

## ENGAGING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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I spent 20 years in large state government organisations and during those years what kept me going was the idea that internal communities need as much nurturing and support as external ones. Some of my beliefs:

- We spend many years of our lives at work, often spending more hours there than with loved ones – why shouldn't work be a good place to be?
- Those that are impacted by decisions – should have a say in those decisions – how can decision making structures better reflect the communities we serve?
- Planning for engagement is important – if we can't get our own house in order how can we engage effectively?
- Interdisciplinary co-operation brings innovation and better outcomes – how can we trust each other and work better together?

### Hints and Tips

- Focus on relationships
- Be prepared to 'educate' clients and your peers
- Best done through role modelling and engaging them in the process
- Find a role for them that won't harm community or your engagement process (yes even elected members!)
- Try and understand their discipline/tradition/language
- Work on finding commonalities and synergies
- Embrace the different unique ideas and qualities you all bring
- Find and encourage cross team projects that breakdown the silos
- Help clients/worker understand they are community members beyond their formal roles
- Where possible bring community and staff into collaborative processes

### Benefits of Interdisciplinary Work

- You get to identify overlaps and gaps
- You have access to multiple information sources
- You get to see the problem/work from different value perspectives
- You can trial processes with each other before going out to community
- You attract resources and save
- You have a more integrated approach
- You learn lots
- Ideas are generated that may not have been imagined otherwise

*The whole is greater than the sum of it's parts*

Kurt Kofka, Gestalt psychologist

