

Consultation and engagement

A GUIDE TO PROVIDING SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

Engaging with the community and getting feedback or formal submissions on projects, plans, policies and much more is an important part of our work.

Sometimes the way we engage or consult is guided by legislation and follows a formal process. Other times we might take a more informal approach.

The [Significance and Engagement Policy](#) guides how we engage with you on important Council decisions.

You'll find more details below on what you can expect from QLDC and how to get involved in the topics that are important to you.

We want to have the right conversations with the right people about the right issues at the right time, while making sure the information we share is inclusive, accessible, and provides everyone with a variety of ways to participate too.

WAYS WE CONSULT

As Council, we engage with the Queenstown Lakes District's community and beyond every day, and in many different ways.

It can be a two-way process of consultation and engagement, a collaborative community process to develop a plan or strategy, our ongoing partnership with mana whenua, or simple one-way communications to keep people informed.

SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE PROCEDURE

This is a formal consultation process defined by the Local Government Act 2002 and triggered when a decision is considered significant or when it is a requirement under legislation, including:

- > Adopting and amending our Long Term Plan
- > Making, amending or revoking a bylaw
- > Transferring Council's ownership of a significant strategic asset

Under the procedure, we must:

- > Prepare and adopt a Statement of Proposal (or Consultation Document in the context of a Long Term or Annual Plan) and Summary, and make it widely available
- > Allow a minimum of one calendar month for people to consider the proposal and enter a submission
- > Ensure people are given the opportunity to present their views to elected members at a hearing

There are other decisions that require formal consultation by law. Examples of this include preparing and adopting a reserve management plan (under the Reserves Act) or putting in public transport shelters (under the Local Government Act 1974). Where this applies, we will always advise what legislation the consultation relates to.

For all other decisions, the Council will determine the level of community engagement or consultation on differing scales, depending on the issue and relevant legislation (e.g. Reserves Act, Resource Management Act etc).

INFORMAL ENGAGEMENT

Sometimes we might informally ask for community feedback on things like draft plans or proposals. This might be asking for ideas to help develop a plan or seeking feedback on a draft that has already been developed.

WHEN WE WON'T CONSULT

There are times when we won't normally consult the community because the issue is routine, operational, or because there is an emergency situation.

We're also conscious that "consultation fatigue" can cause people to tune out of conversations with councils. So, we want to concentrate on having the right conversations on the issues that are generally more significant or combine opportunities to participate where possible.

More details on when we won't consult can be read on page 11 of the [Significance and Engagement Policy](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q How will I hear about what's out for consultation or feedback?

A We will communicate about consultation or engagement opportunities across multiple channels to reach a broad range of people. The tools and channels we use will vary on a case-by-case basis depending on the significance, who we need to hear from and always with an eye to trying new and innovative ways to reach people.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page, local newspapers or apps, and our ratepayer newsletter *Lets' Talk Kōrero Mai*. We will also use other tools such as radio, emails, letterbox drops, posters and TV screens in our Council offices, libraries and recreation centres, and onsite signage.

If you haven't already, you can also [register here](#) for a bi-monthly newsletter all about consultation and engagement.

Q What is a submission?

A A submission is formal feedback, and it's one of the main ways you can influence the future of the district. It's your chance to present your opinions, observations, and recommendations on a matter before Council through a legislative process, to help elected members make an informed decision.

Any individual or group/organisation can make a submission, and your submission can support, oppose, or express a point of view on the matter before you.

Q What is feedback?

A While more informal, feedback is another way you can help to influence the future of the district. We'll often ask for your thoughts to help develop a plan, or to consider different points of view before drafting an update to a bylaw.

Informal feedback is processed by the QLDC subject matter expert with support by the Communications and Engagement team, and considered by elected members in a similar way to a formal submission. The difference is that it is not bound by a legislative process or subject to a public hearing.

We often provide ways to share feedback on our Let's Talk engagement platform, but we also consider everything from talking to members of the community in public to an email to a member of staff as ways to share your thoughts informally.

Q How else can I participate?

A We will often arrange in person opportunities to engage with decision makers on current projects. Keep an eye on our social media pages, Let's Talk, or the local media for details of these when they come up.

You can also directly contact your elected members – you will find contact details here: www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/elected-members

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q When can you make a submission?

A When Council decides to run a consultation and ask for submissions, this will be listed on [Let's Talk](#) and promoted to the community. Often, we'll directly contact stakeholders with an interest in a specific topic that's greater than the general public.

It's important to note that District Plan-related variations and plan changes taking formal submissions are instead listed on our QLDC website (www.qldc.govt.nz) and use either the online platform Consult 24, or a specific submission form known as a Form 5.

Q What is a hearing?

A For more formal consultations, we may also give you the option to attend a hearing which is where you get the opportunity to speak to the decision-makers (usually a panel made of elected members) about your submission.

We will always make it clear during the consultation process when you have an opportunity to speak at a hearing.

If you choose to speak at a hearing, someone from Council will be in touch to arrange an appropriate speaking time and confirm the time allocation afforded to each submitter wishing to be heard.

The hearings are usually open for the public (including media) to attend.

All submissions have equal weight, whether you have chosen to speak at a hearing or not.

Hearings offer the opportunity for submitters to highlight the key points of a submission, and where appropriate elaborate on or clarify any matter raised therein. They also allow for a dialogue between the submitters and the panel to ensure submitter requests are clearly understood and considered.

Your original submission sets the scope of the matters you are able to speak to. If you have changed your mind about anything in your original submission, you can tell the Panel what has changed and why.

Q Who can make a submission?

A Any person, organisation or group can make a submission.

If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation or group (e.g. a sports club), make sure you have permission to do so and that you are presenting the views of the group correctly.

If you are submitting on behalf of a group, it is good to indicate the number of people who support the submission, but please note it will be treated and processed as a single submission. So, if you list 20 people on the submission, it will not be counted as 20 individual submissions.

Q Why make a submission or share feedback?

A Every year we take formal submissions or informal feedback on a number of topics that may affect the community. Your feedback is important to us, and sharing your thoughts is the best way for you to be heard.

While the consultation process is not a vote, making a submission or sharing feedback ensures your views are taken into account by those making the decisions.

As a member of the community, it's important to take the opportunity to have your say. Not every decision will go the way you want it to, but it does allow your views to be considered by elected members as part of the decision-making process.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q What happens to my submission or feedback?

A Every submission or piece of feedback shared during a community consultation is recorded, collated and processed by the project team leading the consultation. The team then uses this information to help inform, guide, and shape the final document or decision to be adopted, endorsed, or approved by Council. In some cases, a committee or community board will be the final decision maker. Other times, a committee or community board will make a recommendation before the document goes to Full Council. Alongside a report summarising the submissions, elected members are provided with all submissions in full, to read and inform their final decision or recommendation.

Q What to say in your submission or feedback?

A Firstly, be sure to find out as much as you can about what changes are being proposed or what Council's asking for feedback on, before you start.

If you are an organisation or submitting on behalf of a group, provide some background information, such as the aims and structure of your group/organisation, how many members you have, and what consultation you have undertaken with your members to put your submission together.

As for your feedback, what you say is up to you. You can write as little as you wish or as much as you want. If the form you're filling in contains questions, you can answer as many or as few of these as you wish, except for the fields marked as required. It's important you keep your feedback focused on the issue at hand to ensure your submission is as relevant as possible.

It's also a good idea to keep feedback short and to the point – some consultations receive many submissions, so the easier and clearer they are to read, the easier it is for the elected members to do their job.

Remember that it's often not a 'numbers game' when elected members are making a decision. One submission with a good idea backed up with good reasoning and explanations, can have more effect than multiple submissions providing little or no explanation for the view.

While we always provide a submission form and it's our preferred way to hear from you, you can also email us at letstalk@qldc.govt.nz or post your submission to QLDC, Private Bag 50072, Queenstown 9348 Freepost 191078.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MAKING A GOOD SUBMISSION

- > Focus your submission on the issue at hand to ensure your submission is as relevant as possible
- > Provide clear reasons and explanations for your view
- > Be respectful, remember that what you write becomes public information with your name on it

Please note that any submission containing threatening language towards a staff or elected member will have the staff or elected members name redacted.

Q I made a submission, but nothing changed - why didn't Council listen?

A A submission is part of a wider decision-making process used to help inform the Council. Whether it's Full Council, a committee or the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board, the decision makers often must weigh up multiple factors in reaching a final position. Other aspects considered include things like expert advice, laws and regulations, and budget constraints.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What are some of the more common misconceptions about the submission process?



- > That a submission process is a vote – it's only part of the decision-making process, used to help inform the council. Council also considers things like expert advice, laws, and regulations, budget constraints.
- > That a submission must be highly technical and/or written by a lawyer - a submission can be made in plain language, it does not need to use fancy language or be written by a lawyer or similar professional.
- > That the submission process is simply a box-ticking exercise - we review and analyse all feedback we receive, and it plays an important role in elected member decision making, along with advice from technical experts and other relevant evidence.



Will my feedback become public?



Your comments are considered public information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987. Submissions may be published on our website and the Let's Talk project page following the consultation period.

All online Let's Talk forms ask participants for their permission for feedback provided to be treated as public information. We may publish the name you supply but will never publish your personal contact details.

Read our [Incoming Submissions Policy](#) and its associated guidelines which outline a clear process to ensure the consistent treatment and processing of public submissions and informal feedback to QLDC.

QLDC takes its responsibilities under the Privacy Act 2020 very seriously. Our Privacy Policy is [available here](#).

