

# Valuing Community Participation in Water Management

A not for profit organisation reflects on its consulting relationship with a local government

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**Ethos Foundation**

NFP sustainability learning organisation in SEQ & NNSW

Focus on transition to ecological sustainability

Mixed economy enterprise model that includes a consulting service



**GCCC & GCW –  
Gold Coast  
Waterfuture  
Strategies**

Community engagement for:

- Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy
- Gold Coast Recycled Water Waterfuture Strategy
- Smaller projects too



The image shows the cover of a report titled 'Waterfuture' for the Gold Coast. The cover features a central image of two hands cupped together, holding a small amount of water. To the right of this image are several smaller inset photos showing various water-related scenes, including a person at a water tap and a landscape. The text on the cover includes 'Waterfuture', 'Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategies', and the years '2006-2026'. Logos for 'GCCC' and 'GCW' are visible at the bottom of the cover.

**Gold Coast Waterfuture  
Strategies**

Background and Policy  
Context

Catalysts:

- Climate change
- Drought
- Population growth

Considerations:

- Community needs
- Economic needs



The image is a high-speed photograph of a water droplet hitting a surface, creating a crown-shaped splash. The background is a solid, vibrant blue color. The splash is centered in the frame and is the main visual element of the slide.

### Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategies

#### Responding to the Challenges

- Commitment to improving customer satisfaction
- Importance of demand management


Initial Approach (late-1990s):

- Community education
- Conventional marketing



Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategy (from 2002):

- Community engagement fundamental to success



### Social Marketing National Benchmarking Criteria (BC)

1. Customer orientation
2. Behaviour
3. Theory
4. Exchange
5. Competition
6. Segmentation
7. Methods mix


French, Blair-Stevens (2006) adapted from original benchmark criteria developed by Andreasen (2002).

**Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategies**

Behaviour (BC2)

- Goal – actionable and measurable behaviour change

**Strategic Aim:**  
To generate a shared vision for council and the community for water supply and demand management in Gold Coast City over the next 50 years (i.e., 2006-2056).



**Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategies**



The Approach

**Customer Orientated (BC1)**

- Stakeholder needs and perspectives

**Insight (BC4)**

- What “moves” and “motivates”



## Gold Coast Water Futures Strategies based on: *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Gold Coast Waterfuture Strategies

The Approach


**Method Mix (BC8)**

- From public forums to online and printed information .

**Segmentation (BC7)**

- Tailored material at all levels.

**Exchange and competing agendas (BC5&6)**



### Learning in & from action – our praxis

Participatory community engagement is our aspirational foundation

Ethos internal participation

Participatory projects

Aim for alignment & leverage



### Critical friend aim but in reality...

Commercial protocols

Power imbalances

Constrained timelines

Traditional client/consultant relationships tend to rule



**Sustainability is a  
work-in-progress**

Ethos staff and Board  
relationship is critical

Signature public programs  
are vital to our mission

Consulting must align and  
amplify but is not the core of  
Ethos

