

# Communications and Engagement Plan

Department of Human Services

2017/18



**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Human Services



## Introduction

This first overarching Communications and Engagement Plan for the department provides a clear picture of our goals for the year, set against themes that tell our story to the community.

It aligns our work closely with the overarching South Australian Government Communications Plan and the State Government's priorities.

It positions communications and engagement as a central pillar of the department's work, by producing timely, impactful and relevant communications, supported by engagement that listens to and builds relationships with stakeholders and communities.

It's our opportunity to show how we're supporting people and communities facing challenges... how we're creating opportunities to participate in a fair and just society... and how we're delivering services to improve people's lives.

This plan provides a framework of communication themes and goals that clearly show the vital work of our department.

Our communications and engagement team will work closely with divisions to plan and execute high quality communications that deliver on this plan.

Our department has traditionally focussed its efforts on building community wellbeing and supporting those facing challenges.

This communication and engagement plan will help us engage the community in the work our department is doing every day to improve citizen's lives and deliver policy and programs.

Ultimately, our aim is to connect with South Australians and build trust and confidence to enable us to work better and more closely in the future.

I strongly endorse this plan and ask you to support its delivery over the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Harrison'.

**Tony Harrison**  
Chief Executive  
Department of Human Services

# Our themes in 2017-18

---

Supporting people and  
communities facing challenges

4

Creating opportunities to  
participate in a fair and just society

6

Delivering services to improve  
people's lives

10

# Supporting people and communities facing challenges



**Promote opportunities for communities, individuals and families to achieve their aspirations, overcome challenges and build wellbeing.**

*All South Australians have a right to the opportunities and resources they need to thrive.*

*We work to connect communities to social and economic opportunities, to coordinate local efforts and resources within communities for the benefit of all.*

*We bring local people, services and businesses together to understand local challenges, identify opportunities and resources and collectively build local strength, leadership and vision.*

*We support people who are in need and help people to live independently in their homes and communities.*

*We want our communities to become safer, healthier, and better places to live, work, socialise and play.*

## **We will focus our communication and engagement efforts in the following key areas:**

### **Aboriginal people and communities**

Aboriginal people have a right to a positive sense of identity and culture, respect and safety, and full participation in communities. We support Aboriginal people living across the state to access services that improve their wellbeing and safety, with a focus on women, children and people living in remote communities, including housing that provides shelter and safety.

### **Concessions**

South Australian households can find it challenging to meet living expenses, as they face rising costs of housing, transport and utilities. We encourage South Australians to apply for a range of concessions designed to help them meet their household and living expenses.

### **Diversity and social inclusion**

All South Australians have a right to participate in the social and economic life of our State. We work to ensure that diverse groups have access to the opportunities and resources they need to actively participate, overcome challenges and achieve their aspirations.

### **Homelessness**

Homelessness removes stability and connection from people's lives. Even a short period of homelessness can have a profound impact on the lifetime wellbeing of an individual. People who move away from their home and local community often leave behind important support networks, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. We partner with homelessness organisations to provide housing and support services to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We develop innovative solutions to homelessness with our partners, such as the Aspire social impact bond and our Code Red and Code Blue responses to extreme weather conditions.

### **Housing**

Low-income earners can often find privately owned rental homes beyond their reach. Each year we support around 50,000 South Australian households who live in public and community housing and provide over 30,000 people with bonds to help with the costs of moving into a private rental property.

### **Problem gambling**

Problem gambling occurs when a person's gambling causes harm to themselves or to those around them such as a partner, family, friends, or others in the community. We provide people affected by problem gambling with a range of services and help to manage their gambling.

### **Relief and recovery**

When South Australia experiences a disaster or crisis, such as fires and floods, that impact people's lives, homes and communities – we work to support recovery and build resilience. We provide emergency relief services when these crises occur and help affected people to rebuild their lives and communities.

### **Violence against women**

Women can experience violence in public places, at work and at home. Violence against women is at horrifying levels, with a woman a week killed in Australia by a partner or former partner. Our department leads the State Government's response and works to prevent violence against women through the promotion of gender equality policies and Stop it At the Start – a national campaign to prevent violence against women. Primary prevention, early intervention, systems improvement and, most importantly, cultural change are at the heart of our approach.

# Creating opportunities to participate in a fair and just society



**Encourage thriving communities that uphold equality, opportunity, safety and justice.**

*South Australians are known for their commitment to a compassionate society and the ideal that everyone deserves an equal opportunity in life.*

*We offer many ways for people to take part in our society.*

*We focus on what individuals and communities can achieve as they seek a better quality of life and to contribute towards thriving communities.*

*We will provide services and programs that increasingly wrap around the individual.*

*We recognise that the more complex their needs, the better we need to be at providing them with coordinated, local support.*



## We will focus our communication and engagement efforts in the following key areas:

### Aboriginal culture

Aboriginal people and communities have deep cultural and social connections. We will work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to deliver culturally appropriate services and provide programs that are culturally inclusive. We will improve our department's cultural knowledge and understanding while supporting Aboriginal people to maintain strong connections to their family, culture and community.

### Communities

We work in partnership with local people and stakeholders to build thriving, resilient communities. We work to understand the community's aspirations and strengths, and to create local solutions to local issues. We coordinate efforts to connect the community to social and economic opportunities, and to create local leadership and long-term improvement.

### Disability

People with disability have the same rights as other South Australians to choice and control over their lives. The National Disability Insurance Scheme provides people with the flexibility to manage their supports to live the life they choose. South Australia is funding the scheme in partnership with the Commonwealth while also advocating for the scheme to meet the needs of South Australians. We are leading communications in South Australia to help smooth the transition of people with disability into the scheme. We are adapting to the introduction of the NDIS by transitioning our disability services into new arrangements. We are also playing a stewardship role to ensure the disability services sector can grow to meet new demand driven by the scheme and offer high quality services that meet the needs of its participants.





### Screening checks

Screening checks help to identify people who pose a risk to children or the vulnerable. Screening is monitored and uses the latest information to identify any changes that affect the clearance status of individuals. We are working hard to make sure clearances are up to date, thorough and timely as well as convenient with online screening forms now easier and faster to complete.

### Volunteers

Volunteers provide their time and skills to make a positive difference to the lives of people across South Australia. We support and promote volunteering and recognise the vital contributions our volunteers make to building stronger, safer South Australian communities. We also promote volunteering is an important pathway to training and work, and to build social connections that improve wellbeing.

### Women

Women and girls must be able to fully participate in and share the benefits of living in South Australia. We are working to improve South Australian women's economic status, participation and leadership opportunities, safety and wellbeing throughout their lives. Central to our efforts are increasing understanding and support for women's equality, gender diversity and social inclusion in our community.





### Young people

Children and young people have a right to grow up in an environment where they can socially, physically and emotionally thrive. We want young South Australians to be connected and actively participating, healthy and resilient, and earning, learning and confident in their own futures and the future of our State. We want to hear the voice of young South Australians, encourage them to contribute to decision making and ensure that they can access appropriate and responsive services. We work to provide young South Australians with the opportunities they need to improve their lives and become confident, active leaders and contributors to the social and economic wellbeing of our State.

### Youth justice

The youth justice system supports children and young people to reduce their offending behaviour. Its focus is to inspire children and young people to change and positively participate in their community. We provide young people with support that is individualised and caters for specific developmental needs and reflects the diversity of cultures and communities in which they live. We work closely with our community partners to ensure the best service response possible that promotes the development of young people's social responsibility.

# Delivering services to improve people's lives



**Promote innovation and high performance  
in the public sector**

*We are currently in a period of positive and unprecedented political and social change, aimed at providing citizens with choices about the support they need to live a good life.*

*We will be innovative and reform the way we do business as we strive to provide the highest standard of services to South Australians.*

*We will change how we do business in response to the changing needs of the public.*

*Our department will be modernised with new technologies and systems that make us more capable and responsive.*

*Giving individuals more choice in their support is changing the role of government and our department across many areas of our business – most immediately in disability and ageing.*

*This shifting environment means we must stay open to new directions and be responsive and adaptable.*

## We will focus our communication and engagement efforts in the following key areas:

### Community engagement

We will address critical issues by combining the strength, wisdom and resources of the entire community. Community engagement will increasingly involve communications to create awareness, encourage public participation and provide information reflecting our 'debate and decide' approach to decision-making.

### Digital

Communities are demanding a closer connection with government than ever before. Citizen driven approaches to service delivery and policy-making are required to meet community demands, involving a high level of engagement, co-design and co-production of policies and services. Public expectations of government information and services have risen, with increased expectation of open access to data, speed, convenience and overall experience. The department is transforming the way it provides services and engages with the community to meet these expectations. We are committed to providing inclusive access to digital services across the State.

### Services and programs

We're a diverse agency, as diverse as the community itself. We seek to change lives, rather than just deliver a service. We deliver many important services and programs which reach many people and are vital to our community.

Good research and evidence will inform our services and we will be held accountable to sound performance measures. The delivery of our services, now and into the future, will be responsive to the needs of individuals and communities.

### Workforce capability

We understand how important it is to have the right people in the right jobs at the right time providing the right services. We recognise and appreciate that our staff have made a committed and considered contribution to reforms currently underway, particularly in disability and aged care, acknowledging that some roles may be outside of government in the future.

We're creating a flexible workforce able to adapt during a time of change. We will invest in and support our workforce as we find new ways to work.



# How we will do this

## Communication principles

We aim to be best-in-class. We will work hard to understand and respond to the needs of our audiences with communications that inform, inspire and challenge.

The department uses the following communication principles:

- show leadership in our agencies through communications
- focus on reaching our audiences via market research insights/public value
- make digital and, in particular, social media central to delivery of our content
- generate two-way conversations with audiences
- strive to improve productivity and be cost effective.

Learn more about communication principles at [govcommunications.sa.gov.au](http://govcommunications.sa.gov.au)

## Engagement principles

Fundamental to our democracy is the concept that everyday people are involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

This means working together to identify problems and find solutions, and sharing ideas, expertise and wisdom to explore new opportunities.

The department uses the following engagement principles:

- we know why we are engaging
- we know who to engage
- we know the history
- we start together
- we are genuine
- we are relevant and engaging.

Learn more about engagement principles at [bettertogether.sa.gov.au](http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au)

## Public value

Understanding what matters to the public and how decisions affect them is critical to being a successful modern, agile and responsive public sector.

Public value thinking provides an approach to public sector management that puts citizens at the centre of program and service design and delivery. The concept of 'public value' was developed by Harvard Professor Mark Moore.

Conveying public value via communications is an essential part of engaging and informing your audiences – while also making sure that our work is strongly aligned to delivery of public policy.

Learn more about public value at [bettertogether.sa.gov.au/public-value](http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/public-value)

## Contact us

Communications and Engagement Directorate  
Department of Human Services

Media line: (08) 8413 9049

Email: [DHSCommunicationsandEngagement@sa.gov.au](mailto:DHSCommunicationsandEngagement@sa.gov.au)



[www.twitter.com/HumanServicesSA](https://www.twitter.com/HumanServicesSA)



[www.facebook.com/HumanServicesSA](https://www.facebook.com/HumanServicesSA)



[www.dhs.sa.gov.au](http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au)