



# Communications, Engagement and Education Strategy

NSW Parliament  
2020–2023



Through connection with the wider community, especially the school community, the Parliament has the opportunity to educate, inspire and create change for the future betterment of NSW

John Ajaka  
President of the  
Legislative Council, 2020



We do need to use better, modern technology and methodologies to improve efficiency, communicate more effectively and engage more meaningfully with the public in a way that enhances democratic decisions

Jonathan O’Dea  
Speaker of the  
Legislative Assembly, 2019

The NSW Parliament needs to have a unified approach and brand when it conducts its engagement. While recognising that each House has its own roles and responsibilities, members from both Houses saw the need to project a unified image to the community

Report on consultation with members of Parliament and their staff, September 2020



## Executive Summary

The Presiding Officers, together with the Parliament's senior executives have expressed a clear desire to enhance and expand the way Parliament educates, communicates and engages with the people of NSW. Strengthening engagement with the public and addressing trust in Parliament is one of our five Strategic Priorities.

Placing a focus on engagement aims to improve awareness and understanding of the Parliament to boost visitation to Parliament House, deliver specific outreach programs for regional communities and increase participation in parliamentary activities. Enhancing Parliament's visibility will help make the institution more relevant, accessible and connected. A core aim of the Parliamentary administration is to provide a neutral, authoritative and accurate voice on the functions of a parliamentary democracy.

This Strategy is informed by a review of approaches taken in Australian and international parliaments, as well as extensive consultation with key stakeholders in the NSW Parliamentary community. Members who participated in consultations on this Strategy were

enthusiastic about enhanced community engagement by the Parliament, guided by a long-term Strategy.

Importantly, members from both Houses clearly advocated for the Parliament to have an identifiable approach and brand when it comes to engagement. While recognising each House has its own constitutional role and unique set of responsibilities, members saw the need to project a consistent image to the community. Members told our review that they felt building awareness of the NSW Parliament required a coordinated approach, as it would confuse the community if each House pursued uncoordinated strategies. The important function of a bicameral parliament can be told as a part of that parliamentary message.

## WHAT is Communications, Engagement and Education ?

*Communications* is **what the Parliament says about itself** or the **transfer of information to a range of different audiences**. Good communication informs our audiences, explains processes, encourages behaviours, can start a conversation and initiate a learning process.

*Engagement* is the Parliament creating and devising multiple ways to facilitate understanding of the work of the Legislature. Engagement builds on the foundations of **awareness** and **understanding**, to spark feelings of **connection, empowerment, and trust**, and in turn generate opportunities for people to take **action, collaborate or get involved** if they choose.

*Education* is the Parliament **informing and teaching** its audiences or **facilitating learning, to impart knowledge**, particularly among school students in order to increase understanding of Parliament and its processes.

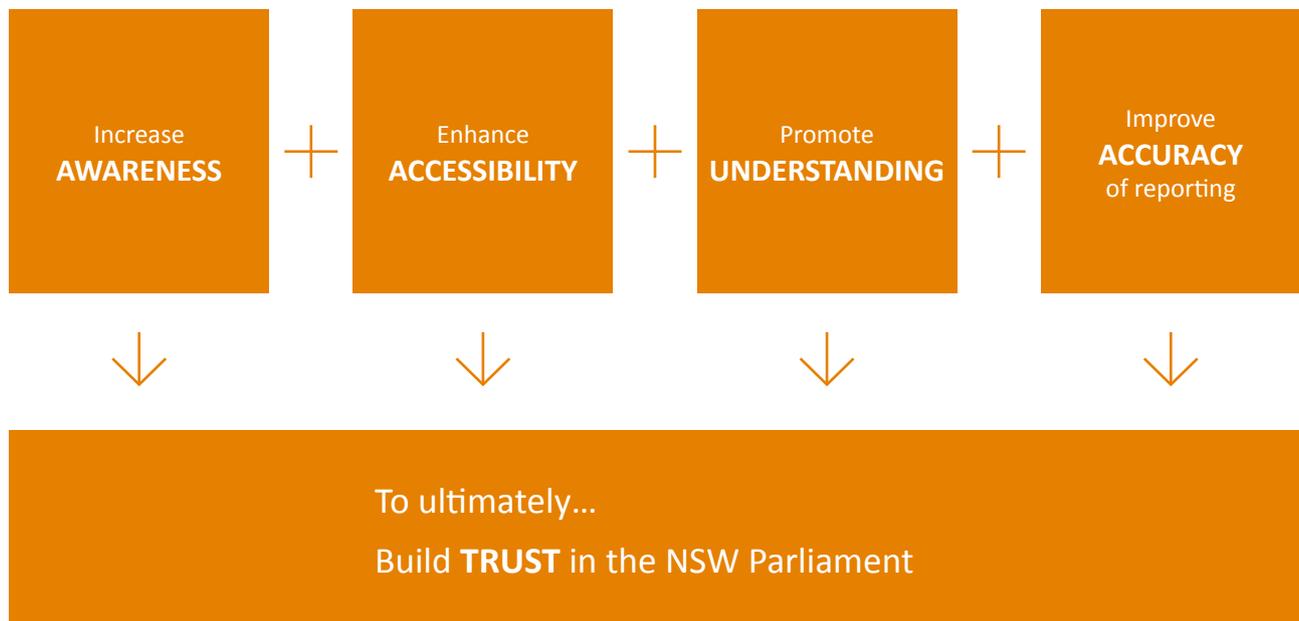
## WHY are we doing this?

- Parliament and democracy matter
- Parliament is central to social cohesion
- Parliament has an important story to tell that involves the lives of the State's citizens
- People currently don't know enough about their State Parliament
- The work of the Parliament is often misrepresented and misunderstood
- Parliament is strengthened by an engaged community
- We want people to be involved.

The word engagement implies some sort of 'action'. It also suggests a sense of relationship. Some sort of connection.

Parliamentary staff, 2020

## WHAT are we aiming to achieve?



### An overview of the current situation

- There is **strong support** from the Presiding Officers, members of both Houses and parliamentary staff for an increased focus on engagement and education activities, and better communicating who we are and what we do;
- Each Department has developed engagement strategies to support their respective priorities and purposes. However there is a need for a parliamentary strategy that focusses on our shared areas of responsibility; promotes a **coordinated approach** to engagement; and advocates for more Departmental resources to support engagement programs;
- A **long history of underfunding** of the Parliament for education, engagement and communication has meant a lack of dedicated resources. To date, parliamentary staff have combined engagement or education initiatives with their core roles, in order to deliver on individual activities;
- Due to this underfunding, there is a **shortage of specialist staff** to provide increased engagement opportunities to all NSW citizens and the wider community;
- Dedicated resources are needed to ensure the work of members, the chambers, committees, or the Parliament as a whole, can be **promoted proactively**;
- Evidence suggests there is **very little awareness** of the NSW Parliament, with the public often confusing the State Parliament with the Federal Parliament;
- The Parliament can often be the subject of **misreporting**, inaccuracies and partiality, which are not in the interests of the institution of Parliament.

### Approach and resourcing

Members indicated that the success of an engagement strategy will rely on strengthening and enhancing the capacity for creativity and delivery. This will require more specialist staff within and across the Departments to generate new ideas and communicate these events and programs in an effective way to a diversity of audiences.

### Measurement and evaluation

Having a comprehensive Strategy to guide community engagement activities is crucial, with outcomes and milestones that can be measured. It is important that the Parliament knows whether its activities and efforts lead to positive change. An initial focus on capturing community knowledge of Parliament will assist the Parliament to gauge current levels of understanding and awareness of NSW Parliament. Similar surveys will be undertaken each Parliament to assess the effectiveness of this Strategy.

## Initiatives for Communications, Engagement and Education Strategy

Initiative	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	Priority audience
<b>Initiative 1</b> Governance of Communications, Engagement and Education – management of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Engagement Board, comprised of senior managers from the three departments</li> <li>Engagement Board to align this high level strategy with Department engagement strategies and develop a coordinated approach</li> <li>Engagement Board to coordinate the delivery of priority initiatives, as outlined in this Strategy</li> <li>Active participation in inter-parliamentary forums on engagement to promote the work of the Parliament and exchange best practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Governance structure</li> <li>Undertake survey of members and staff to assess effectiveness of Strategy; and review and refresh initiatives</li> <li>Funding dependent, undertake externally facilitated process to gauge community knowledge about Parliament</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain governance arrangements to assess engagement progress against other comparable jurisdictions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presiding Officers</li> <li>Members</li> <li>Members' staff</li> <li>Parliamentary staff</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 2</b> Resources for the Communications, Engagement and Education function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement Board to agree on revised bid to Treasury for resources to support initiatives in this Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If Treasury bid successful, implement new staff structure and programs</li> <li>If Treasury bid unsuccessful, consider alternative funding options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If unsuccessful, re-submit Treasury bid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Treasury</li> <li>Presiding Officers</li> <li>Members</li> <li>Members' staff</li> <li>Parliamentary staff</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 3</b> New Parliament Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Digital Transformation Board on the development of a new website for the Parliament which will include the conduct of an external users survey</li> <li>Implementation of new Education website pages (see Initiative 8)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Digital Transformation Board on development of the new website for the Parliament</li> <li>Website review to consider a user friendly design based on functionality and subject content rather than on existing hierarchies and relationships</li> <li>Launch of new Parliament website</li> <li>Consider "Roadshow approach" to promote the website and offer communities supported exposure to parliamentary websites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review effectiveness of new Parliament and Education websites, including user surveys</li> <li>Continue to develop new interactive content and improve usability of the website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Community</li> <li>NSW public service</li> <li>Academics</li> <li>School groups</li> <li>People with disability</li> <li>Members</li> <li>Members' staff</li> <li>Ministerial staff</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 4</b> Rural and regional outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education team to accompany parliamentary committees to rural and regional areas</li> <li>Explore expanding videoconferencing education program, using new and improved facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue outreach visits by education and committees</li> <li>Expand education videoconferencing program to secondary schools</li> <li>Work with EO Services to build regional hubs</li> <li>Facilitate visits of Speaker and President</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue outreach visits by education and committees</li> <li>Continue education videoconferencing program</li> <li>Implementation of regional hubs using electorate offices for community activities</li> <li>Continue visits by Speaker and President</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural and regional electorate offices</li> <li>NSW rural and regional community and interest groups</li> <li>Rural and regional schools, including primary and secondary levels</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 5</b> Indigenous engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledgement of Country installed in the Parliamentary precinct</li> <li>Consider implementation of Aboriginal language at commencement of sittings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ Aboriginal Liaison Officer to support initiatives</li> <li>Expand events and resources, including refresh of Reconciliation Wall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to expand resources and events aimed at Indigenous communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous elders and communities</li> <li>NSW community</li> <li>School groups</li> </ul>

## Initiatives for Communications, Engagement and Education Strategy *cont.*

Initiative	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	Priority audience
<b>Initiative 6</b> Communications and promotion of the work of the Parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct media training for committee staff to ensure proactive approach on Parliamentary activity</li> <li>Develop a number of cross-departmental case studies which demonstrate the value of engagement, these would then be the supporting evidence for future business cases – showing how inputting resources correlates to good engagement outcomes</li> <li>Increase output on social media platforms of parliamentary activity including legislation</li> <li>Proactively pitch stories to media</li> <li>Establish a protocol for managing media enquiries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop media resources for parliamentary committee chairs</li> <li>Continue to expand and embrace new social media channels to promote the work of Parliament</li> <li>Work with the AV Project Board to implement video on demand to allow access to footage of parliamentary proceedings</li> <li>Develop Parliamentary “brand” and identity</li> <li>Establish framework for media liaison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of unified brand</li> <li>Build a centralised image, logo and video library</li> <li>Develop cataloguing program of the Parliament artworks and artefacts</li> <li>Expand hosting events and conferences, for international visitors and other parliaments and democratic institutions</li> <li>Explore new technologies and engaging ways to gather committee submissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media, including rural and regional</li> <li>NSW community</li> <li>School groups</li> <li>Special interest groups, including focus on history and art</li> <li>Other parliaments and democratic institutions</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 7</b> Visitor experience at Parliament House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the current public tours programs, to identify any improvements</li> <li>Work with Capital Works Board on proposals for enhanced visitor experience spaces including Gift Shop, Museum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding dependent, expand number of public tours offered, including to special interest groups</li> <li>Funding dependent, implementation of Capital Works program aimed at enhancing the visitor experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to expand public tours and other events held at the Parliament</li> <li>Funding dependent, implementation of Capital Works program aimed at enhancing the visitor experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW community</li> <li>School groups</li> <li>Special interest groups, including focus on parliamentary democracy, history and art</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 8</b> Education for schools, universities and public sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review school tours program and explore expanding offering for unmet demand and use of learning centre</li> <li>Review interns policy and program to include additional universities and faculties</li> <li>Launch new Education website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding dependent, further expand school tours to meet unmet demand</li> <li>Review Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council public sector seminars and consider expansion and a combined seminar</li> <li>Funding dependent, develop video and interactive content for new Education website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore additional opportunities for collaboration with universities, including research projects, guest lectures etc</li> <li>Explore expansion of public sector seminars to other interest groups</li> <li>Funding dependent, continue to develop new interactive and video content for Education website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW schools</li> <li>Universities</li> <li>NSW public service and other interest groups, including non-government sector</li> </ul>
<b>Initiative 9</b> Twinning with parliaments of Solomon Islands and Bougainville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in two virtual workshops to staff in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twinning Steering Committee to initiate planning workshops with both twinned parliaments to determine priority initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be confirmed following planning workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members and staff of NSW Parliament, and parliaments of Solomon Islands and Bougainville</li> </ul>



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