

**Submission  
No 50**

## **INQUIRY INTO COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PRACTICES**

**Organisation:** The 3068 Group

**Date Received:** 5 June 2025

**Submission Text:** The 3068 Group has participated in planning decisions and planning scheme amendments since 1998. The overall aim of the 3068 Group is to maintain the heritage character, streetscape and amenity of the postcode area of 3068 and the City of Yarra.

Engage Victoria is a well designed and convenient web server way to alert engaged community groups about areas where the State Government is seeking input.

Groups or individuals who don't know about it and have not subscribed will miss opportunities to make submissions.

Effort should be extended to alert communities who may be impacted by a proposal beyond the existing subscriber list.

The Engage Victoria's service should be extended to all Local Government consultation, to provide a more streamlined approach. This would reduce LGA costs as well as improve the consultation process. This needs to address privacy concerns and the risk of manipulation by the service provider.

The Engage Victoria consultation on recreational uses in National Parks was very poorly designed to support outcomes and drive responses towards positions which may not be what submitters wished to present. This was an example of push-polling.

Our observations of the consultation process are

- Third party firms are not transparent

- There is an effort to simplify community input, from a complex submission to one or two streams, like 'heritage concerns'. Sometimes only average tallies are presented.
- Elected representatives get a very 'distilled' version of the input.
- Both the consultation service provider and government officials have an opportunity to mediate the voice of the submitters.
- Government officials have the incentive to bias submissions towards desired outcomes before elected representatives review the submissions.
- Service Providers have an incentive to bias submissions to be easily digestible.
- Original Submissions should be logged and protected in a verifiable tamper proof form.
- Elected officials must have access to the original submissions.
- Auditing of the summaries to confirm they truthfully reflect the submissions should be performed by an auditor who is independent of all the interested parties, including the service provider, government officials and elected officials.
- An independent review of the questions being asked should also be considered.
- All consultation should include an opportunity for the community to make comments beyond multiple selections.
- The town hall approach, where attendees are split into tables with butchers paper is another a divide and conquer approach to avoid mob rule. It should be abolished.
- Usually, the scope of the input sought is limited.
- Often the important decisions have already been made.