Remote Engagement and Coordination Policy

Policy

Date effective: 31 March 2017

1. Background

1.1. The Remote Engagement Policy

This *Remote Engagement Policy* (the *Policy*) supports the implementation of the *Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy* (the *Strategy*).

This *Policy* signals our department's commitment to adopt and enact the values, principles and objectives of the *Strategy* (refer Appendix A).

It reflects discussions and input from multiple divisions of our department.

1.2. The Remote Engagement and Coordination Strategy

The *Strategy* was developed by our department in partnership with representatives from two regional councils, and Charles Darwin University and NTG agencies active in remote.

The *Strategy* establishes a platform for working with Aboriginal community members to meet their needs, improve our efficiency, and support greater local decision-making

The *Strategy* comprises six elements which together provide practical guidance, systems and tools for remote engagement work and the coordination of government policies and services for remote communities:

- Best Practice guide for Remote Engagement and Coordination

- Levels of Remote Community Participation

- Remote Information and Coordination System (RICS)

- Bush Ready (induction and professional learning)

- Evaluation Framework

- Online Toolkit.

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2. Why do we need a Remote Engagement and Coordination Policy?

This *Policy* helps bring key aspects of the *Strategy* to life by providing guidance to staff when engaging with remote communities.

Remote engagement can be complex and challenging work. Effective engagement typically requires specialist skills, a certain amount of knowledge and behaviour appropriate to the remote community environment.

Unfortunately engagement and coordination practices across government have often not met the expectations of remote community residents.

The department recognises that our staff need to be better prepared for engagement work and have a more systematic and consistent approach to it. To continue improving our performance we also need a system for reviewing the conduct of our engagement visits and building these learnings into improved engagement practice.

3. What is remote engagement?

As defined under the *Strategy*, remote engagement is the two-way communication, exchange of information and deliberation that occurs between governments and people living in remote communities. It should increase understanding and enable community members to influence decisions that affect their lives.

4. How do we define remote communities?

The *Policy* defines remote communities as all communities that sit out the regional centres of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs.

5. What are the key Objectives of this Policy?

This *Policy's* main objectives are to:

- Embed the Strategy principles and practices across all areas of the department and our work

- Have in place clear processes that will help us achieve the Strategy's goals and drive continuous improvement

- Ensure we each have a sound understanding of what our responsibilities are when we visit or engage our remote communities

- Encourage and achieve cost effective use of our department's resources through better planning and coordination of engagement activities

- Ensure we adopt relevant culturally appropriate communication, engagement and feedback practices (closing the loop) in our work with remote communities

- Ensure that all remote engagement is carried out by appropriately trained staff.

6. What are our responsibilities when we engage with remote communities?

Staff will ensure:

- That all their remote engagement activities are consistent with the values and principles outlined in the Strategy.

- They meet the department's obligation to use qualified interpreters as required in the NTG Language Services Policy.

- That relevant regional staff are notified of all community visits.

- They honour all commitments made on the community to pass on or provide information to government and follow up by advising community members of any response ('closing the loop').

Managers will ensure:

- Staff undertaking remote engagement work have completed appropriate training and can demonstrate they are 'bush ready'.

- Staff meet the department's obligation to use qualified interpreters as required in the NTG Language Services Policy, and provide evidence of how English language competency was assessed if interpreters were not used.

- One-off engagement visits have a simple pre-visit plan and post-visit report completed.

- Complex or multi-community projects have a more detailed engagement plan and post engagement report completed. The engagement plan should outline things such as: purpose, number of expected visits, stakeholders to be engaged, outcomes sought, timeframes, interpreting arrangements, and how 'closing the loop' will occur.

- Before any travel requisition is approved, a visit plan that also includes a confirmation that regional staff have been notified and attempts have been made to coordinate travel or share transport resources, is attached in TRIPS.

- Before any travel requisition is acquitted, a visit report is attached in TRIPS.

7. How will we know this Policy is working well?

7.1. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Engagement will be subject to the appropriate level of review and evaluation. The department has committed to undertaking regular monitoring that will include checking on the use of interpreters, the notification of regional staff, engagement planning and reporting.

More complex or multi community engagement projects will be prioritised for evaluation in the department's six-monthly audit process.

7.2. Checks and balances

Visits to be approved by divisional Executive Directors or Directors as appropriate.

7.3. Support for staff, first and foremost at the front end

While monitoring, reviewing and evaluation will show us if this *Policy* is achieving its objectives, creating an environment that supports staff will go a long way towards the success of this *Policy* and the *Strategy* overall. A focus on the front-end will mean that we are better equipped with the right tools and training when we engage remote communities.

Enquiries

For queries regarding this policy please contact Martin Plumb on Martin.Plumb@nt.gov.au or phone 08 8999 6253

8. Document change control table

Release Date	Version Number	Approved by (position)	Section amended	Category
[date of release]	[number]	[position]	[section]	[Editorial amendments / New / Revised]

Policy revision process

RECS Policy will be reviewed in collaboration with the relevant DHCD staff. The review process would be broadly consistent with DHCD Housing's approach of establishing an Internal Reference Group (IRG) that is tasked with designing and reviewing the policy.

The IRG would be provided with the RECS Strategy, a copy of the current policy and this early draft revision.

The revised policy will then be redrafted to incorporate input given in a one-off IRG meeting. The IRG will be made up of staff members from various divisions and levels within the department. Those asked to participate in the IRG are:

Division	Staff name	Position
Community Development and Engagement	Darren Johnson	Director Regional Remote Services
Remote Programs and Projects	Annette Murtagh	Director Leasing
Remote Information Management & Evaluation	Brett Beaton	Director Remote Information and Evaluation
Commercial Strategy and Planning	Chris Hammond	Director Commercial Strategy
Tenancy Support and Compliance		Director Capability Development
Housing Delivery		Director Planning and Housing Supply /Director Essential Services
Service Delivery North		Director Arnhem or Arafura or Big Rivers
Service Delivery South		Director Barkly or Central Australia or Regional Development South
Local Government	Adrian Curry	Director Regions and Operations
Human Resources	Amanda Brimson	Director Human Resources
Corporate Communications	Jennifer Sekulich	Director Corporate communications

IRG participants would be required to brief their Executive Directors and Directors.

Any questions or concerns about this policy would be addressed by contacting the policy action officer to discuss and/or table at the IRG meeting.

A final draft would be circulated to EDs who would be asked to sign a form noting the attached policy and supporting documentation and showing that they have considered any implications with respect to their business area.