

## Risk perception and engagement strategies to reduce outrage Summary of key messages

### Perceptions of risk and outrage

#### What is conflict?

Conflict exists when individuals/groups who depend on each other express different views, interests or goals and perceive their views as incompatible or oppositional. It can derive from competition for scarce resources, different values and ideologies, power relationships or from ineffective communication.

It's not always possible to avoid conflict; conflict is not always bad, and it can't always be resolved. View conflict as an opportunity to increase understanding between parties that are not afraid to communicate their differences openly and make the necessary adjustments.

#### A win-win approach

A win-win approach is always possible. A win-win outcome is not.

#### Perception

Perception is how we experience the world; how we make sense of what we see, hear, smell, touch and taste. We all perceive the world in slightly different ways – which affect how we engage with new issues.

### Some Components of Outrage

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard (technical)} + \text{Outrage (perception)*}$$

(Peter Sandman)

\*Technical and perception aspects of risk need equal attention

### What perceptions can increase outrage?

<b>Voluntary or coerced</b> <i>Ask permission</i> <i>Share the knife</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People feel less at risk when the choice is theirs. The right to say 'no', makes saying 'maybe' much easier.</li> <li>• Being at the mercy of someone else produces the most outrage.</li> <li>• Share control and outrage will be diminished.</li> </ul>
<b>Natural or industrial</b> <i>Don't make comparisons with natural impacts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People tend to be more forgiving of natural hazards (nature's coercion) than of corporate coercion.</li> </ul>
<b>Fair or unfair</b> <i>Distribute benefits more equitably</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An unfair risk/impact is perceived to be a <b>big</b> impact.</li> <li>• Involving people in the solutions – saying what they want – is more empowering than saying how you will fix it!</li> </ul>
<b>Familiar or exotic</b> <i>Make risk more familiar</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiar risks and familiar surroundings diminish outrage. Don't evade the tough issues, explain the risks and make them more familiar.</li> </ul>
<b>Not memorable or memorable</b> <i>Acknowledge how bad things have been handled previously</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memorable incidents and images of risk increase outrage.</li> <li>• Discuss the memorable events before you are accused of them e.g. "yes we did a poor job on that"</li> </ul>
<b>Not dreaded or dreaded</b> <i>Legitimise dread</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some things are more dreaded than others e.g. 'contamination' rings alarm bells. You can't reduce dread, so acknowledge and legitimise it.</li> <li>• Delayed risks (e.g. to future generations) generate more dread than immediate risks.</li> </ul>
<b>Chronic or catastrophic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are usually more concerned about catastrophe than chronic risk/impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Knowable or not knowable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community worries more about uncertainty.</li> <li>• A risk that is more dangerous but more certain generates more outrage than one that is safer but more undefined.</li> <li>• Expert disagreement can be unhelpful.</li> </ul>

# Tapping into Local Knowledge

## Better Community Engagement in Coastal Planning

<p><b>Morally irrelevant or morally relevant</b> <i>Acknowledge moral relevance</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a community responds to an issue strongly, it is likely that something has triggered a moral response.</li> <li>• Once something becomes a moral issue, then the language of trade-off cannot be used.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Can I trust you or not?</b> <i>Build trust but don't demand too much of it</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polluting industries and government are widely distrusted.</li> <li>• If you are not trusted, then the community won't pay too much attention to your data.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Is the process responsive or unresponsive?</b> <i>Listen and respond openly, courteously, compassionately and apologetically</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secrecy provokes outrage; say it like you mean it; be courteous – follow up, feedback.</li> <li>• Communities expect experts/agencies to be compassionate, agencies/experts expect the community to be more dispassionate. When a community is most heated, the experts resort to the technocratic approach, which only exacerbates the outrage.</li> <li>• Credibility is influenced by expertise, altruism and understanding cultural values.</li> </ul>

## Effective engagement planning

### PLANNING and DELIVERY

- Have clearly SMART defined objectives – short term and long term. Organisational and stakeholder.
- Have a solid understanding of your stakeholders and communities – demographic character, history, resources, preferences. Which groups:
  - Have been previously involved?
  - Will be directly affected, or think they are?
  - Have responsibilities?
  - Are likely to be angry if not consulted?
  - Should be involved to ensure a balanced range of opinion?
  - May not want input but need to know?
- What is your current relationship with these stakeholders?
- Select appropriate techniques for the purpose (objectives) and to maximise input:
  - It's not one size fits all. Be inclusive.
  - Techniques should be appropriate to the sensitivity of the issue, the number of stakeholders and any statutory or policy requirements.
  - Explore techniques that clearly integrate technical and local knowledge bases.
  - Consider innovative techniques to increase interest and involvement.
  - Use both formal and informal processes – agencies and communities have different preferences re structure.
- Afford meaningful involvement. What do people really want to know? Is information easily understood and adequate to ensure a meaningful community response? Allow enough time for people to digest information before expecting a response.
- Remember to incorporate outrage components in engagement planning and delivery.
- Be clear about how information obtained will be used and do what you say.
- Seek feedback – about how the process worked from the stakeholder perspective, how it could be improved; how stakeholders will judge whether you have listened, learned and responded; what they would like next in terms of engagement.

