

Community Engagement Policy

LEADERSHIP

COUNCIL, COMMUNICATES AND ENGAGES WITH THE COMMUNITY IN A DIVERSE, OPEN AND INCLUSIVE WAY

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Table of Contents

1. Objectives.....	3
2. Policy Statement	3
3. Scope.....	3
4. Responsibilities	4
4.1 Councillors.....	4
4.2 Executive	4
4.3 Manager Governance and Corporate Performance	4
4.4 Group Managers and Managers	5
4.5 Council staff.....	5
5. Definitions	5
6. Related Material.....	6
6.1 Related Legislation	6
6.2 Related Policies, Procedures and General Manager Practice Notes	6
8. Non-compliance with this Policy.....	6
9. Document Control.....	6
9.1 Version Control	6
9.2 Superseded Documents	6
10. Attachments.....	7



1. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are:

- to express Council's commitment to engaging with the community and stakeholders on matters that affect them;
- improve understanding of community and stakeholder engagement; and
- outline how community engagement is integrated into Council activities in order to support decision making and strengthen relationships.

2. Policy Statement

Council aims to achieve community engagement that actively and genuinely involves the community in the decisions that affect them.

Working with the community, we aim to achieve great outcomes for the Shire, now and into the future.

Council is committed to:

- Ensure all sectors of the community have opportunities to have their say
- Reduce barriers to community participation
- Strengthen Council's relationship with the community
- Increase Council's understanding of the Shire's many communities and their unique need and priorities
- Continuously improve the Council's approach to community engagement

3. Scope

This policy outlines the principles and commitments that will guide the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of community engagement practices at Council.

Community Engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees. It also applies to contractors and consultants undertaking work on behalf of Council.

Principles for Community Engagement

As part of this commitment, Council has adopted the following principles which provide a framework through which all community engagement will be considered and delivered:

- Provide meaningful and authentic opportunities for the community to be involved in decision making
- Inform people about the final decision and how their feedback was considered
- Provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say, and all people are welcome to participate
- Remove or reduce barriers to participation
- Ensure engagement occurs as early as possible, allowing sufficient time for people to contribute
- Seeking opinions that are reflective of the broader community and those most impacted by a decision
- Ensuring information is easy to understand, and complex issues are well explained
- Treating all participants with respect, regardless of their opinion, circumstances or role in the process

The principles were developed in discussion with members of the community along with Council staff. They support the social justice principles of access, equity, participation and rights. They also take into consideration the community participation principles in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Level of engagement

Council will call for different levels of engagement depending on the issue, statutory requirements, forecast impact on the community and at different stages of a project.

The five levels of engagement outlined in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum shown below will be utilised.

- **Inform:** To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- **Involve:** To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- **Empower:** To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

The identified level of engagement and its financial implication for each project will be noted in Council Committee Papers and Council Business Papers. The level will be determined in consultation with the appropriate Manager and Deputy General Manager.

Statutory requirements

Some elements of community engagement are directed by statutory requirements of the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (Part 2, Division 2.6)* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

4. Responsibilities

Responsibilities for the implementation of this Policy are shared as follows.

4.1 Councillors

Councillors shall:

- provide leadership in adhering to the requirements of this Policy;
- participate as an elected member, listen to the views of the community and consider those views when making decisions.

4.2 Executive

The Executive shall:

- lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of and compliance with this Policy and related documents;
- support the community engagement process and encourage the appropriate level of engagement by all staff.

4.3 Manager Governance & Corporate Performance

The Manager Governance and Corporate Performance shall:

- provide guidance to Councillors, Executive and other Council staff as to the content and implementation of this Policy;

- ensure the timely review of this Policy
- conduct investigations into alleged non-compliance with this Policy

4.4 Managers

Managers shall:

- provide guidance to Council staff within their respective branches as to the content and implementation of this Policy, seeking guidance from the policy owner as required.

4.5 Council staff

Council staff shall:

- read, understand and comply with this Policy;
- organise and facilitate the discussion, record, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community’s views when making unbiased recommendations to Council;
- manage individual community engagement activities ensuring that they are in line with the Policy and Strategy, and provide feedback to participants on the outcomes of an activity or how community input informed the final decision.

5. Definitions

Community Engagement	<p>Community engagement is a term that covers information sharing, consultation and active participation between government and communities.</p> <p>It seeks to ensure people have an opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.</p> <p>In a local government context community engagement can take many forms, ranging from receiving a letter about a neighbour’s development application or responding to a “have your say” advertisement, to attending a facilitated workshop on a major project.</p>
Communication	The exchange and promotion of information between Council, community and internal or external stakeholders.
Community	<p>Community refers to the people who have a stake and interest in the Wingecarribee Local Government Area (LGA) and includes, people who:</p> <p>Live, work, study or conduct business or are involved in local community groups or organisations in the LGA.</p> <p>Visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the LGA.</p>
Stakeholder	Traditional Owners, property owners and residents, business representatives, associations, other levels of government and agencies who have an interest or are directly impacted by the decisions of Council.
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation

6. Related Material

6.1 Related Legislation

The following legislative materials are related to this Policy:

- *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

6.2 Related Policies, Procedures and General Manager Practice Notes

The following policies/plans/strategies and documents are related to this Policy:

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Meeting Practice
- Community Engagement Toolkit (internal doc)
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026
- Notification of Development Proposals Policy
- Positive Ageing Strategy 2016-2026
- Privacy Management Plan
- Youth Strategy & Action Plan 2016-2026

7. Non-compliance with this Policy

Non-compliance with this Policy should be reported to Group Manager Corporate and Community who will investigate and determine the appropriate course of action to resolve the matter.

8. Document Control

8.1 Version Control

Version	Adoption Date	Notes
3.0	19 April 2023	Adopted by Council on 19 April 2023 in conjunction with the Community Engagement Strategy

8.2 Superseded Documents

The following documents are superseded by this Policy:

Document Title	Adoption Date	Notes
Community Engagement Policy	10 April 2019	Version No. 2.0 adopted
Community Engagement Policy	26 November 2014	Initial adoption of document Version No. 1.0



9. Attachments

There are no attachments to this Policy.

Approved by:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

19 April 2023