



MEDIA RELEASE – 17 December 2025

When “low response” is used to silence communities, democracy itself is weakened

Community Development Advocacy SA (CDASA) says reports today on proposed building height changes along Main North Road and the Prospect Oval precinct highlight a deeply troubling trend: **public consultation is being formally undertaken, then effectively dismissed when residents respond with opposition.**

Prospect Council characterised the engagement rate as just 0.73%, suggesting this made the outcome less relevant - despite the majority of written submissions opposing both the land revocation and the draft plan.

CDASA Founder Craig Pickering said **this logic is fundamentally flawed.**

“A low response rate does not equal community support,” Mr Pickering said. “It often reflects consultation fatigue, lack of trust in the process, or people being busy - not indifference.”

“If we applied the same logic elsewhere, we’d have to declare political parties irrelevant,” he said. “Publicly available figures show **well under 1% of Australians are members of major political parties** - yet no one argues those voices should be ignored. Democracy relies on listening to the people who participate.”

The report also referenced ongoing community concern about the North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment, which is being progressed through special legislation that bypasses standard planning processes and will see around 4,000 trees demolished.

“When communities see decisions fast-tracked, consultation narrowed, or feedback dismissed, it reinforces the belief that outcomes are predetermined,” Mr Pickering said. “That’s how trust is lost.”

CDASA is calling for reforms that ensure consultation is **early, meaningful and accountable**, including clear explanations of how community feedback influenced final decisions.

“People don’t expect to win every argument,” Mr Pickering said. “But they do expect their voices to be taken seriously - not written off as irrelevant.”

A copy of a review of the Public Engagement Charter, presented to the SA Planning Commission and DHUD, is available upon request.

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