing the directive in the UK. Its targets include 40% of municipal waste to be recovered by 2005, with 25% of that achieved by recycling or composting.

¹² www.wasteuptowaste.com

¹³ www.durham.gov.uk

¹⁴ www.lancswasteinfo.com/strategy/intro.html

¹⁵ www.cheshire.gov.uk/waste/home.htm



The **Hampshire County Council** process was one of the most extensive in the UK and is well documented.¹⁶

In 1991 Hampshire County Council attempted to establish a 400,000 tonne incinerator in Portsmouth and met concerted, well-organised public and political opposition. The county council had adopted a paternalistic ‘the County knows best’ stance, utilised a public relations approach, and made little real effort to listen to people’s views. The opposition claimed that a range of options should be considered, not just incineration, and that a more integrated holistic strategy should be adopted that considered reduction, recycling and recovery. (Petts 1997),

The proposal failed to gain planning approval, and in 1993 the county commenced a new public involvement process to develop a 20 year integrated waste management strategy that responded to the public’s call for a more holistic approach. The program lasted 2 years and involved:

- three Community Advisory Forums;
- a survey of 500 opinion leaders;
- a telephone survey of the public;
- a public outreach program to inform the public about the waste problems and possible solutions. This consisted of exhibitions, displays, media campaign, telephone hotline and a newsletter;
- distribution of 44,000 booklets.

Petts 1997 evaluated the Community Advisory Forums in considerable detail. She especially examined the public-expert interface, recording the difficult (though not unpredictable) questions asked by the public, and discussed the ways that new technical information was shaped and balanced by community interaction, effectively allowing waste managers to make more competent decisions.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Hampshire County Council process documents are available on the website www.integra.org.uk, it was the subject of a book, *Project Integra - A personal history*, by Robert Lisney, and the public forums were evaluated in depth in Petts 1997.

¹⁷ Her conclusions are worth quoting at length:

“Contrary to expert fears, it is evident that when scientific uncertainty or lack of expertise is openly acknowledged, and when management mechanisms to deal with the situation are explained, demands for zero-risk options are not forthcoming from the majority, and experts are not rebuked. Members of the public who have an opportunity to address issues in an informed manner are willing and able to balance risks and benefits.”

“It is the credibility of the expert that is at least as important, if not more important, than his or her knowledge. Credibility is gained by personal and organisational performance, by evidence of independence, and by evidence that the expert is acting with the interests of the public in mind. It is the process of interaction with the expert that provides the opportunity for credibility to be either lost or enhanced.” (p378)



The consultation process produced *Project Integra*, an integrated waste management strategy that was adopted by the 11 member councils and the waste contractor. It included actions in reduction, recycling, composting, support for anaerobic digestion, use of recovery technologies, 3 to 5 waste processing facilities, and residue to landfill. There was a strong emphasis on education, with *Project Integra* launching its first major education program, *War on Waste*, in 1996.

The issue of incineration proved more protracted, with a final legal action against the proposed waste-to-energy facility being dismissed by the UK High Court in June 2001. The judge found that the county council's report to its members had been 'admirably clear, comprehensive and balanced' and that the claimant had 'failed to get off the starting blocks with the facts.' This perhaps adds weight to the evaluator's conclusion that:

'There is evidence in the information shaping in the Hampshire process that members of the public can act as quality assurers in the risk management process.' (Petts 1997, p378)

1.18 Canada: Comparison of four hazardous waste facility siting processes

Canadian researchers Kuhn and Ballard analysed four hazardous facility siting processes from the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁸ Their review provides instructive guidance to WA authorities considering the establishment of novel waste facilities.

Two of these processes, in Alberta and Manitoba, were successful. They followed 'open' decision-making processes which involved the public at every stage and the final decision was never a *fait accompli*.

Two processes, in British Columbia and Ontario, failed due 'closed' top-down processes which generated concerted public opposition.

1.18.1 Alberta: The Swan Hills integrated hazardous waste facility

This process commenced in 1981 and concluded in 1984.

The initial stage involved conventional hearings and recommendations from an expert committee to build the facility.

The Alberta Cabinet, however, balked at accepting a largely technically driven option and established an Hazardous Waste Management Team, independent of government, to identify a site under a strict policy of environmental and social criteria. The process involved extensive site selection processes, solicitation of volunteer communities, followed by local assessment processes and consultation.

The team engaged in extensive public outreach and consultation activities including numerous community forums and seminars which were kept to fewer than 50 participants to allow for two-way discussion. Opposition was not avoided or overtly countered.

¹⁸ Much of the following is taken directly from Kuhn and Ballard 1998.



After extensive consultation, the residents of Swan Hills (population 2500) were prepared to accept the facility and expressed support through a referendum.

The Alberta Special Waste Treatment Centre was officially opened in 1987 and was the first hazardous waste facility in Canada to be sited using both environmental and social criteria.

1.18.2 Manitoba: The Montcalm Hazardous Waste Facility

The Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation followed the Alberta example and improved on it, adopting the principle of co-management agreement between the proponent and the community.

The process lasted from 1981 to 1987 and included extensive public involvement. Residents finally expressed their support in a referendum. The proponent noted:

'There seems to be an 18 month rule having to do with building the level of support in a community. It seems to be just the amount of time that it takes for a community to become involved and make decisions.'

Kuhn and Ballard noted:

'The proponents found that trust alone could not keep communities in a voluntary process. For communities to progress in the siting process, three concerns had to be met: 1) environmental and public safety; 2) the nature of the site selection and decision-making process; 3) economic opportunities. Provided the first two elements were felt to be under local control, communities would remain in the process if economic benefits were apparent.'

1.18.3 British Columbia

The British Columbia Ministry for the Environment began accepting proposals from industry to develop a Special Waste Management System in 1982. In 1983 the ministry signed an agreement with a consortium which proposed construction of an incinerator in Lower Mainland. The government left public consultation to the consortium and intense local opposition blocked the project in 1984.

In 1987 the ministry tried again, appointing a Special Waste Advisory Committee to examine hazardous waste treatment technologies and review regulations. Again the government accepted industry proposals and the committee selected a consortium of companies (The Envirochem Group) to build and operate an integrated facility.

Meanwhile 120 communities had received invitations to host the facility. Ten responded and public hearings were held by ministry officials, Envirochem Group reps and advisory committee members.



Officials subsequently identified Cache Creek and Ashcroft as having the best biophysical conditions. All other communities dropped out because of strong citizen opposition to the facility design. Many communities had asked for the incinerator to be dropped from the design, however the consortium refused to alter their plans.

Several public information hearings were held in Cache Creek and Ashcroft. In May 1998 a referendum was held and approx 60% of the voters favoured continuing the siting process. However this public support quickly faded when Envirochem Group began secret test drilling on sites it had selected.

The government's credibility was further eroded when it disbanded the independent siting advisory committee, leading to a community backlash. By Oct 1988 support had totally disintegrated and the province decided to end the siting process.

Kuhn and Ballard's review concluded that the British Columbia government was not truly committed to an open approach. Although communities volunteered for the process, the province and the private consortium failed to follow through on maintaining trust and power sharing.

In particular, the province failed because it became involved in trying to convince communities to accept the facility. Once the siting process came to be seen as little more than a public relations effort, public opposition galvanised.

1.18.4 Ontario

The Ontario Waste Management Corporation was formed in 1981 to develop an integrated hazardous waste facility for the province.

The Corporation chose an essentially top-down, technically focused process, which included immense investment in community consultation, but nevertheless failed to create trust in the process.

The initial site identification process involved 300 public meetings, six seminars and 1000 mail contacts statewide.

The second phase, focusing on the Golden Horseshoe region in southern Ontario, included three weekend seminars, five site selection workshops and 53 meetings with elected officials and the public.

Twenty candidate areas were chosen and a further 59 meetings were held to refine the siting process.

Finally eight sites were chosen and subject to another round of public consultation. At this stage a citizen coalition formed to criticise the process.

West Lincoln emerged as the preferred site and the local government launched a court case to obtain an assessment under the Ontario Environment Act. They lost the case, but the province relented and granted a review and hearings under the act.



Despite the numerous chances to be heard, the residents of West Lincoln considered themselves to be the 'losers' in the consultation process and the local council formally opposed the facility.

Kuhn and Ballard concluded that the process created opposition because citizens believed they had no real ability to influence the decisions, which were made exclusively by Corporation staff or government officials. Although the public consultation was extensive, accepting or rejecting public evidence was totally at the discretion of the officials.

Despite numerous economic incentives and a generous compensation agreement, the local community continued to oppose the facility, essentially due to its distrust of the process and of government.

Fourteen years and \$140 million (Canadian dollars) later, the Ontario Waste Management Corporations' attempt to site a hazardous waste facility in West Lincoln ended in failure.

In reviewing these four cases, Kuhn and Ballard conclude:

'Power is fundamental to successful siting. Power must be granted to citizens potentially affected by the construction of a hazardous waste facility early and be carried forth throughout the four siting stages. Citizen participation through community meetings, seminars or questionnaire surveys alone does not necessarily imply that power to either accept or reject a facility has been granted. Participation does not mean influence. If the latter is absent, community distrust will rapidly develop. Offering financial incentives in the form of jobs or infrastructure developments will not be enough. Incentives will only work once trust and commitment are established between the proponent and the public.' (p543)

1.19 Australia: NSW Waste Boards' residual waste treatment consultations

The NSW Waste Boards were Government agencies that had statutory responsibility for developing regional approaches to waste management. In this regard, both the Hunter and Southern Sydney Regional Waste Boards commenced processes to develop regional Resource Recovery systems/technologies for their respective member Councils and communities. Nolan-ITU supported both Waste Boards in undertaking forms of community engagement around their processes in 2000 and 2001.

The processes had both similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, both processes:

- were part of the preparation of an Expression of Interest from the commercial sector to gauge Resource Recovery technology and site options;
- had **no preferences** or preliminary plans for technology type and/or site;
- undertook community engagement **prior** to the public advertisement of the Expression of Interest to the commercial sector;
- were guided by publicly stated **consultative principles** (such as transparency in decision making and respect for all viewpoints) approved by constituent Councils;



- were independently and neutrally facilitated;
- sought to inform the community of the overall rationale for Resource Recovery and of the decision-making process;
- sought stakeholder and community feedback on Resource Recovery as a concept (rather than about specific technology and/or site options);
- promoted improved trust between Government, communities and stakeholders and resulted in no negative political/media responses; and
- utilised a mix of community engagement methodologies, including dissemination of public education materials (such as brochures, posters, information kits, websites, regional and suburban newspaper advertisements, and regional radio advertisements), conduct of stakeholder meetings (more than ten), conduct of public meetings (more than 20), and conduct of telephone surveys (approximately 1200 participants in total).

The Hunter and Southern Sydney processes were different in the following ways:

- The Hunter and Southern Sydney regions are socio-demographically, geographically and economically distinct;
- The whole of the lower Hunter region had been recently politicized by several separate proposals to develop large scale landfills in the region, while significant concern about waste management facilities in Southern Sydney was largely historically limited to individual communities (Waterloo, Sutherland, and Rockdale);
- The Hunter process involved a small number of constituent Councils (4) while the Southern Sydney processes involved a large number of Councils (11);
- The Hunter process featured a Stakeholder Reference Group (consisting of individuals and groups known to be concerned with waste management outcomes in the region) that was used a 'touchstone' for all community engagement efforts;
- The Hunter process was continually monitored by an independent probity advisor; and
- The Hunter process moved through issuing the Expression of Interest, receipt of submissions and evaluation of submissions and is continuing to progress, while the Southern Sydney process has stalled due to a restructure of the NSW Waste Boards.

A number of key issues of stakeholder and community concern were identified through qualitative techniques such as the attendance by activist groups and highly interested citizens at public meetings or through their written submissions. These issues were then 'verified' in terms of general public attitudes through quantitative means, eg, telephone surveys. The issues of concern included: facility siting, net environmental impact, and the need to promote waste avoidance strategies rather than just technology-based approaches.



The Hunter and Southern Sydney Waste Boards and their project teams (Council representatives) then incorporated identified issues into the Expression of Interest documentation. Effectively, technology proponents were asked to show how they would address the issues raised in the community engagement process.

As a result, both projects – in the estimation of stakeholders, project managers and consultants - could claim greater legitimacy for their Expression of Interest, as well as lower risk profiles.

Both community engagement processes achieved their objectives for three major reasons. First, both processes were 'open', eg, the Government bodies involved were transparent about having no specific plans with regard to technology type or site and were not advocates of any one approach. Second, and relatedly, both processes took place early in the overall decision-making / technology selection and development cycle. Thirdly, through the process' consultative principles, participants in the community engagement process were clearly informed how their input was to be used in decision-making and where they stood.



GLOSSARY

Consultations *

Information-gathering processes, where members of the public are invited to have their say, on the basis that they may influence a decision made elsewhere.

Typically includes facilitated forums, workshops, surveys, search conferences, citizen panels, charrettes, and precinct committees.

Deliberations *

Problem-solving discussions, where people are brought together to share ideas and views, learn, exercise judgement and make decisions.

Includes formal councils or boards, empowered committees (e.g. management committees), citizen juries, inquiries (e.g. formal government inquiries or informal processes like community indicator projects).

Public relations

One-way communications designed to influence public attitudes towards a product, brand or proposal.

Typically includes advertising, publicity events, public meetings, direct mail, newsletters, media management, commentators, letter-writing campaigns, and, sometimes, the creation of deceptive front groups.

Education

One-way communications, designed to engender knowledge, skills or attitudes.

Includes formal classes, training seminars, social marketing campaigns, stalls, public meetings, and demonstration projects.

Social marketing

One-way communications, which utilise product-marketing tools to encourage socially-desirable or healthy behaviours.

Includes advertising, seminars, direct mail, and stalls.

Communication

General term for any transfer of information stories or images.

* These are called 'participative', since people are invited to actively express their views, rather than simply passively receive information.



APPENDIX 1: TWO TOOLS FOR CHOOSING THE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

The choice of process depends on the context and appears to be as much an art as a science. Advice from experienced practitioners should always be sought when designing a community involvement process. However as a guide, the following tools may be useful.

1.20 The Public Participation Matrix ¹⁹

The choice of a community involvement process depends on your assessment of two factors:

- the *risk* inherent in the situation e.g. the potential for negative environmental or social impact, or the risk of community conflict.
- the *complexity* of information which needs to be digested before informed participation is possible.
Here are some questions to help you evaluate these factors.

1.20.1 Inherent risk

1) How do you rate the potential for conflict with the community over this decision?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
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2) How do you rate the potential for social, environmental, or financial damage if the wrong decision is made?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
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3) How many unknowns are there in the current decision-making equation?

¹⁹ The assessment questionnaire is inspired by a similar tool developed by the International Association for Public Participation.



<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	A few	<input type="checkbox"/>	Many
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1.20.2 Complexity of information

4) How much information needs to be communicated to the community for them to participate?

<input type="checkbox"/>	A few simple facts	<input type="checkbox"/>	A detailed proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	A significant amount of technical data
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5) How much learning is required by the participants before they can be expected to make an informed decision?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Low	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium	<input type="checkbox"/>	High
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6) How many abstract or technical concepts need to be digested before an informed decision can be made?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	A few	<input type="checkbox"/>	Many
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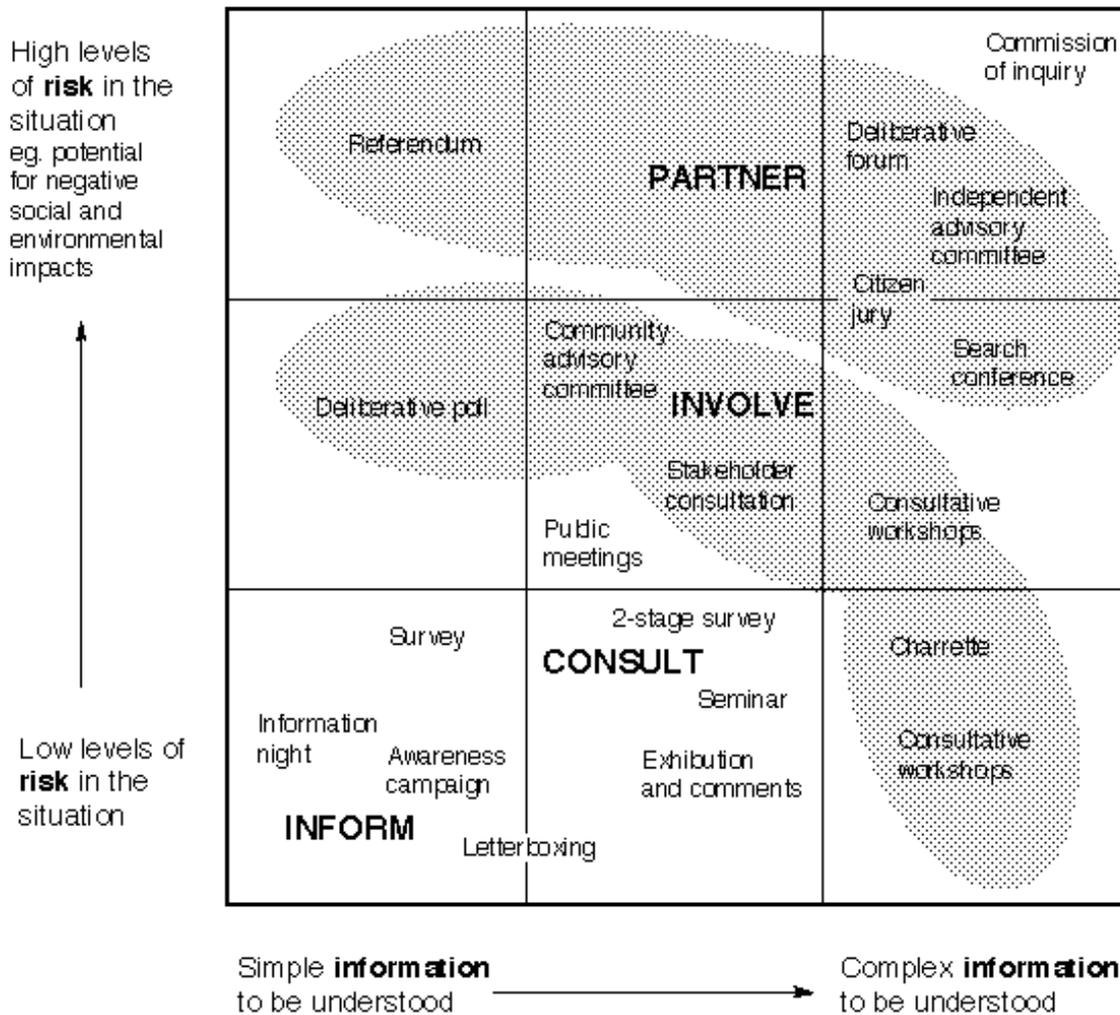
1.20.3 Interpretation

IF most of your answers are in the left hand boxes, then CONSULT methods may be sufficient.

IF your answers are scattered between the left, centre and right hand boxes, then INVOLVE methods may be sufficient.

IF the most of your answers are in the right-hand boxes, then you should consider using PARTNER techniques to minimise your risk and maximise the amount of knowledge and perspectives brought into the decision-making process.

The matrix below is a guide to particular community involvement methods which may be suited to the risk and complexity of your situation.



1.21 Vroom-Yetton Decision Tree

In 1973 Victor Vroom and Phillip Yetton introduced a contingency decision-making model for the business world. The model was intended to aid in deciding on the level of participation by subordinates would improve the quality of decision making in a corporate setting. The utility of the model has been verified in a number of empirical studies.



The model was subsequently modified slightly to allow for public participation in general and in natural resource decision-making in specific, and has been tested in a number of independent studies (Lawrence and Deagen 2001).

We have altered the model slightly to improve clarity and suit the Australian context.

KEY

A: The manager solves the problem or makes the decision alone without public involvement (=INFORM).

B: The manager seeks information from segments of the public, but decides alone in a manner which may or may not reflect public influence. (=CONSULT)

C: The manager shares the problem with separate segments of the public or stakeholders, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects public influence. (=INVOLVE, with separated stakeholder segments)

D: The manager shares the problem with the public and stakeholders as an assembled group, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects public influence. (=INVOLVE, with mixed participants)

E: The manager shares the problem with the public and stakeholders as an assembled group, and together the manager and the group attempt to reach agreement on a solution. (=PARTNER)



APPENDIX 2: SEVEN DEADLY RISK COMMUNICATION SINS

A veteran risk manager provides these salutary warnings to waste managers who need to communicate with the public over proposed waste facilities. (Nitschke 1998)

'The first sin is the sin of omission. This sin has a legal analogue where not only the truth but the 'whole truth' is requested. Sometimes this sin is committed unwittingly but other times not.

'The second sin is the sin of oversimplification. Here is a well-intentioned attempt to portray complicated matters in a simple manner, key elements are omitted and misleading and incomplete pictures are presented.

'The third sin is the sin of arrogance. This sin has two heads. One is the head of 'I know more than you do:' the other is 'I know what is best for you.'

'The fourth sin is the sin of 'loss of big picture'. This sin is commonplace in bureaucratic environments where only one's piece of the puzzle is important.

'The fifth sin is the sin of ignorance. The sin is a failure to know that you don't know.

'The sixth sin is the sin of deception. This sin manifests itself as hidden agendas and 'risk shopping'.

'The last sin is less common but nonetheless undesirable sin of blind compliance. This sin is primarily committed by those who don't have to pay the bill.'



APPENDIX 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CONSENSUS PROCESSES

1.22 The Canadian Round Tables

Frustration with the rigidity of conventional consultation methods led to experiments of consensus-based multi-stakeholder processes in Canada in the late 1980s.

This model was eventually adopted and strongly promoted by the Federal Government as Canadian Round Tables, launched in 1993. The guiding principles of Canadian Round Tables are listed below.²⁰

The approach involves a committee with representatives from government, industry, NGOs and community groups. The parties address each other directly, engage in debate and make decisions as a group, usually aiming for consensus. The aim is to provide authoritative advice to government, which may or may not be followed. (Vanderwal 1999)

The optimism of the founders has generally been confirmed in practice and the model is now widely followed in environmental management and dispute resolution at all levels of government in Canada (Vari 1995, Vasseur et al 1997, Kuhn and Ballard 1998, Vanderwal 1999, Konisky and Beirle 2001).

This model is essentially similar to 'stakeholder' or 'Consensus-Based Decision-Making' in the USA and to the stakeholder advisory committees established by Australian governments e.g. the catchment management, native vegetation management and water reform processes in NSW.

The Canadian Round Tables are based on the following guiding principles.

- Principle #1 - **Purpose Driven**
 - People need a reason to participate in the process.
- Principle #2 - **Inclusive not exclusive**
 - All parties with a significant interest in the issue should be involved in the consensus process.
- Principle #3 - **Voluntary Participation**
 - The parties who are affected or interested participate voluntarily.
- Principle #4 - **Self Design**

²⁰ See <http://www.mediate.com/articles/consen.cfm>



- The parties design the consensus process.
- **Principle #5 - Flexibility**
 - Flexibility should be designed into the process.
- **Principle #6 - Equal Opportunity**
 - All parties must have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate throughout the process.
- **Principle #7 - Respect for Diverse Interests**
 - Acceptance of the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of the parties involved in the consensus process is essential.
- **Principle #8 - Accountability**
 - The parties are accountable both to their constituencies, and to the process that they have agreed to establish.
- **Principle #9 - Time Limits**
 - Realistic deadlines are necessary throughout the process.
- **Principle #10 - Implementation**
 - Commitment to implementation and effective monitoring are essential parts of any agreement.



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Principles for Public Participation in Integrated Resource Recovery in Western Australia

1. Introduction

These principles promote public participation in Integrated Resource Recovery (IRR) processes in Western Australia and guide decision-makers' interaction with the general community, key stakeholders, commercial proponents and each other in those processes. The principles are an integral part of the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in Western Australia.

The principles are the *shared 'rules of the road'* for how different levels of Government will engage with the public and each other during the stages of IRR processes, including the selection and implementation of Resource Recovery technologies and/or systems. The principles seek to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, and avoid duplication between Government agencies in the IRR loop.

By ensuring a high level of public participation, greater inter-agency co-ordination and consistency, and compliance with State Government policy and international best practices, the intended effect of the Strategy and these principles is to increase the legitimacy of IRR decision-making, increase technical competence in IRR decision-making, reduce associated risks, and thereby achieve optimal resource recovery outcomes.

Principles for public participation necessarily carry with them *roles and responsibilities* for different players in the IRR 'chain' and these are also outlined here.

1.1 Background

The principles were developed by a workshop consisting of Local, Regional, and State Government representatives in May 2002. The workshop took place as part of a project conducted by the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) through the Waste Education Strategy Implementation Group (WESIG) to develop a Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR for WA. The principles are based on and seek alignment with researched international best practice for public participation in waste management aspects, recent WA State Government guidelines for public participation, the general Code of Ethics of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner, and consultation with key stakeholders – including Local, Regional, and State Government representatives and community groups - in the context of the project.

2. The Principles for Public Participation

*Principle 1: The public (which includes local residents, general community, Government officials, industry, non-Government organisations, and others who have a stake) has a **right** to be involved in IRR decision-making.*

Principle 2: IRR decision-making will be conducted in an inclusive, honest, and transparent manner that can demonstrate independence from proponent interests and foster trust amongst all participants. Agencies will provide feedback to the public on the way its input has been used in IRR decision-making.

Principle 3: Using the Public Participation Matrix (PPM), agencies will assess IRR risk and complexity (social, technical, financial and environmental aspects) and design appropriate public participation approaches.

Principle 4: Agencies will ensure that all stages of IRR (IRR planning, Resource Recovery option selection, Resource Recovery development, and IRR implementation) will feature public participation opportunities. Those opportunities will typically feature a mix of educational, consultative and deliberative methods and will be based on appropriate social research.

Principle 5: Agencies recognise that special skills and appropriate human and other resources are needed to effectively conduct IRR public participation programs.

Principle 6: Agencies will continuously improve IRR public participation programs in line with community expectations.

Principle 7: Agencies will demonstrate commitment to these principles and cooperatively fulfill the roles and responsibilities outlined.

3. The Four Stages of the IRR ‘continuum’

<i>Stage 1</i>	<i>Stage 2</i>	<i>Stage 3</i>	<i>Stage 4</i>
<i>Developing Regional IRR Plan</i>	<i>Progressing Resource Recovery – technology / site selection.</i>	<i>Implementing Resource Recovery</i>	<i>Educating the Public – using new IRR system</i>
Typically, in terms of public participation, this would see the Region with the support of participating Councils seeking out community attitudes and inputs – as part of a two-way dialogue - how resource recovery should be conducted on in the Region.	As part of the Regional IRR Plan, the Region and participating Councils may wish to pursue Resource Recovery. Typically, in terms of public participation, this would involve the Region with the support of participating Councils seeking out community attitudes and inputs – as part of a two-way dialogue - about different Resource Recovery options and potential sites.	Once an Resource Recovery option has been selected, the Region with the support of participating Councils may typically choose to keep local communities informed of progress in implementation.	When an IRR system – potentially including an Resource Recovery option – is to commence or has commenced operation, Council may typically communicate with ratepayers about any changes to service and any new actions that are required.
In Stage 1, residents and stakeholders are informed, consulted, involved and potentially partnered with .	In Stage 2, residents and stakeholders are informed, consulted, involved , and potentially partnered with.	In Stage 3, residents and stakeholders are primarily informed .	In Stage 4, residents are primarily informed and educated .

4. The Players and their Main Roles

<i>Local Government – Community Advocates</i>	<i>Regional Government – Problem Solvers</i>	<i>State Government – Facilitators</i>
<i>Primary Sphere of Influence: Resource Recovery Practices; Collection / Recycling</i>	<i>Primary Sphere of Influence: Strategy, Systems and Technology; Sorting, Processing & Treatment</i>	<i>Primary Sphere of Influence: Policy; Avoidance</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind support of Regional conduct of public participation in Regional IRR Plan and Resource Recovery implementation. • Direct conduct of education initiatives aimed at local behavioural change in IRR system, eg, ratepayer participation in collection programs. • Act as advocates of local interests in IRR processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose develop and implement IRR • Direct conduct of public participation in Regional IRR Plan and Resource Recovery implementation. • Support of constituent Councils’ conduct of education initiatives aimed at local behavioural change in IRR system, eg, ratepayer participation in collection programs. • Act as problem solvers on behalf of the community in IRR processes; act as primary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and monitoring of IRR policy and funding framework. • Promote concept of public participation. • Conduct of State-wide social research on community attitudes and behaviours in waste management and sustainable consumption; conduct of State-wide waste education. • Act as facilitators of IRR processes.

4.1 Rationale for Main Roles

Different levels of Government have different capacity to enact the principles. This is a function of their relative spheres of influence and core business, eg, one level may be more or less effective in significantly enacting a given principle. For the principles to achieve their intended effects, it is important for each member of the IRR ‘value chain’ to focus their best endeavours on the sphere in which they have the greatest capacity.

Stages 1, 2, and 3 are strongly concerned with strategic issues and the identification and adoption of complex and costly systems and technologies, particularly those centred on Resource Recovery aspects. It is foreseen that the lead agency in Stages 1, 2 and 3 is Regional Government. Regions’ role in Stages 1, 2, and 3 is borne out by their overall organisational mandate, the WA IRR experience to date, the capacity and resources of Regions to progress IRR (particularly Resource Recovery), and Australian and international trends toward regionalisation of waste management as driven by economies of scale.

Local Government is more appropriately placed as the lead agency in Stage 4 due to Councils’ direct relationship and day-to-day experience with ratepayers and, therefore, their legitimacy in promoting appropriate resource recovery behaviours. Fundamentally, ratepayers’ direct experience with resource recovery (eg, bins and the collection of their contents) is associated with Councils. It is logical therefore for Councils to be the primary vehicle for seeking different or improved resource recovery behaviours from ratepayers. Where a local Council is undertaking an IRR process in its own right (eg, separately from a Regional structure), the Council will assume all the role and responsibilities allocated here to both Local and Regional Government.

For its part, in line with Towards Zero Waste and the creation of the Waste Management Board, State Government has a crucial role to play in facilitating the overall policy, planning and funding settings for IRR and creating a context that is conducive to its take-up. State Government is also best placed to gauge community attitudes on a holistic basis and to articulate broader issues, such as those associated with consumption / waste avoidance.

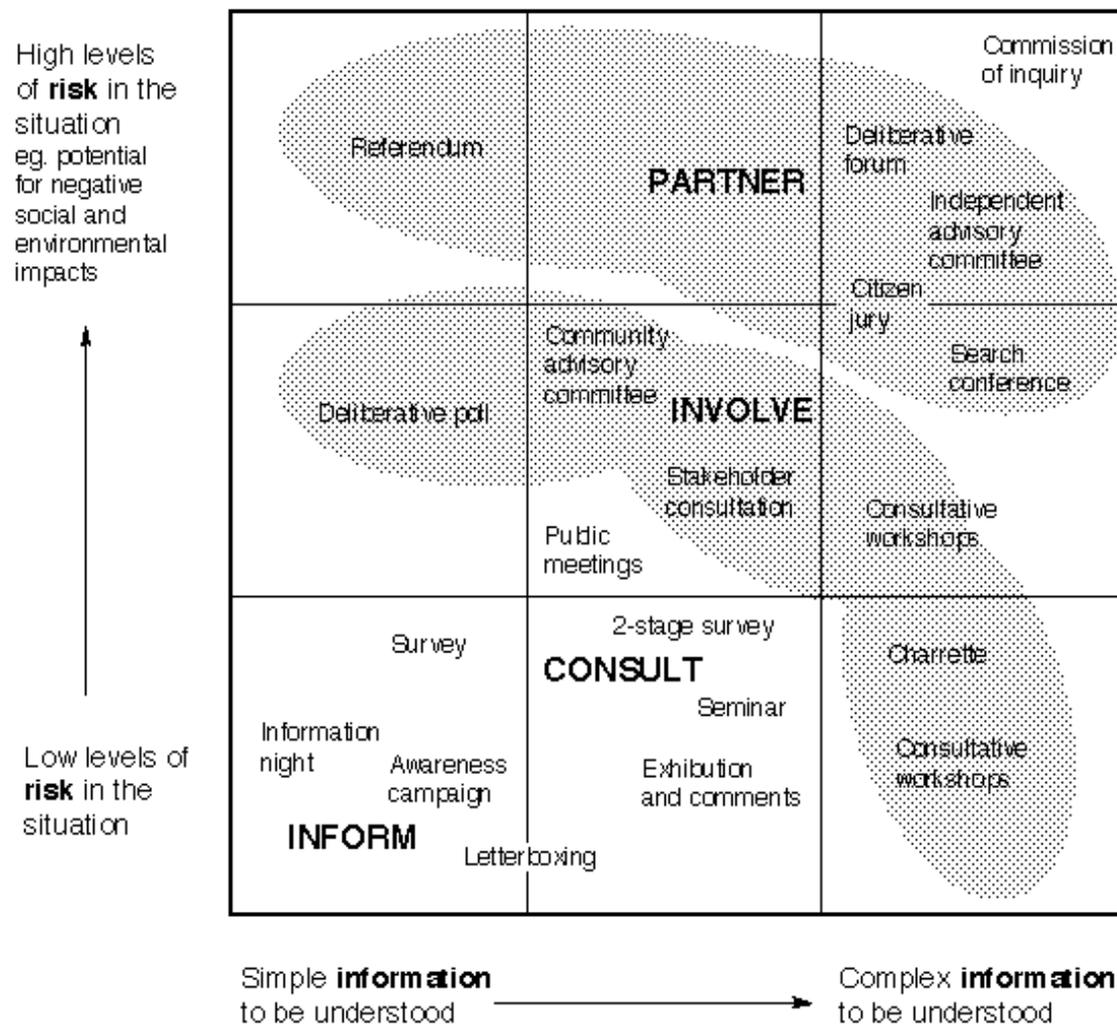
4.2 Techniques for Public Participation

There are many different techniques and tools for involving the public in decision-making and implementation processes. These range from media-based public education campaigns to one-on-one discussions with key stakeholders to large-scale public meetings to quantitatively-based telephone surveys to the development and deliberation of community-based special interest committees. Techniques serve different purposes in different contexts according to different circumstances, such as budgetary resources, local socio-demographics and practitioner capability.

Fundamentally, as underscored by the Public Participation Matrix (PPM) developed for the WALGA/WESIG project, technique selection is driven by the level of public participation that is adopted in an IRR process. As recommended by the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy, the fundamental guide for technique selection should be ‘Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide’ by the Department of Premier and Cabinet Here, the primary focus is on each player committing to selecting appropriate techniques to suit their situation rather than prescription of specific techniques.

The importance of community consultation process needs to be recognised and adequately resourced in the planning phase of the process. The techniques should be tailored to the needs of the community and not sacrificed due to inadequate resourcing.

5. The Public Participation Matrix



6. The Responsibilities

The Principles for Public Participation fall into four general categories: a) those that demonstrate the agency's overall commitment to public participation; b) those that guide the agency in internally preparing to conduct public participation; c) those that guide the agency's external implementation of public participation; and d) those that commit the agency in resourcing public participation. Agency responsibilities are interpreted within that framework. The responsibilities that are considered core to the achievement of an improved situation in IRR public participation in Western Australia are bold italic.

6.1 Local Government

Committing to Public Participation in IRR

Local Government – at both individual Council and peak body levels – will:

- ***recognise that the community and key stakeholders represent a significant source of knowledge in progressing IRR;***
- approach IRR with an open mind;
- ***recognise that Resource Recovery selection must consider technical, financial, environmental and social issues, general public interest and local public interest;***
- conduct itself as the ***advocate*** of locally-based interests in IRR processes;
- ***be open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny of its involvement in IRR processes;***
- recognise that public participation in IRR processes is an on-going and continuous commitment;
- recognise that public participation strategies and methods are needs-based, eg, different approaches and techniques suit different circumstances based on risk and complexity of a given IRR aspect;
- consider the fact that 'two way' participatory approaches are optimal and best practice;
- ***co-operate with Regional and State Government in a co-ordinated approach to IRR including public participation aspects;***
- demonstrate commitment to public participation in IRR processes by adopting and publicising appropriate Council resolutions;
- adopt and publicise the key principles for public participation at WALGA Executive and Conference levels;
- ***sign multi-stakeholder Memorandum of Understanding (through WALGA) for Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in WA;*** and
- disseminate WALGA executive / conference resolution to all member Councils.

Preparing for Public Participation in IRR

Local Government – at both individual Council and peak body levels – will:

- ***raise internal levels of awareness and understanding about IRR, including the role and practice of public participation, potentially through attendance at training programs;***
- have reference to 'Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide' issued by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and standards developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2);
- advise Regional public participation practitioners of specific local community characteristics and needs;
- select public participation methods that cater for the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of contemporary communities;
- ***adopt the PPM as a standard assessment and planning tool in preparing public participation approaches;***
- view the use of the PPM and the conduct of public participation as an extension of best practice risk identification, assessment and treatment;
- utilise performance measurement for all public participation methods (quantitative and qualitative);
- revise on-going public participation programs based on performance measurement and other feedback; and
- review other experiences of public participation in IRR processes .

Implementing Public Participation in IRR

Local Government – at both individual Council and peak body levels – will:

- identify all individuals and groups in an LGA with a significant stake in IRR;
- provide input on local views and priorities about resource recovery to Regional and State IRR processes;
- ***provide in-kind assistance and input to Regional efforts to gain public participation in Regional IRR planning;***
- ***provide in-kind assistance and input to Regional Government in creating opportunities for stakeholders and communities to: a) better understand the role and purpose of Resource Recovery within IRR; b) better understand Resource Recovery technological options and their relative pro's and con's, and; c) have input into Resource Recovery technology/system and site selection;***
- ***implement education initiatives – following the adoption of Regional IRR Plan and Resource Recovery option - aimed at achieving appropriate resource recovery behaviours such as general participation and quality presentation in collection;***
- provide ratepayers participating in a Regional IRR Plan with performance feedback (eg, participation rates, contamination rates, recycling/diversion rates, general environmental/financial outcomes) through Council communication means;
- publicise Regional site and technology open days for community members through Council communication means; and
- support Region in establishing community-based committees, where appropriate, to gauge community attitudes to operation of IRR system.

Resourcing Public Participation in IRR

Local Government – at both individual Council and peak body levels – will:

- ***make personnel available for training in the conduct of public participation programs;***
- ***make personnel available to provide in-kind support to Regional public participation programs toward the Regional IRR Plan and/or Resource Recovery option;***
- ***allocate budget for the conduct of Council-implemented (and Regionally coordinated) education programs to inform ratepayers about adopted IRR system and any changes ratepayers need to be aware of;***
- disseminate appropriate IRR information through Council communication means as appropriate; and
- otherwise plan for budgetary implications of initiatives arising from these principles.

6.2 Regional Government

Committing to Public Participation in IRR

Regional Government will:

- *recognise that the community and key stakeholders represent a significant source of knowledge in progressing IRR;*
- approach IRR with an open mind;
- conduct itself as the **problem solver** on behalf of the community rather than the proponent of any predetermined approach;
- be open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny of its involvement in IRR processes;
- state their intent to progress IRR - through Regional IRR Plans and Resource Recovery option identification - and outline opportunities for public participation;
- accept the possibility that a technology-based strategy is not always necessary;
- *recognise that IRR – particularly Resource Recovery technology and site selection - must consider technical, financial, environmental and social issues, the general public interest and the local public interest;*
- *seek to involve a wide range of community representatives and key stakeholders in issue identification and problem solving in IRR processes;*
- continually provide clarity about IRR decision-making and the ways in which community/stakeholder input will figure;
- recognise that public participation in IRR decision-making and implementation is an on-going and continuous commitment; and
- *adopt and publicise these principles via a multi-stakeholder Memorandum of Understanding for the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in WA (to be signed by all Regional CEO).*

Preparing for Public Participation in IRR

Regional Government will:

- work with constituent Councils to identify all individuals and groups in a Region with a significant stake in resource recovery practices;
- ***undertake / conduct training of appropriate personnel in public participation methodologies and techniques;***
- have reference to 'Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide' issued by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and standards developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2);
- ***incorporate public participation streams into overall IRR project management plans;***
- define and communicate clear objectives for public participation programs;
- select public participation methods that cater for the multi-dimensional and diverse nature of contemporary communities;
- consider the overall awareness and knowledge levels and needs of local communities in selecting public participation methods;
- consider the fact that 'two way' participatory approaches are optimal and best practice;
- recognise that public participation strategies and methods are needs-based, eg, different approaches and techniques suit different circumstances based on risk and complexity of a given IRR aspect.
- utilise various social research methods in order to inform the public participation approach, including quantitative and qualitative methods;
- promote the benefits of public participation in IRR to constituent Councils;
- investigate Regional community attitudes – as they relate to financial, environmental, and social priorities - to IRR in general and Resource Recovery options;
- ***apply the Public Participation Matrix (PPM) where appropriate to assess the appropriate level and means of public participation;***
- view the use of the PPM and the conduct of public participation as an extension of best practice risk identification, assessment and treatment;
- adopt the PPM as a standard assessment and planning tool in preparing public participation approaches;
- develop and utilise performance measurement for all public participation methods (quantitative and qualitative);
- establish appropriate procedures in the EOI and tender process for Resource Recovery technology and site selection to ensure the highest levels of probity;
- develop and incorporate probity procedures and auditing into Resource Recovery EOI and tender assessments;
- have staff involved in managing processes to select Resource Recovery technologies / systems sign disclosure statements;
- undertake all appropriate legal and planning requirements in terms of Resource Recovery technology / site development;
- establish benchmarks for and continually monitor the performance of Resource Recovery contractors;
- facilitate third party verification of technology / site performance where appropriate;
- require (through contractual arrangement) technology / site operators to support on-going community participation, including technology / site open days and other means of communication;
- develop structured means for conflict resolution during IRR processes;
- consider the use of independent facilitators; and
- require (through contractual arrangement) technology / site operators to provide regular performance reports.

Implementing Public Participation in IRR

Regional Government will:

- create structured and ‘early as possible’ opportunities for stakeholders and communities to participate in IRR processes;
- act as the **primary interface** with key stakeholder groups participating and /or affected by IRR processes;
- ***create opportunities for stakeholders and communities to: a) better understand the role of Resource Recovery within IRR; b) better understand Resource Recovery technological options and their relative pro’s and con’s, and; c) have input into Resource Recovery technology / system and site selection;***
- ***incorporate local views and priorities about resource recovery into Regional IRR Plans and Resource Recovery option selection;***
- make documentation relating to the Resource Recovery technology and site selection process readily available to interested parties;
- create appropriate forums for the gathering of input as well as the provision of feedback;
- provide on-going communication and feedback to stakeholders in participation programs and clarity about how their input is being utilised;
- provide regular briefings to Councils about the use of local community input into IRR planning;
- make the advice and views of independent experts available to interested parties;
- place as much documentation as possible (within the bounds of commercial-in-confidence considerations) about IRR processes, including Resource Recovery EOI and tender, on the public record;
- ***design template education initiatives for Council implementation – following the adoption of Regional IRR Plan and Resource Recovery option - aimed at achieving appropriate resource recovery behaviours such as general participation and quality presentation in collection;***
- develop means to provide the community and stakeholders with on-going information about holistic performance of Resource Recovery approach;
- keep State Government/WMB informed of status of public participation in IRR processes;
- incorporate community feedback into the contents of Resource Recovery EOI / tender documentation, as well as Resource Recovery EOI / tender assessment criteria;
- disclose the basis of deciding in favour of a given Resource Recovery option / site;
- ***disclose the environmental, financial and social cost/benefits of the preferred Resource Recovery option / site;***
- regularly collect, collate and distribute to constituent Councils and stakeholders performance information about the Regional resource recovery system;
- ensure that information issued in public participation programs is objective, complete and accessible;
- revise on-going public participation programs based on performance measurement results and other feedback;
- monitor effectiveness of educational initiatives conducted in the Region in attitudinal and behavioural terms; and
- consider and act on the implications of these principles in the context of future organisational plans.

Resourcing Public Participation in IRR

Regional Government will:

- ***plan for and allocate appropriate budget to the public participation component of IRR Plan design, Resource Recovery option selection and Resource Recovery implementation including the development and dissemination of educational materials, the conduct of consultative sessions, the conduct of social research, and the servicing of community-based consultative structures;***
- ***plan for and allocate budget to research, design and disseminate to Councils a template education and communication campaign to let Regional residents know about IRR system and any implications for changes to resource recovery services;***
- select staff who have experience and knowledge of (or capacity to quickly develop relevant skills) the delivery of public participation programs;
- have relevant personnel trained in public participation practices;
- incorporate capacity to conduct or manage public participation programs in position descriptions / Key Performance Indicators of project managers; and
- otherwise plan for budgetary implications of any projects and/or initiatives arising from these principles.

6.3 State Government

Committing to Public Participation in IRR

State Government will:

- *recognise that the community and key stakeholders represent a significant source of knowledge in progressing IRR (all agencies);*
- *promote the benefits of public participation in IRR processes (Dept of P&C; WMB);*
- *sign the multi-stakeholder Memorandum of Understanding for the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in WA (WMB/DEP); and*
- *facilitate Ministerial endorsement of these principles (WMB).*

Preparing for Public Participation in IRR

State Government will:

- *recognise that public participation strategies and methods are needs-based, eg, different approaches and techniques suit different circumstances based on risk and complexity of a given IRR aspect (all agencies);*
- *develop, utilise and disseminate template performance measures for IRR public participation methods (quantitative and qualitative) (WMB);*
- *identify most appropriate social research tools / methods (DEP);*
- *identify optimal IRR related environmental and social outcomes for WA and adopt in policy and planning framework (WMB/DEP);*
- *provide a policy and planning framework that considers and incorporates community-based values and local government viewpoints about IRR (WMB/DEP);*
- *provide a policy and planning framework that requires commercial proponents to meet established standards for technology / system performance in terms of environmental and social performance (WMB/DEP); and*
- *consider convening an overall IRR Facilitation Committee through the Waste Management Board – consisting of Local, Regional, community/stakeholder representatives and technical experts – to globally monitor all aspects of IRR performance in WA, including its technical, environmental and societal performance, as well as the role of public participation (WMB).*

Implementing Public Participation in IRR

State Government will:

- ***create structured opportunities for stakeholders and communities to participate in developing State-wide IRR policy and planning framework (WMB/DEP);***
- undertake strategic communication of State-wide policy and planning framework for IRR in general and to specifically support IRR initiatives by individual Regions and Councils (DEP);
- identify general gaps in IRR decision-maker knowledge about community attitudes / behaviours (DEP);
- ***establish and conduct a social research program into community attitudes / behaviours with regard to waste management and sustainable consumption on a State-wide basis (DEP);***
- provide research findings to Councils, Regions and the general public in order to raise awareness levels and guide program development (DEP);
- ***conduct a State-wide education campaign to promote waste avoidance and sustainable consumption and generally raise waste awareness levels (DEP);***
- monitor developments in public participation best practice and distribute relevant information to relevant players, potentially through training (WMB);
- monitor Regional and Council specific IRR process developments and refer community enquiries to relevant bodies (WMB);
- collect and compare experiences with public participation in IRR situations (WMB);
- consider strategic alliances with the Australian branch of the International Association for Public Participation (DEP);
- monitor on-going design of Regional IRR Plans (WMB);
- regularly collect, collate and publicise State-wide performance information on the WA resource recovery system (WMB);
- revise on-going public participation programs based on performance measurement results and other feedback (all agencies); and
- facilitate collection of public participation in IRR case studies and promote them (WMB).

Resourcing Public Participation in IRR

State Government will:

- ***as part of Waste Management and Recycling Fund (WM&RF) and the operation of the Waste Management Board, scope and prioritise funding and granting commitments as outlined above and in the Pro-active Public Participation Strategy for IRR in WA, including:***
 - ***potential funding of public participation in development of State-wide IRR policy and planning framework;***
 - ***potential funding of IRR Facilitation Committee;***
 - ***potential funding support for the conduct of public participation programs about IRR at the Regional and Council level;***
 - ***potential funding support for the conduct of training of appropriate personnel – at State, Regional, and Local levels - in public participation methodologies and techniques;***
 - ***potential funding of IRR educational and information materials and social research; and***
 - ***potential funding of State-wide educational initiative to promote waste avoidance and sustainable consumption.***

