



Australian Government

Fair Work
OMBUDSMAN

Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

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Our commitment to stakeholder relations

The Fair Work Ombudsman's (FWO) vision is for our agency 'to be valued by the community for supporting compliant, productive and inclusive Australian workplaces'.

We understand that to be an effective and efficient workplace regulator, we must be responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of the Australian Government and the community - and that strong engagement with our stakeholders is integral to enabling the Agency to achieve our vision.

At the FWO, we are committed to working with a broad range of stakeholders to deliver more effective services for stakeholders and the community and to find solutions to workplace issues and for opportunities to collaborate.

The FWO values the expertise, knowledge and experience that stakeholders contribute and we aim to harness this to ensure we make the best informed decisions in relation to our strategic priorities, policies and operations. We are open to different views, needs and expectations to continuously improve and better target our work.

The FWO is committed to building relationships with stakeholders and the community based on trust and respect to increase our impact in the community and achieve quality outcomes.

The FWO consults with stakeholders on our work, considers their views and identifies ways we can collaborate. We also work with government agencies to improve services for the community and decrease the burden of regulation.

Whilst we are committed to stakeholder engagement, it is also important to acknowledge that not all issues or projects provide the opportunity for broad consultation or active participation. The FWO has to balance its strategic priorities, regulatory responsibilities and other commitments with its stakeholder engagement objectives. For example, in some situations, FWO's stakeholders for a project may also be the subject of regulation by FWO. The FWO will only engage with stakeholders where this is the best approach to achieving the required outcomes and there is a genuine opportunity to inform policy, program or service development.

This strategy document:

- sets out the key principles we will use to inform our engagement with our stakeholders;
- aims to ensure that stakeholder interactions with the FWO follow a consistent approach, are meaningful, productive, transparent, and deliver benefits for all involved; and
- provides examples of where and how the FWO will engage with stakeholders.

Our key stakeholders

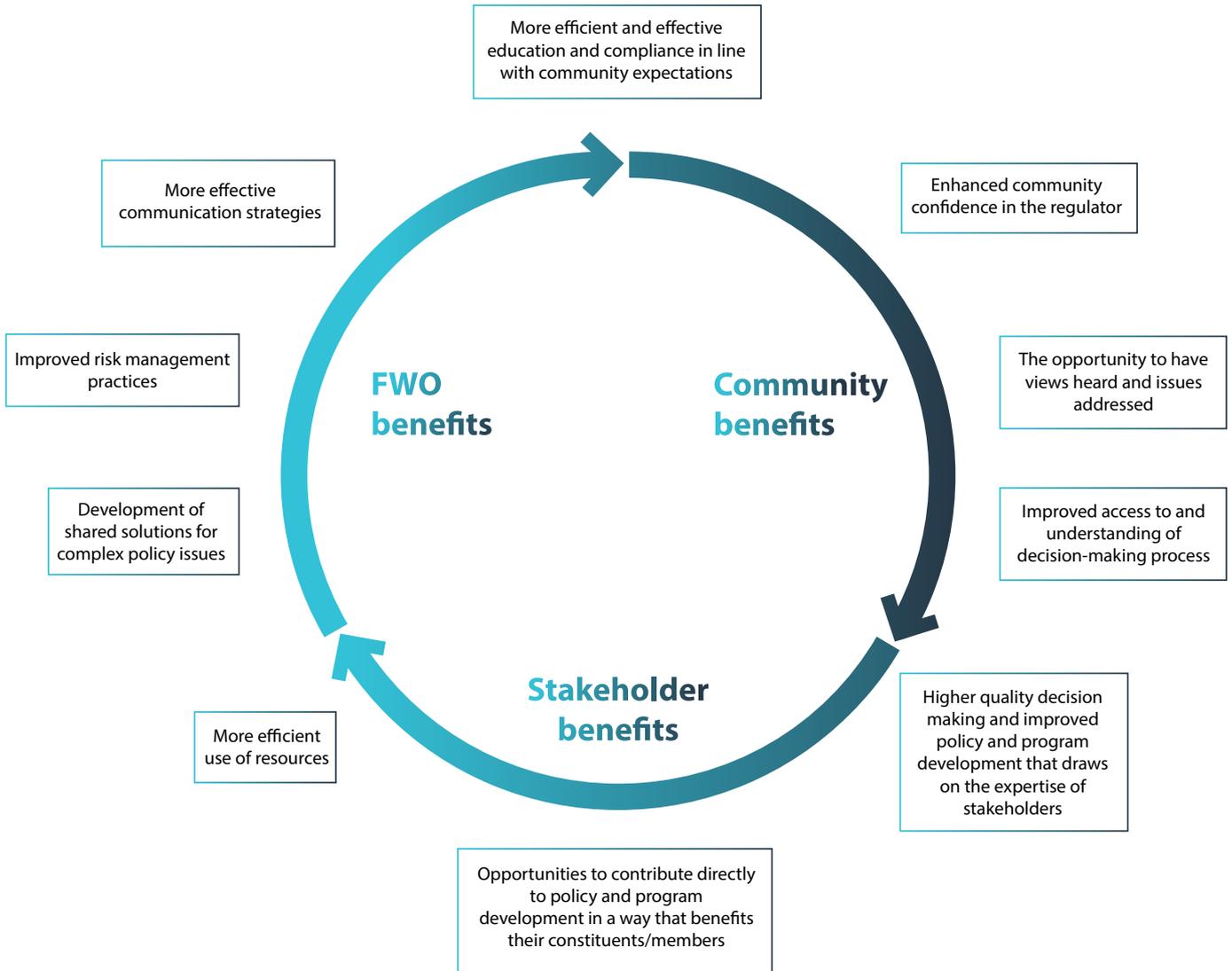
The FWO interacts with a broad range of stakeholders in its education and compliance activities.

These include:

- industry and employer representatives
- unions and employee representatives
- government departments and agencies
- business advisers or other intermediaries (e.g. accountants)
- community organisations, providing advice and support, particularly to vulnerable employees (e.g. charities, not-for-profit groups, community legal centres and migrant resource centres)
- academia
- the public.

Note: this Strategy does not directly apply to individual workers, employers or other entities insofar as they interact with FWO as customers. Our customers and their interactions with FWO are already supported by the FWO's [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) and our [Customer Service Charter](#).

The benefits of stakeholder engagement



Our engagement principles

The FWO has adopted the following five key principles to guide stakeholder engagement activities:

1. Purposeful and effective

- We are driven by our strategic priorities, and a commitment to innovation, best practice and continuous improvement and we conduct targeted engagement to find shared solutions to workplace issues and to make better decisions that consider the interests of those affected.
- We seek to build strong and effective stakeholder relationships with awareness of our stakeholders' interests, expertise, influence and the environment in which they operate.

2. Inclusive

- We harness intelligence and insight from a range of sources, including industry, community, government and academia, (as well as other non-traditional stakeholders).
- We aim to provide fair access to engagement processes by identifying and enabling participation for those stakeholders who may be harder to reach due to language, culture, age or mobility.

3. Timely and responsive

- We engage stakeholders at an early stage, to encourage a greater range of ideas and solutions to emerge, to test assumptions, and to enable consideration and constructive debate on issues prior to decision making.
- We seek agreement at an early stage on when, and in what form, we will engage.

4. Transparent and accountable

- We are open and honest in our engagement and seek to build trust and credibility for the process of engagement in our actions and our communication with participants.
- We clearly identify and explain the engagement process and we communicate clear expectations about roles and how input will inform projects and decisions.

5. Respectful

- We acknowledge and respect the expertise and alternative perspectives of our stakeholders.
- We respect the needs of stakeholders to access information, provide feedback and actively participate in decision making (where appropriate and particularly when they will be affected by those decisions).

How FWO will engage with stakeholders

Considerations

When we commence a project or initiative (e.g. launch a campaign or inquiry), or propose to make a significant decision or develop a policy, as part of the planning we will consider whether to conduct stakeholder engagement and, if so, what the purpose of this will be (note: there may be more than one purpose). At this point we will also consider if there are any limitations or reasons why engagement should not occur.

Where we identify that some form of stakeholder engagement is desired in the circumstances, we commence a systematic process to identify all relevant stakeholders by first determining who may be affected by the project (i.e. who has an interest in it) and who has capacity to add value to it in some way (i.e. who has power to influence how the project proceeds or is perceived). For each stakeholder or group of stakeholders, we then make a decision about what the goal of engaging them will be and how we should engage them to achieve this goal, based on the following considerations:

- how a particular person or group will be directly or indirectly affected by the project/ decision (e.g. they may have an intrinsic or perceived right to be involved in some capacity);
- what connections, relationships or inherent influence a person or group may be able to exercise in relation to the project;
- what community expectations, views or concerns on particular issues exist;
- benefits that the project, decision or process could gain from involving particular individuals or groups (e.g. expertise of certain stakeholders, potential reach/influence in the community);
- risks we could mitigate by ensuring we involve particular individuals or groups (e.g. duplication of efforts underway in other organisations, poor relationships leading to reputational damage);
- in what capacity and when such stakeholders could or should be engaged for the best outcome.

Types of engagement

In general, the greater the interest or influence a stakeholder is identified as having in relation to the particular project or issue, the greater the level of engagement they can expect to receive from FWO. Depending on the situation, the FWO may engage across one or all of the types identified below.

Stakeholder's 'investment' in the project or issue	Stakeholder has a low - medium level of interest and influence		Stakeholder has a medium - high level of interest OR influence		Stakeholder has a medium - high level of interest AND influence
Type of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Stakeholder engagement goal	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that stakeholder concerns and views are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the stakeholder. Stakeholders are enabled/equipped to actively contribute to the achievement of outcomes.
Methods of engagement that may be used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Email distribution Annual reports Seminars or speeches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for comments or submissions Direct approach for advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder workshops and meetings Forums One-to-one discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working groups/project committees Technical advisory groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building Provision of data Shared projects

What type of engagement can be expected?

Examples of FWO projects and the type of engagement commonly associated with them are:

TYPE OF PROJECT/ INITIATIVE COMMENCED BY FWO	TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT TO BE EXPECTED BY STAKEHOLDERS
A Campaign	<p>Campaigns involve gathering intelligence to ensure they are evidence-based and deliver the greatest benefit. An important part of our campaigns is gaining the support of, and working with, groups such as industry associations, employer representatives, unions and community groups.</p> <p>Stakeholders will be informed of the commencement of the campaign, and can generally expect to be consulted on and even involved in various stages of the campaign depending on what they can contribute.</p>
An Inquiry	<p>Stakeholder engagement may be similar to that involved in a campaign, including that FWO will seek to gather evidence from stakeholders. Where FWO determines that a comprehensive inquiry is warranted, we may seek broader stakeholder involvement and stakeholders with a high level of interest and influence can expect that FWO will collaborate on recommendations for solutions to systemic workplace issues.</p>
Review of an operational policy	<p>Stakeholders can expect to be consulted as part of the review and some stakeholders may be involved to a greater extent where they have greater influence or expertise.</p>
Development of an educational resource	<p>Stakeholders can expect to be consulted on and even involved in various stages of the development (particularly where their expertise is utilised). In some circumstances FWO will collaborate with Stakeholders to produce co-designed resources and to distribute them through established networks.</p>
Issues outside of FWO's jurisdiction or where there is shared responsibility	<p>FWO is not always the agency best placed to deal with an issue. For example, a number of authorities specialise in handling superannuation, visa issues or bullying. We may share information with other government agencies or departments where authorised by the FW Act and we also receive information from these government agencies that assists us with our work. FWO may collaborate with government stakeholders on shared initiatives and in other situations FWO may empower them to administer laws within their own jurisdictions.</p>