

**FAIR GO RATES SYSTEM
ENGAGEMENT TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP
(Draft) Notes from the introductory meeting
7 April 2016**

Attendees:

Name	Organisation
Andrew Chow	Essential Services Commission
Angelina Garces	Essential Services Commission
Lisa Horsburgh	Essential Services Commission
Joel Farrell	Hume City Council
Mark Ritch	IAP2
Kathy Jones	KJA (Independent Facilitator)
Juanita Haisman	Manningham City Council
Rosemary Scott (via phone)	Mitchell Shire Council
Vicky Mason	Mount Alexander Shire Council
Owen Harvey-Beavis	Municipal Association Victoria
David Woodhams	Strathbogie Shire Council
Dr Sarah Ewing	Victorian Local Governance Association
Kim Rawlings (via phone)	Wyndham City Council
Ray Campling	Yarriambiack Shire Council

Apologies:

Name	Organisation
Malcolm Lewis	Baw Baw Shire Council
Laura Potter	City of Greater Geelong
Edith Heiberg	Latrobe City Council
Chris Phoon	Local Government Victoria
Ross Goeman	Monash City Council

Introduction

Andrew Chow gave an update on the process of the Fair Go Rates System (FGRS) to date and made the following comments:

- The deliberations of this group are not intended to feed into the current 2016-17 application process given the timing and objective not to create any uncertainty for this year's process.
- Through this group we hope to talk through how the legislated community engagement requirements might be reconciled with the engagement requirements of the FGRS.
- Some intended outworkings of the Engagement Technical Working Group (ETWG) will include:
 - Refining the Commission's guidance material drawing on discussions around how this could happen.
 - Facilitating the process where key community engagement issues can be fed into the group and insights can be shared with the whole sector

Agreed objectives of the working group

Through the course of the discussion, the group agreed that the following should be objectives of the working group:

- Discuss how best to integrate statutory and FGRS requirements for engagement
- To provide feedback about community engagement to the Commission and vice versa

- To facilitate the sector's development of community engagement practices that are more robust and tailored to needs of the community
- To assist the Commission in continuously improving its guidance material
- To give feedback to enable the FGRS's community engagement requirements are scalable and recognise diversity
- To give greater clarity of the FGRS's expectations for the engagement requirements of the FGRS
- To better understand what works for the sector

Parameters of the working group

Through the course of the discussion it was noted that the working group will conduct itself and its work within the following parameters:

- Because of timing, it will not be part of 2016-17 assessment process
- Its focus will be on outcomes
- That no specific engagement tactics should be imposed on councils and that engagement is fit for purpose
- The work of the group will be an ongoing process and will focus on achieving long term outcomes consistent with legislation
- Not an onerous requirement on councils
- Relevant local government legislation
- Different and new ways to engage with ratepayers and ratepayer organisations will be explored

General discussion points

The following points were noted for future reference:

- There will be constraints on timing and process issues in light of the council elections in October 2016.
- The desire of the sector to be given specific guidance on community engagement.
- That the group should focus on longer term outcomes.

Task list for next meetings

- Reflect on applications and assessments from this year
- Provide advice on timelines (especially for 17/18 application)
- Discuss the level of guidance to Councils re engagement needed
- Discuss messages for Councils (e.g. not another layer)
- Understand Councils who did not apply even though they said they might
- Discuss desirable Guidance Material revisions
- Discuss how to engage with ratepayer groups
- Consider service review engagement