

***Engaging Queensland :
Community Engagement—
What is it and how does it work?***

**A presentation by
Ms Glenda Emmerson¹**

Welcome to the APEC Conference, we look forward to presenting an informative and exciting program for you. We would greatly welcome any comments or feedback you may have as we believe in an engaging environment, so we would welcome your feedback. Most importantly, we look forward to getting to know you all better over the next few days.

Our first presentation today is on *Engaging Queensland: Community Engagement and Indigenous Liaison – What is it and how does it work?* That is, how it works for us. As you are no doubt aware, Queensland has a history of doing things, how shall I say, well ... differently! We like to think we have our own style and I am sure you all have your own opinions on the matter. Regardless, we have undertaken a unique experiment in Queensland with community engagement and within that, Indigenous engagement or liaison. Today is a perfect opportunity to share our experiences – good and bad – with you.

Firstly, I am going to put community engagement in the Queensland Parliament in some context for you and then I will hand over to Brett, our Indigenous Liaison Officer – who I am sure you are all *really* here to hear from! Lucky I am getting used to being part of “Brett’s team” as the Members’ often refer to us all in Community Engagement Services (CES) during valedictory, letters of appreciation and so on. Brett, please introduce yourself.

My name is Brett Nutley and I am the Parliamentary Indigenous Liaison Officer. Today I am going to quickly fill you in on what the Queensland Parliament has accomplished and is doing to engage with Indigenous peoples across Queensland, how we have built relationships and gained trust with large organisations and key figures in rural, regional and urban Indigenous communities. I will talk to you all again soon.

But what am I going to talk to you about? Today I am going to quickly update you on:

- *Our background* – where we came from and the make-up of our team? Also our goals and why bother with community engagement?;
- *Our achievements and our challenges* – some of the things we have achieved and some of the things we have failed at – fortunately for us the good outweighs the bad. Mostly anyway!;
- *Our future direction* – following a recent review, the future directions we have identified;
- Then, I am going to hand over to Brett to discuss in more detail our *Indigenous engagement* – specifically our experience!

Our background

So first, our background - Community Engagement Services began in Queensland in July 2007. Its creation followed a comprehensive and inclusive review of the Queensland Parliamentary Service which involved members of parliament, such as the Speaker and others, the Clerk and other parliamentary managers, as well as parliamentary staff during a number of meetings over several months. This review found that the Queensland Parliament had not been very successful in

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engaging with the Queensland community and that it needed to undertake this activity more strategically. Basically, there was a traditional belief that the public would come to us – but we had to change our thinking and take our activities to the community.

As a result, the Parliament's goals were amended to include a new goal:

Goal 3 - Community Engagement

To support the Parliament to engage with all Queenslanders and to play a positive role in the community.²

The Community Engagement Services area was created to support this goal. The area included existing staff within the Parliament including parliamentary education services and some communication staff with some new staff employed in other areas, specifically Indigenous liaison and protocol. The service area began in July 2007 with nine staff positions.

What is community engagement?

But before I progress onto our activities here in Queensland, I just want to quickly refresh your understanding of community engagement and how parliamentary education fits within this emerging discipline. More importantly, I want to ensure you know what I mean when I use the term “community engagement”.

Community engagement is an emerging discipline, drawing from wide fields of practice including political science and public administration. But also an increasing amount of information is being published by community engagement practitioners themselves. As a result of its evolving status, whenever a group of community engagement practitioners gather to discuss ‘what is engagement?’, a discussion about diversity of language usually emerges. This cartoon therefore sums up community engagement nicely!



² Queensland Parliament, *Parliamentary Service Management Plan 2007-2011*, p 3.

'Engagement' can involve consultation, extension or liaison, communication, education, public participation and working in partnership. So community engagement is all of these things – and more!³

Cartoons are fine, but we are a group interested in the scholarly – otherwise we would not be attending an Australasian Parliamentary Educators' Conference – so what is a scholarly definition of community engagement?

As community engagement is an emerging discipline, there is currently more than one accepted definition of community engagement. But within the literature, there is broad agreement on the basic concepts, principles and good practice approaches for community engagement.

Personally, I believe the most useful definition of community engagement has been developed by the International Association for Public Participation, also known as IAP2. For this speech, the terms 'community engagement' and 'public participation' are meant to be the same.

IAP2 is an organisation that has been developing, supporting and promoting the practice of community engagement throughout the world since 1990. It defines community engagement as:

*Any process that involves the community in problem solving or decision-making and uses community input to make better decisions.*⁴

So this definition shows that community engagement is about making decisions. And it makes it clear that communities should be engaged about decisions that are yet to be made, not with a view to hard-sell decisions already made. And if anyone watched the former ABC show – the Hollowmen – you'll know what I mean!

So good community engagement is about ensuring that the community feels that they have been heard, feel comfortable with the process and the basis on which the decision was made, even if they aren't happy about the outcome.

IAP2 has also developed a Public Participation or Community Engagement Spectrum⁵ to demonstrate five different levels of engagement possible with communities. I am going to spend some time explaining this spectrum as it really is the 'heart and soul' of community engagement.



³ Department of Sustainability and Environment, State of Victoria, 2007.

⁴ Developed by the International Association for Public Participation, www.iap2.org, 2004.

⁵ Twyford Consulting, *Beyond Public meetings: Connecting Community Engagement with Decision-Making*, 2006, p. 135.

This spectrum shows an increasing level of public impact as you progress from 'Inform' (at the left) through to 'Empower' (at the right). At the 'Inform' level, you aim to make the decision-making process transparent by providing balanced and objective information. So you are letting people know what you will do and how it will be done.

Moving up the spectrum to 'Consult', you continue to inform the community, but you are now also seeking feedback. By seeking this feedback, you are promising the community that you will listen to and consider that feedback and use it in the decision-making process.

At the 'Involve' level, you are seeking more than just feedback. You are saying that you want to work with the community to generate new ideas. To work at this level of engagement, you are acknowledging that you don't have all the answers and believe that the community knows something that you don't. You are also saying that you would like to identify this information sooner rather than later so you can base your decision on this information.

Up until this stage on the community engagement spectrum, the responsibility for making the ultimate decision rests entirely with the decision-maker and not with the community. This relationship now changes as you move further along the spectrum.

At the 'Collaborate' level, you actually want the community to help you make the decision and therefore share the responsibility for the decision.

Ultimately, at the 'Empower' level, you are saying that the community only is going to make the decision and will become responsible for its implications and outcomes.

Therefore, as you move from left to right along the IAP2 spectrum, the community is invited to have an increasing impact and therefore responsibility for the decision, to the point where, at the 'Empower' level, the community becomes the decision-maker.

People tend to think that engagement occurring at the 'Inform' level is less difficult than engagement occurring at the 'Empower' end of the spectrum. But in reality, no part of the spectrum is harder or more preferable than another.

I have also listed tools that can be used to facilitate community engagement in a parliamentary context.⁶

⁶ Glenda Emmerson, developed for presentation at Australian Study of Parliament Group in 2008 and updated in 2011.



International Association
for Public Participation
Australasia

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Parliamentary examples	<p>Inform</p> <p>“Everyone’s Parliament” brand Fact sheets</p> <p>Other parliamentary publications – Tabled papers database Website (lists way to engage)</p> <p>Open days Public tours/ virtual tour Media releases Education activities – public service/ cultural awareness training Hansard Broadcast of Proceedings Events Parliamentary committee reports Indigenous Liaison Officer Members/ EO</p> <p>Parliamentary Committees</p>	<p>Consult</p> <p>Committee public hearings/ submissions Surveys</p> <p>Petitions and e-petitions</p> <p>Education activities – role plays, voting activities</p> <p>Indigenous Liaison Officer Members/ EO</p> <p>Parliamentary Committees</p>	<p>Involve</p> <p>Committee public hearings/ submissions/ Facebook/ youth forums Workshops</p> <p>Education activities – Youth Parliaments, constitutional conventions</p> <p>Indigenous Liaison Officer Members/ EO</p> <p>Parliamentary Committees</p>	<p>Collaborate</p> <p>Indigenous Advisory Working Group Indigenous artist in residence Committees – Advisory groups</p> <p>Indigenous Liaison Officer Members/ EO</p> <p>Parliamentary Committees</p>	<p>Empower</p> <p>Elections and by-elections Referendums Citizens juries</p>

Significantly, traditional parliamentary education activities have tended to operate at the ‘Inform’ level of the spectrum. However, through our various events and activities, we have managed to work in all areas of the spectrum except ‘Empower’. However, this occurs at elections. This list is certainly not exhaustive and provides only a glimpse of actual and possible activities that parliaments can use to engage with the community. I am not going to go through them all individually, but they can be fine tuned to ensure they become more valuable engagement activities for all involved – the Parliament, its members and the community.

And you may note, I list members, their electorate offices, and committees as the primary tools for engagement between the Parliament and the community at all levels of the spectrum except ‘Empower’. This is because I firmly believe, along with other commentators, that the Parliament as an institution has a role in supporting its members in an apolitical way to create opportunities and relationships for directly involving the public in its work.

Why bother with community engagement?

But before I proceed further, why is a traditional organisation such as the Queensland Parliament even interested in community engagement? Why actually bother? Well for many reasons.

Both globally and locally, there have been a range of drivers, forces and trends moving decision-makers to include community engagement in planning and decision making. The Annual World Values Surveys⁷ have documented the emergence over the last 30 years of three major phenomena

⁷ See: www.worldvaluessurvey.org

which are impacting on decision-making processes in developed and developing countries.⁸ They include:

1. A steady decline in public confidence in societal institutions, government and non-government recognising that governments do not have all the answers.

The second trend identified by the World Values Survey includes:

2. A rise in citizen intervention in the decision-making processes of public and private agencies and organisations.

This has arisen from legislative requirements for engagement, such as that required with environmental impact statements, but also from increasing community expectations that they can be involved in decisions. There is also a growing expectation that governments should be responsive, accountable and effective.

The third trend identified is an:

3. increase in the public's ability and willingness to pursue alternative modes of participation and political action.

This trend has resulted from an increase in education levels and an increasing interest by the community in having its opinions reflected in decisions. Changes brought about by technology, such as the internet, RSS feeds, mobile phones, texting, twittering etc., are all providing simpler and faster opportunities to influence decision-makers.

Locally, there have been a number of forces moving the Queensland Parliament towards undertaking more meaningful engagement. In November 2002, the Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research (OESR)⁹ conducted a series of random household surveys. The survey showed that only 37.8 per cent, just over one-third, of the Queensland population knew of someone in the Queensland Parliament that they could contact for advice or information.

More recently, an August 2011 study conducted by Harbinger Consultants on *South East Queensland Community Attitudes to Consultation and Engagement* (August 2011)¹⁰ found that respondents attitudes to engagement varied from "cynicism" and "pointless" to "necessary" and "having a say". So although participants were cynical about the process, they wanted engagement to occur. This research clearly demonstrates that the Parliament and politicians have work to do in improving their image. So there is actually a lot of work yet to be done! And this is where you as parliamentary educators come in!

Positive community engagement activities assist in building constructive and positive relationships between politicians and the community they represent. These relationships can be further strengthened in many ways including:

- Providing apolitical facilitation of engagement events such as those soon to be described;
- Providing information on parliament, its role and its decision-making activities to the community – the traditional parliamentary education role;
- Identifying new partnerships to assist in building connections to the community; and
- Motivating the community to become involved and see that their opinion matters!

⁸ Demediuk, Peter (2008) *The Costs and Benefits of Community Engagement by Local Government*. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, 2 (5). pp. 157-164. ISSN 1833-1882.

⁹ Queensland Office of Economic and Statistical Research (OESR), *Queensland Economic Review 2003/02* at p 19 of www.oesr.qld.gov.au/products/publications/qld-econ-review/qld-econ-review-2003-2.pdf, Queensland Treasury.

¹⁰ JM John Armstrong and Linda Carroll, *Survey Report: South East Queensland Community Attitudes to Consultation and Engagement, August 2011*, Harbinger Consultants.

All of these activities are required but they are occurring at different levels of effectiveness. Regardless, they all involve effective parliamentary education to encourage and motivate community engagement with the Parliament.

Therefore in response to these global and local drivers and trends, public and private decision-makers are taking a variety of approaches to enhance community engagement. So what has the Community Engagement Services (CES) team in Queensland done to address these issues?

Our team

Firstly, we built a team. But who is our team? Queensland's Community Engagement Services staff have skills in:

- media and communication;
- multimedia and publications;
- education;
- events and projects;
- Indigenous and community liaison; and
- community engagement.

Initially we had a team of nine full-time-equivalent positions. Now we have 8 staff positions but with part-time administrative support and the assistance of an Honorary Research Fellow, Professor Paul Reynolds. Most importantly, as a small team, we work together and support each other! I am very proud of our small but dedicated team. The successes we have achieved over the past four years were only possible through the development of a high-performing team.

But what do we actually do? Our service area goals include¹¹:

Supporting engagement:

Examples include:

- Outreach programs for regional Queenslanders, as well as culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD), disabled people; young people; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples.
- Management of community engagement projects, displays and related activities.
- Assist Members and parliamentary staff to engage and support a range of charities.
- Facilitate engagement with various community groups through displays, events and related activities.

To raise awareness and understanding – capacity building:

- Seminars, workshops, conferences and Youth Parliaments for educators, secondary school students, university students, public servants, Members and their staff, and other client groups (both community service and fee paying).
- Educational and information resources for use in educational institutions and by the wider community.
- Parliamentary Internship Program, where university students undertake a nominated research project under the supervision of a Member of Parliament or senior officer of the Parliamentary Service.
- Ongoing evaluation, in partnership with Education Queensland, of current educational programs to ensure that they are appropriate for the target audience; based on relevant school curricula; and consistent with current best practice in teaching.

¹¹ Queensland Parliament, *Community Engagement Services Operational Plan 2011-12*.

- Provide advice on selected protocol related matters, particularly Indigenous, international and multicultural protocols.
- Provide support for Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) engagement activities and events.

To improve stakeholder information – relationship building:

- Promote parliamentary activities and events in order to improve community understanding and awareness of the role and activities of the Queensland Parliament.
- Media releases, speeches and associated services for the Speaker and Parliamentary Service.
- Managing the Community Engagement Services pages on the Parliament’s website, plus the content of “What’s New?” and “Events”.
- Communication strategies for service wide projects, or projects involving multi-services.
- Support effective communications between the Parliament and its clients and within the Parliamentary Service.
- Facilitate support for charities as directed by the Clerk and the Speaker.
- Provide multi-media design and publication services for the Parliamentary Service and parliamentary committees.

In summary, CES engages the community with the decision-making processes of the Queensland Parliament through:

- Capacity building; and
- Relationship building.

We achieve these goals through a many and varied events, projects and activities. I will now detail some of our achievements and challenges over the past four years.

Our achievements and challenges

The Queensland Parliamentary Service is committed to actively promoting and educating others about the Parliament and to being a responsible corporate citizen. Key strategies and initiatives that support the achievement of this goal include involvement in various community activities, such as regional parliaments, open days, youth parliaments and conferences, as well as the development and implementation of inclusive policies and programs. These activities can generally be categorised into the following groupings:

- *Internal engagement*

An important point to make here is that we have found that it is just as important to engage internally as it is to engage externally in the usual manner. Without the support of your parliamentary colleagues, management and Members of Parliament, your achievements will be limited. We have been fortunate and have managed to have a high level of support internally, particularly from the Deputy Clerk, Clerk and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. This has made achieving our external engagement activities much easier!

- *Indigenous engagement*

With the assistance of our Indigenous Liaison Officer, the Queensland Parliament has achieved a number of successes with Indigenous engagement. Brett will detail these later, however a significant achievement is the creation of the “Wind Yarn”, a didgeridoo that tells the story of reconciliation in Queensland that is used at official parliamentary events and sits alongside the parliamentary mace. Also the introduction of a traditional acknowledgement at the beginning of each sitting week and the flying of Indigenous flags – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – in the Assembly Chamber and outside the Queensland Parliament

every day are testament to the improved engagement we have undertaken over the past few years.

- *Engagement with parliamentary committees*

CES has assisted parliamentary committees through providing advice and training on engagement and cultural awareness. We have also assisted in relationship building through forming partnerships with a number of organisations to the benefit of parliamentary committees. These organisations include: ECQ, AEC, Department of Communities, Education Queensland, Department of Premier and Cabinet and non-government organisations such as the Justice Groups, the Queensland Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Human Services Coalition (QATSIHSC), etc

- *Multicultural achievements*

In 2009, the Queensland Parliament introduced citizenship ceremonies, which are then followed up with new citizens' information sessions. These have been extremely popular with the community and members and are an excellent opportunity for effective engagement. The annual multifaith service is also an excellent opportunity to invite the community into the Parliament.

- *Traditional parliamentary education activities and projects* are excellent engagement opportunities.

In Queensland, our fact sheets are branded with the "Everyone's Parliament" logo. We also hold the usual youth parliaments, student activities (including tours and workbook) and constitutional conventions. In addition, we undertake training. In addition to the cultural awareness training provided internally, we also provide externally training for teachers on effective parliamentary education methods. We also offer a fee for service seminar program for public servants. Graeme Kinnear will elaborate on this program tomorrow for you. In a nutshell though, to improve the engagement of this program, we have extended this program regionally and have grown it by over 800% over the last four years. We now earn over \$120,000 annually through this program alone.

- *Projects and events* are also very significant engagement opportunities.

A number of events such as open days and regional parliaments are managed and created by us. However, we tend to work with substantive events already occurring such as Brisbane Open Day, the Multicultural Festival, NAIDOC etc.

- *Support for charities* – significant engagement opportunity, raising awareness of parliamentary activities and garnering positive support in the community.

Tens of thousands of dollars have been raised annually over the past four years for RFDS, Pyjama Foundation, ACT for Kids, etc

Selected examples of our actual achievements 2007-2011:

Everyone's Parliament brand

To begin, we developed a unique marketable brand. Titled "Everyone's Parliament", the brand also includes the parliamentary logo, website and a call to action:

Help to shape your future – participate in Queensland's democratic system

We use this brand on a range of merchandise and our community engagement website. The development of a visually appealing and simple brand is very important as it enables people to identify the Queensland Parliament easily. The brand also contains Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander artwork in primary colours.

Fact sheets

Another important project has been the development of a range of fact sheets under the new Everyone's Parliament branding. The fact sheets are distributed to school students and other interested members of the community to educate them about how the system of government works and more importantly where they can influence the decision-making process.

Publications

In June 2011, the most significant change to the Queensland Parliament occurred since the abolition of the Upper House in 1922. Changes were made to the legislative process and the parliamentary committee system, resulting in amendment to almost all of parliamentary education publications produced by CES. A significant amount of effort has been required to update these resources.

Examples of current publications include:

- *Parliament of Queensland* brochure in simplified Chinese;
- *Order in the House* – coffee-table book produced for sesquicentenary celebrations;
- Three posters for use in classrooms: The Legislative Assembly Chamber in Queensland; Parliament and Government in Queensland; and How you can be involved?;
- A student workbook to enhance and reinforce learnings from school tours;
- Two large portable stand-alone display panels - one explaining the role of Legislative Assembly; and the other the history of the Legislative Council; and
- What sort of political animal are you quiz.

Public Sector Seminars

Our longstanding fee-paying seminar program for public servants has been in operation since 1996. Importantly, it has grown over 800% between 2007 and 2011, since the operation of CES began. Annually, approximately 700 public servants now participate in the program. Significantly, evaluation of the seminar shows it is well regarded, averaging more than 95% approval over the last four years.

Two seminar programs are currently offered:

- An additional half-day fee-paying seminar program will begin in early 2012 explaining the new amended role of parliamentary committees in Queensland.
- A non-fee paying *Committees and You* seminar has been designed for interest groups and community groups.

Youth Parliaments

CES conducts several Youth Parliaments annually, as well as supporting Youth Parliaments from external organisations. Since 2007, CES have moved away from the traditional model of

“mock” youth parliaments on topics of potential interest to students. Introducing community engagement principles, youth parliaments are now mostly run on topics currently before parliamentary committee inquiries or government task forces. Resulting debates and other supporting materials are then provided to the inquiries to assist in their decision-making. This small change has been extremely well-received by youth parliament participants and decision-makers. Participants can see their efforts contributing to a real decision and decision-makers appreciate the opportunity to obtain additional information and engage with youth.

Website

We recently redeveloped our parliamentary website. It now contains educational material under “Explore your parliament” as well as a section titled “Get involved”. It details events and exhibitions and highlights upcoming events.

Indigenous engagement

The Indigenous Liaison Officer has been building Indigenous relationships and partnerships since his commencement in January 2008. Partnerships have been established with Government at State and Federal levels and also with Indigenous non-Government organisations across the state. This enables the Indigenous Liaison Officer to work along side other Indigenous organisation and their stakeholders in building capacity through parliamentary education tools and techniques.

CES has also been working with parliamentary committees to strengthen engagement between the Queensland Parliament and the Indigenous community.

Citizenship ceremony and Information Evening

CES organises an annual citizenship ceremony, which is conducted at Parliament House and hosted by the Speaker. Over 500 people have become Australian citizens as a result of this activity. This event is followed later in the year by a Citizens’ Information Evening.

Multifaith services

Annually, CES coordinates the Parliament’s Multifaith service. Now in its second year, the service is held before the first sitting day of the year and hosted by the Speaker.

Regional Parliaments

A few years ago, a major change to the Queensland Parliament occurred with the introduction of regional parliaments – one sitting each three year term. In September 2002, the Queensland Parliament assembled outside of Brisbane for the first time in its then 142-year history. The concept proves that Parliament is not just a sandstone building in George Street, it is actually a group of elected representatives meeting to make decisions on our behalf – those that elected them.

Regional sittings include public displays, tours and plays on the workings of government and highlight the ways citizens can get involved with parliament, as well as government planning and decision making. More than 8000 people visited the first regional parliament during three days of sittings in 2002 in Townsville.

In 2005, Rockhampton in Central Queensland, hosted the second regional sitting of Parliament. In October 2008, the third regional sitting occurred in Cairns. Over 5000 people attended each of these sittings which were very colourful and included firefighters stopping proceedings; debates on crocodiles and protesting cassowaries.

The most recent regional sitting occurred this year in May. A total of 2,537 students and their teachers visited the Mackay Regional Sitting of Parliament, with over 5000 locals attending the three-day sitting.

Regional parliaments are an excellent engagement activity, however they are a huge strain on resources.

Open days, events and projects

CES is largely responsible for running many of the Queensland Parliament's events and projects. This includes the many events and activities associated with the Parliament's 150th in 2010 – P150 – as well as open days, opening of parliament, swearing in of the governor and many other events and projects.

An unusual and successful engagement project was the creation of a range of Queensland wines named after former members of parliament and containing cartoons by well-known cartoonist – Larry Pickering.

Parliamentary committees

Parliamentary committees are an important tool for community engagement, as they provide the opportunity to involve the community in decisions which impact upon them. The committee system enables people to become informed, to be consulted, and actively participate in the decision-making process. This occurs through issues papers, public hearings, and general debate on issues.

CES has been working with parliamentary committees to strengthen engagement between the Queensland Parliament and the community. This work has become even more important due to changes implement this year.

In June 2011, the Queensland Parliament agreed to a number of significant reforms to its committee system, legislative process, and daily program. These changes were contained in the *Parliament of Queensland (Reform and Modernisation) Amendment Act 2011* and the *Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly and the Sessional Orders 53rd Parliament (First Session)*. Further changes to the Parliament's operations were contained in the *Parliamentary Service and Other Acts Amendment Act 2011* which received Royal Assent on 9 August 2011.

These reforms are considered the biggest changes to how the Queensland Parliament operates since the abolition of the Legislative Council in 1922. Numerous strategies were enacted to promote these reforms and educate key stakeholders about their impacts and ramifications.

Now, I have just highlighted a few examples of how we undertake community engagement activities at the Queensland Parliament. This list is not exhaustive. But it gives a flavour of our activities over the past four years. Numerous other methods also exist and I am sure you are undertaking many of them in your own jurisdictions. I look forward to hearing from you all about your activities in your jurisdictional reports over the next few days. The important point to note from these examples though is that all of this engagement requires sound parliamentary education to build the capacity of the community to become involved in decisions that impact on them.

Our challenges

Although it's nice to rejoice in our successes, it is just as important to talk about our challenges or what hasn't worked so well. Fortunately, there have really only been a few major challenges.

- ***Team***

I consider the Community Engagement Services team our biggest asset. As I mentioned earlier, we are small in number but big in capacity, skills and enthusiasm. We are all very positive and highly productive. Instead of looking at why something can't be done, we look at how it can be done! So our team is our biggest success and our biggest asset. But building that team is a major challenge – to get the skill mix right, to establish roles and responsibilities, it is a constant challenge for all members of the CES team.

- ***Trust***

In Queensland, we have spent a lot of time and effort in building trust – internally and externally. We keep our word and we try very hard to be positive and productive. This can be difficult as not everyone's intentions are pure. We had a very unfortunate example where a group attempted to partner with us on developing an Indigenous youth parliament. Despite statements to contrary, this group was really trying to make money off our parliamentary education program, and even worse some criminal allegations were made against those seeking access. As a result, we made a hasty retreat. This led to a situation where law suits were threatened. Meetings were held with the Clerk and I received phone calls from the Premiers' Office. We were eventually vindicated, but it took a lot of time and effort to deal with this situation. Not our brightest days. Fortunately, not long after, we managed to achieve an Indigenous youth parliament regardless and it is now a shining success held annually with significant government and corporate support. But building trust is also an ongoing challenge.

- ***Support***

And talking of support, as I mentioned earlier, garnering support internally as well as externally is paramount when it comes to community engagement. That has been a real challenge. Internally, there have been major challenges from parliamentary colleagues – some misunderstandings, some blurring of traditional roles – with members – a lack of understanding of our role and capacity and externally with the community. But patience and perseverance has assisted us in developing support.

- ***Success***

The old saying is that success has its own challenge. And that has definitely been the case in Queensland. The challenge with success is the accompanying workload. Many a discussion has occurred with management and members about capacity, which leads me onto managing expectations.

- ***Managing expectations***

Expectations must be managed internally and externally! This can be fraught with difficulties. But it is worth the effort!

So we have discussed our background, what we mean by community engagement, our achievements and our challenges.

Now our future!

Community Engagement Services was reviewed late last year as part of the regular review processes occurring within the Queensland Parliamentary Service. The review concluded in January 2011 with the report containing 20 recommendations.

Fortunately for us, the review found that our engagement experiment of 2007 was in fact successful and such would continue as an embedded part of the Queensland Parliamentary Service. In summary, the review found that over four years Community Engagement Services had an average approval rating with clients of over 95% and a consistent 100% approval amongst Members of Parliament. That was a huge relief!

The review recommended that many of the current programs continue along with a few new directions. These included:

- Review community engagement resources, including members' entitlement to education resources and the method of delivery of these resources.
- Conduct a strategic planning session on Queensland Parliamentary Service community engagement activities.
- Increase training – including implementing a parliamentary committee seminar program to explain the new committee structure and operations and cultural awareness programs for members of Parliament.
- Increase our Indigenous and multicultural engagement – attending events, providing cultural awareness training internally to staff and members.
- Implement an improved engagement strategy in partnership with parliamentary committees

As previously mentioned, recent reforms to the Queensland Parliament have seen the responsibility of parliamentary committees to undertake community engagement enshrined in the Legislative Assembly's Standing Orders.¹² This amendment only further strengthens the future role of CES within the Queensland Parliament. Therefore, the future of community engagement in Queensland is positive.

In conclusion, over the past four years we achieved many things, faced many challenges and improved our methods of parliamentary education through introducing community engagement principles and practices. But there is still much more to do!

So please watch this space!

¹² See Standing Order 133 - *How a portfolio committee may examine a Bill* as published on p 44 of the *Standing Rules And Orders of the Legislative Assembly* (amended 15 November 2011) on www.parliament.qld.gov.au