

Wingecarribee
SHIRE COUNCIL

Community Engagement Strategy



We're with you



The Wingecaribee Shire acknowledges the Gundungurra and Tharawal people as the traditional custodians of this land we now call the Wingecaribee Shire. We pay our respect to Elders both past, present and emerging.





It is my pleasure to introduce our 2023 edition Community Engagement Strategy.

The Strategy is the culmination of several months' worth of listening to the community about how we communicate and engage with you.

It considers what successful community engagement looks like and what it takes to get there. Importantly it has meant reflecting, as an organisation, on past and current approaches to how we engage you in the decisions of Council.

We understand that we need to do better. We are working hard to resolve a legacy of low levels of community satisfaction with how the Council has engaged with you on the matters that impact you most. This Strategy is designed to help correct that legacy.

Personally, I have had the pleasure of meeting with hundreds of residents and learning from these conversations. In addition, the team has been busy engaging with you through focus groups and surveys to better understand where and how we need to improve community engagement.

Residents, workers and business owners have talked to me directly about the importance of transparency and providing authentic and timely opportunities to get involved in decision-making. This is why we are now taking a principles-based approach to how we engage with you; with a view to achieving more inclusive, accessible, representative and respectful engagement.


The Strategy provides us with a road map and high-level objectives that we will work towards between now and the next local government election in 2024. This approach will help to ensure that your incoming Council is well positioned to continue this ongoing and important conversation about how people across the Shire participate in the decisions that affect them.

I appreciate that real improvement can take time, but I remain optimistic that we can continue to rebuild the community's trust in our local democracy processes.

Through our Community Engagement Strategy, we aim to rebuild and develop strong, collaborative relationships across our community. We will do this through a more consistent, evaluated approach to how and when we engage.

Most of all, we will continue to listen to and learn from our community.

*Viv May PSM
Administrator*



The community is at the heart of local government and what we do.

That is why I am particularly excited be overseeing the review of our Community Engagement Strategy at such a critical time in our history.

Our Community Engagement Strategy describes how we will inform, consult, involve, and collaborate with the community. Hearing from you helps inform the important strategies, plans, projects and services that we provide to the community.

That is why we need to get it right.

We are currently working to refocus, reinvigorate and rebuild the organisation and this Strategy is key to realising that goal.

Over the next 18 months, we will be working to progress our core objectives; one of which is to reduce barriers that might prevent people from getting involved in community engagement activities and having their voices heard.

This acknowledges that many of our residents are older and face challenges to fully participating in community life. We also want to engage with more young people by creating inclusive, welcoming and safe environments for them to share their thoughts.

We also need to restore transparency and openness between the Council and the community. That is why a focus of this Strategy is to ensure we are communicating with participants about when and how decisions have been made and how community input, along with other factors, was considered in the process.

We also need to consistently evaluate what we do. Your feedback on how we engage you will be key to our success as we build upon and learn from past experiences.

The Strategy aligns with our organisational road map and will be key in supporting us in becoming an exemplar in local government, applying learnings of the past to create a trusted, resilient, courageous and caring organisation that listens to the community it serves.

On behalf of the team at Wingecarribee I look forward to engaging with you on the issues you care about most and, working together, achieving a bright future for the Shire.

*Lisa Miscamble
General Manager*

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About the Community Engagement Strategy

This Community Engagement Strategy seeks to define how, when and who we engage, and sets the principles we aim to uphold.

In this context, the term 'community' refers to all our stakeholders. This includes those people who live, work, study or visit here. Importantly, it also includes other levels of government.

The Strategy reflects the vision of the Community Strategic Plan, Wingecarribee 2031.

It is strongly aligned with Council's Communication Strategy and is supported by a Policy, which outlines our commitment to achieving effective engagement, and a Community Engagement Toolkit designed to help staff plan, deliver and evaluate community engagement activities.

The Local Government Act 1993 requires all NSW councils to have a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles.

Our Strategy also includes a Community Participation Plan. This Plan describes how and when the community will be engaged on planning and development matters and is required under Division 2.6 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.



What we mean by 'Community Engagement'

Community engagement is a term that covers information sharing, consultation and active participation between government and communities.

It seeks to ensure people have an opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them. 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.

Community engagement helps Council:

- provide opportunities for the community to voice an opinion on proposals, plans, services and activities
- work more closely with the community to shape policy options and priorities

Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus. However, community input into Council's decision-making process provides the potential for a better, more informed decision for everyone. This results in:

- improving the relationship between the community and Council
- enhancing community ownership of decisions
- adding value to Council's decision-making processes by drawing on the skills and wisdom of people and groups in the community
- maximising the possible positive impacts of a Council decision and minimising the possible negative impacts

How we developed the Strategy

The 2023 edition Community Engagement Strategy was informed by a series of community focus groups, a youth survey and the results of a broader Community Research Survey which attracted over 400 participants.

We asked a range of questions about community engagement including:

what is working well ?
where can we improve ?
what is the best way to communicate and engage with you ?

We learned that many people prefer a mix of communication and engagement methods and value opportunities to have their say. Taking conversations out to the Shire's villages and towns also proved popular, acknowledging that these distinct areas have different needs and priorities.

A core theme was the need to provide genuine opportunities for people to get involved in decision-making and to always provide feedback so that people are aware of the outcome and how their input was considered.



Our roles and responsibilities

We all play a role in the delivery of the Strategy. Whilst the Strategy is focused on the Council's role, it is important to acknowledge that its overall success will be influenced by the participation of many stakeholders.

Your Councillors

A Councillor's role in community engagement is to participate as an elected member, listen to the views of the community and consider those views when making decisions. They play an important role in reflecting the views of the community back to the staff ensuring that concerns and ideas are heard.

At the time of reviewing this Strategy, the Council was under Administration. In the absence of elected representatives, the role of the Administrator is to ensure the community's concerns and priorities continue to be considered as part of decision-making processes.

Council staff

A Council staff member's role is to organise and facilitate the discussion, record, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community's views when making informed recommendations to Council.

Staff are responsible for managing individual community engagement activities ensuring that they are in line with the Policy and Strategy. Importantly, they are also responsible for providing feedback to participants on the outcomes of an activity, how their input was considered in making the final decision.

Staff, and Councillors, must always act in a professional, unbiased and responsible manner that reflects the Code of Conduct.

Community Engagement Coordinator

While community engagement is the responsibility of everyone, the Community Engagement Coordinator plays an important role in managing the implementation of this Strategy. The Coordinator provides advice and assistance to staff to support a more consistent and evaluated approach to delivering community engagement activities.

Community

Our community includes a range of diverse stakeholders, including other levels of government and service providers. Members of the community are responsible for contributing to the decision-making processes available to them.

This involves making themselves aware of opportunities to engage, considering the information or options available, providing timely feedback, participating respectfully and considering the ideas of others.

The role of local democracy

The Community Engagement Strategy supports local democracy, which is a system of government in NSW that involves democratically electing local governing bodies (the Council).

The community will elect community representatives (Councillors) to form its governing body, which in turn is responsible for developing and delivering policies, strategies, plans, and services.

The community participates in decision making through community engagement activities – or opportunities to have a say. These opportunities allow them to inform and shape Council decisions.

Under the Local Government Act, the elected Council is the final decision maker and is accountable to the community. This means ensuring that reasons for decisions are transparent and clear.

The community will elect its new Council in September 2024.

Our commitment to the community

Wingecarribee Shire Council is committed to improving its approach to community engagement. We have listened to the community and developed a 'road map' which will guide our continuous improvement journey.

The road map includes significant community engagement milestones we aim to achieve between now and 2024.

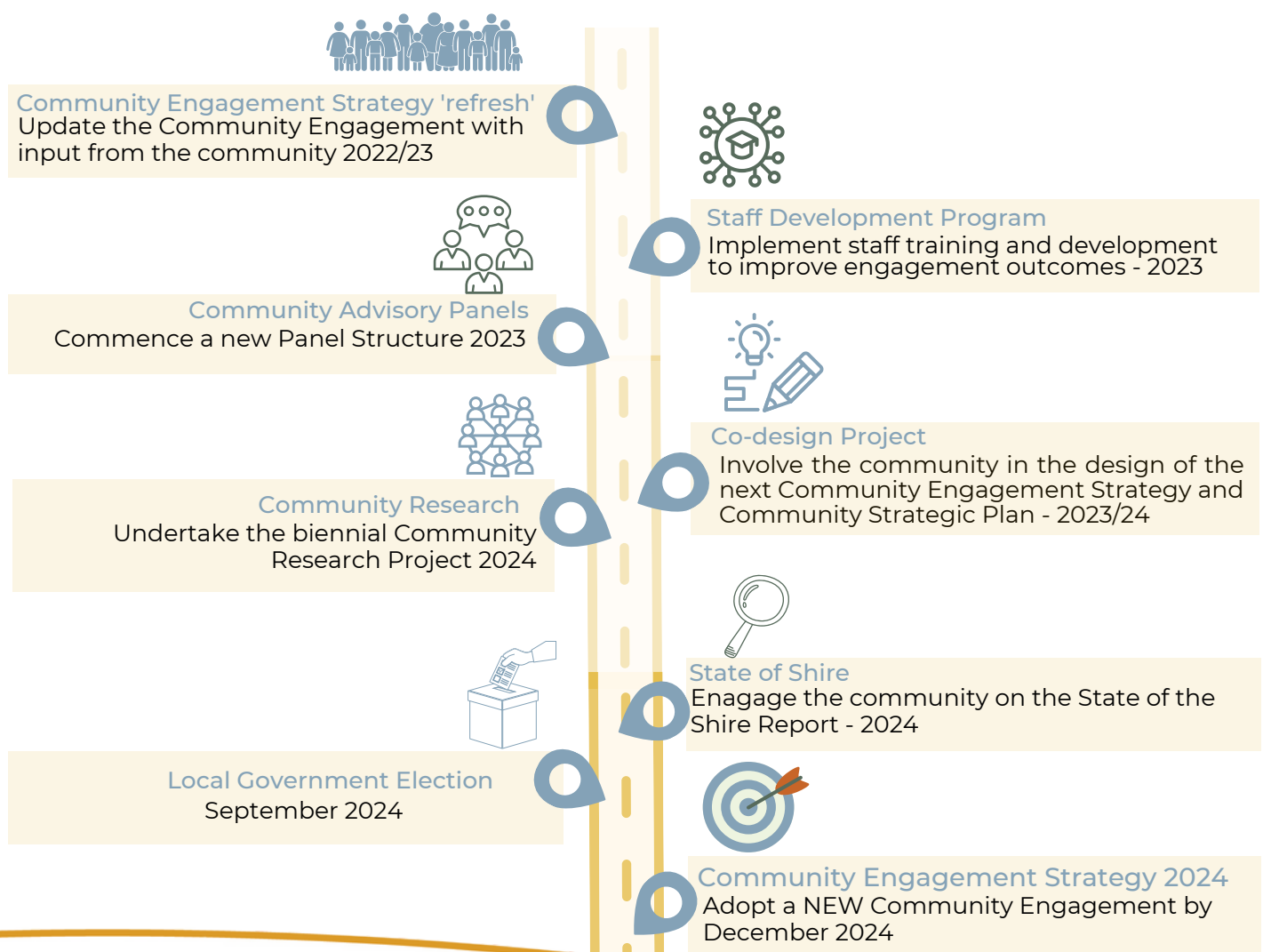
This work complements our annual program of community engagement activities designed to inform the development and delivery of projects, plans, services and other activities. The program is dynamic meaning that it changes depending on the timing and priority of decisions and projects.

Between now and the 2024 election we will continue to work hard to build our in-house capabilities, deliver genuine community engagement and actively involve our stakeholders in the decisions that affect them.

When undertaking community engagement, Council will make every effort to:

- attract and reach a cross section of the community by using a wide range of communication methods;
- invite specific community interest and user groups as identified in particular projects;
- accommodate participants' cultural, language and other specific needs;
- involve community groups and individuals who may otherwise be difficult to reach

Community Engagement Strategy - Road Map to 2024



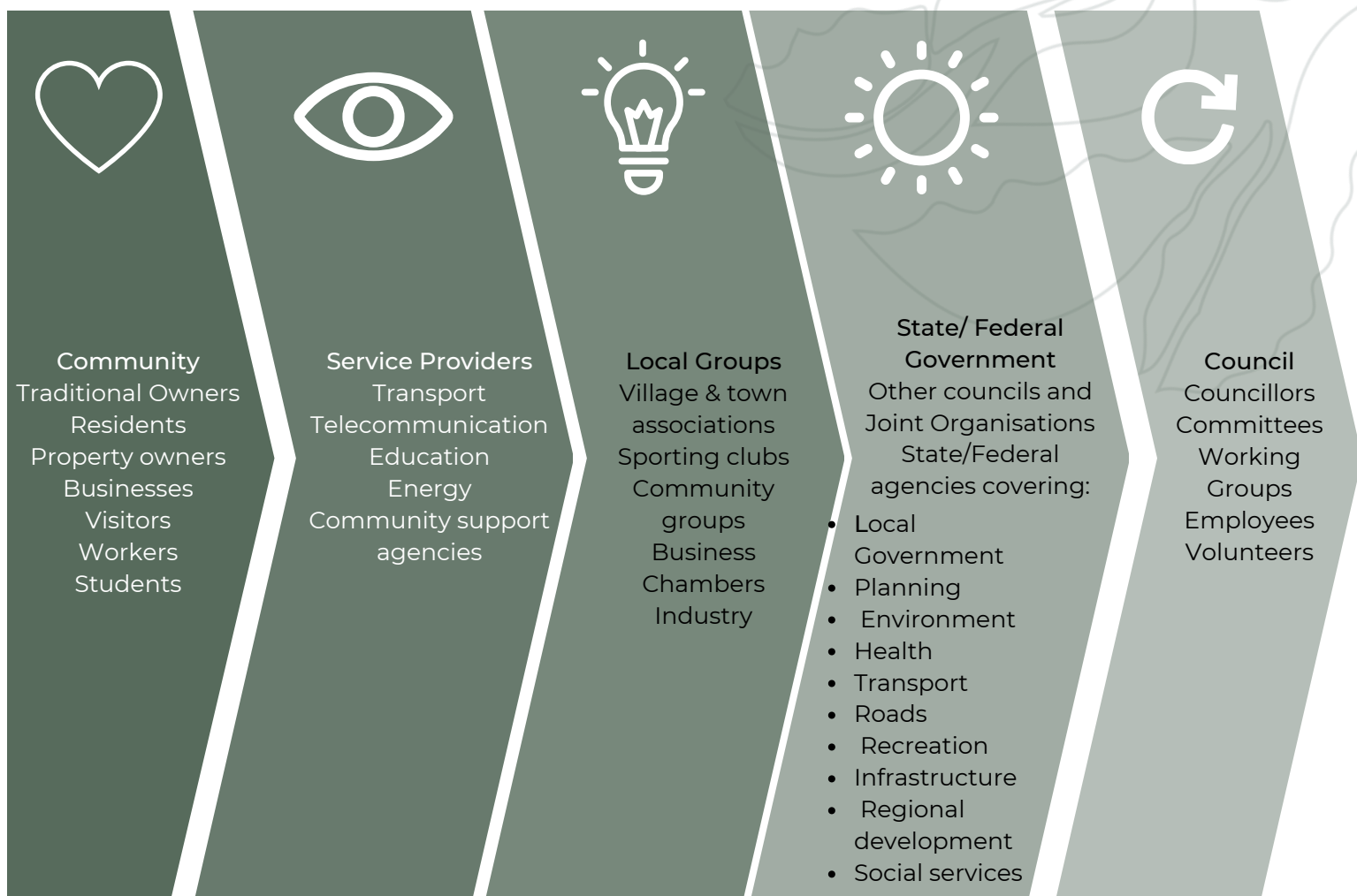
Who we engage with

Our community is inclusive of many stakeholders. This means we need to understand and sometimes balance diverse interests, priorities and needs.

This can make community engagement challenging however it also provides us with great opportunities to hear from a diverse range of perspectives. Our aim is to, in the first instance, ensure we are engaging with those people most impacted by a decision.


Sometimes we define our communities as being communities 'of place' or communities 'of interest.' This refers to people having a particular area in common, such as a town or village. Others may share a concern about a particular issue or topic.

Our stakeholders are broadly described below



Community Snap Shot

POPULATION

2021 Population = 52,456  1,000 residents



population increased by 4,825 people (10.1%) from 2016 to 2021. An average of 1.94% per year over the period.

Our projected population in 2041 is 65,275



47.8% of the population are males *2016



52.2% of the population are females *2016



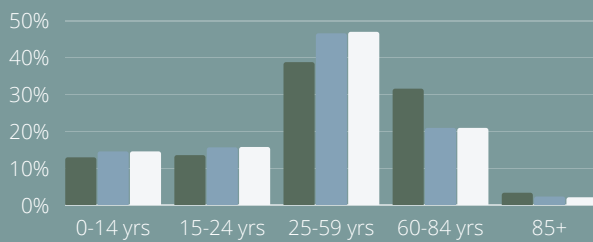
In 2021, 2,940 people (or 5.6% of the population) reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. This was a similar percentage to 2016.



6.6%

of residents identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

AGE STRUCTURE



Wingecarribee

National



77%

of us were born in Australia



7%

of us speak a language other than English

EMPLOYMENT



The largest changes in the age structure between 2016 and 2021

- Seniors (70 to 84) (+2,036 people)
- Young workforce (25 to 34) (+775 people)
- Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59) (+454 people)
- Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49) (+345 people)

HOUSING



90.7%

Shire's residents live in standalone dwellings



8%

high-density housing



23,618

total dwellings



12.8%

of the population earned an income of \$2,000+ per week.



12.8%

of us have a long-term health condition



81%

Work and Live in the Shire



23%

participate in volunteering activities higher than NSW figure of 18.1 %



26%

single person households



38.7%

two person household



26%

of us are couples with children



43%

Own our home



15%

of us are at school

Challenges and opportunities



Our new Council

The Wingecarribee Shire Council was dismissed in 2022 following a public inquiry. Since that time the organisation has been rebuilding and refocusing on the community. The review of this strategy has been an important step forward in that process, allowing us to learn from the past and adopt a fresh and well-considered approach to how we keep the community involved and informed. It has been designed with input from the community and aims to assist the incoming Council as it continues on a journey to rebuild the community's faith in local government.

The new Council will consider the Strategy's effectiveness following the local government elections in 2024.



An ageing population

The Shire is home to many people over the age of 75. This segment of the population continues to grow.

It is important to acknowledge the depth of experience that older generations bring to conversations about the Shire. Council will therefore continue to work with the community to tap into this knowledge. An ageing population does however present some challenges. Many older residents, particularly frail aged people, experience barriers to participating in community life. This is why Council is taking a holistic approach to supporting older people to participate.

A key action of this Strategy is to better understand the needs of older participants and design community engagement activities that remove barriers such as accessibility, transport, and cost. We will also work to support people in the use of technology and provide regular opportunities for face-to-face engagement.



Encouraging youth participation

Young people are the future of the Shire, and it is important that they have opportunities to shape that future. Young children, school aged children and young adults are typically difficult to engage and experience their own types of barriers.

To encourage higher levels of participation by younger people, the Council aims to work with young people to better understand how they wish to be engaged, and create welcoming, inclusive and safe environments for them to participate in.



Communities of place

Our Shire consists of many distinct towns and villages, each with their own unique character and history.

Given the separate nature of these places, spread across many kilometres, it is sometimes difficult to reach everyone in a timely manner. It can also be difficult to reach consensus across these communities given diverse priorities and needs.

Council will continue to offer a mix of both place-based engagement events, which brings the conversation direct to the community, and online technologies to ensure we reach as many people as possible. Council has also introduced a Place Liaison Officer role that works across the Shire to support engagement at the local level.

Engaging with other levels of government

It is important that the Council has ongoing and open communication with other levels of government. The Mayor and General Manager will often initiate and lead these discussions on behalf of the Council however ongoing dialogue, planning and consultation happens between individual agencies and staff on a regular basis.

A responsibility of both State and Federal Government is to proactively participate in consultation activities and work with the Council and the community to resolve issues.

Levels of service

One of the most important conversations the Council will have with its community is on levels of service. The term applies to both customer levels of service, for example the quality, timeliness or capacity of a service as well as technical levels of service for assets such as roads and buildings.

We acknowledge that we cannot deliver everything all at once, and this is why careful prioritisation needs to occur. Sometimes, an increase to one service, will see a decrease to another.

The Council will consult with the community on customer levels of service as part of its service review process.



Our Purpose

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.

Our Principles

The principles below guide and inform our approach to engaging with you.

We regularly evaluate our community engagement activities against these principles.

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.

1. **Genuine** – meaningful and authentic opportunities are provided for the community to be involved in decision making
2. **Open** – people are informed about the final decision and how their feedback was considered
3. **Inclusive** – everyone has an opportunity to have their say, and all people are welcome to participate
4. **Accessible** – barriers to participation are removed or reduced.
5. **Timely** – engagement occurs as early as possible, allowing sufficient time for people to contribute.
6. **Representative** – we seek opinions that are reflective of the broader community and those most impacted by a decision
7. **Clear** – information is easy to understand, and complex issues are well-explained
8. **Respectful** – all participants are treated with respect, regardless of their opinion, circumstances or role in the process.

Our Objectives

Our objectives, or goals, are core to the achievement of this Strategy. They provide us with strategic direction.

Our staff consider these objectives when planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement. How well we achieve these objectives helps us to also evaluate our performance.

Objective 1 - Ensure all sectors of the community have opportunities to have their say

We will do this by:

- Delivering a diverse program of community engagement activities
- Promoting community engagement activities through a variety of platforms and channels
- Investigating innovative approaches that will help us to reach more people
- Ensuring that the level of community engagement we undertake, and the methods we use, are appropriate to what we are trying to achieve

Objective 2 – Reduce barriers to community participation

We will do this by:

- Tailoring activities to suit specific audiences and their unique needs
- Using easily accessible venues, online tools and resources
- Writing in plain English, avoiding the use of technical or confusing language
- Being aware and considerate of cultural sensitivities and needs
- Using a mix of face to face and online or digital methods
- Using artistic and creative techniques to help people share their ideas and stories

Objective 3 – Strengthen Council's relationship with the community

We will do this by:

- Providing feedback to participants on the outcomes of decisions and what influenced the final decision
- Involving the community in the design and delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy
- Understanding diverse needs through improved stakeholder mapping and analysis
- Educating the community on the roles and responsibilities of the Council and other stakeholders
- Enabling people to monitor our progress by tracking key decisions on our website
- Developing partnerships with the community to inform the design and delivery of projects, programs and services.

Objective 4 - Increase Council's understanding of the Shire's many communities and their unique needs and priorities

We will do this by:

- Including the outcomes of community engagement activities in Councillor and Committee briefing sessions and formal reports of Council
- Engaging the community on affordable and acceptable Council services, including levels of service, at least every four years as part of the review of the Community Strategic Plan
- Engaging the community on priority issues and overall satisfaction with Council performance via a biennial survey

Objective 5 – Continuously improve the Council's approach to community engagement

We will do this by:

- Asking for feedback on community engagement activities
- Sharing the outcomes of community engagement more broadly to inform future activities
- Applying a consistent and coordinated approach to planning, delivering and evaluating community engagement
- Consulting with the community on appropriate channels and methods for communication and engagement
- Proactively investigating new technologies and methods to communicate and engage

Our Approach

We develop engagement plans when delivering community engagement on major projects and decisions which may have a significant impact on stakeholders. Smaller projects of a lesser impact and fewer resources benefit from a similar but less formal approach.



When we engage

Council often seeks public participation during the planning stages of projects or initiatives; when a change in service, activity or infrastructure is considered; or when more information and evidence is required.

In the engagement planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the optimal time needed for people to respond. Whilst legislation sets out minimum requirements for some specific consultations, each engagement process is considered on its individual basis and merit.



How decisions are made

The decision process can be complex. Feedback from the community will be considered in the final decision made by Council.

At times the community will have limited opportunity to have a say but when this happens, Council will clearly explain why.


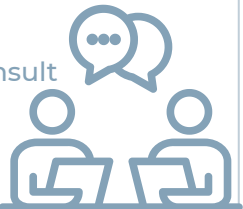



Reasons that may limit the ability to inform a decision include safety, legislative requirements or other factors Council cannot influence. For example, sometimes Council will collect comments on behalf of the State Government. When this happens, we can only forward your comments on.

In other cases, Council is given a target – such as a housing development target over five years – which we cannot change. When this happens, we can only consider comments about how to meet the target, but not about whether the target itself is right. Sometimes the Council will advocate on an issue to effect change on behalf of the community.



Levels of participation

Planning for public participation in decision-making is broadly guided by practices advocated by the NSW Government and International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). Council acknowledges that engagement may fall within five increasing levels of participation within the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and different approaches are required for each.

Increasing levels of participation	Goal	Description	Example methods
Inform 	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and / or solutions	All levels of community engagement will involve this level.	Social media Website Adverts Flyers Letters Emails
Consult 	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	This level is selected when Council asks and listens to the community about ideas to improve a particular proposal, understand what would happen if Council made a certain decision, or when a number of options are provided for community preferencing, e.g., providing feedback on a draft plan to upgrade a nearby park	Written submissions Online submissions Focus groups Surveys
Involve 	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	This level is selected when Council wants to include the community early in the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are both heard and understood, e.g., the community are engaged to help identify aspirations and solutions to create an Environmental Strategy. Initial input and local knowledge is used to inform the development of the Strategy, which is then presented for further feedback before being finalised.	Community advisory panels Working Groups
Collaborate 	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.	This level is selected where issues and solutions are unclear and Council works with equal power and partnership to find solutions that lead to an agreed outcome, e.g., Council works closely with a demographically representative group of people to review the Community Strategic Plan.	Co-design committees Task force
Empower 	To place final decision making in the hands of the public	This level is selected when the community and stakeholders are provided with the skills, information, authority and resources in order to make the final decision. This level is rare given that the final decision usually sits with the elected representatives.	Highly participatory activities e.g. citizens' juries

Design and delivery

Staff are provided with a Toolkit to assist them when planning and evaluating community engagement.

Project managers are responsible for following key steps in preparing Community Engagement Plans.

1. Define and scope the project – review Council resolution or Executive requirements. Confirm the purpose and objectives, consider the context, review risk, consider resource constraints and identify the negotiables and non-negotiables. Determine the levels of participation required at various stages of the project.
2. Identify key stakeholders – consider individuals and organisations who could be affected by a decision on the issue. Consider decision making processes, regulations and levels of authority. Gather contact details and prepare to record interactions. Identify any barriers that might impact certain stakeholders and work to reduce or remove these.
3. Plan consultation approach – offer a range of ways for stakeholders to learn about the topic and share their thoughts and ideas. Anticipate the details they will require to participate in an informed way. Tailor the approach and consider creative tools and interactive methodologies.
4. Seek approval of the plan - smaller scale engagement requires approval from, at a minimum, the responsible Director. These projects tend to be low impact and local to a small section of the community.
5. Implement the plan – conduct communication and engagement with stakeholders as described in the plan. Adhere to timeframes and budget. Develop relationships and record interactions or outcomes. Monitor process and adjust if required.
6. Consider response – collate, analyse and identify how engagement outcomes will be utilised in decision making.
7. Close the loop – provide feedback, articulate to participants how their input has been or will be utilised in decision making and what other information was used to determine the final outcome.
8. Review and report – evaluate success of the engagement plan. Consider reach, participation, design and delivery, and alignment with our engagement principles.

Plans for significant community engagement are usually authorised by management and then endorsed by Councillors as part of Ordinary Meetings of Council. Council reports are required to outline planned consultation as well as record subsequent results.

Significant, in this context, relates only to those projects that are considered high impact local or city-wide activities.





How we engage

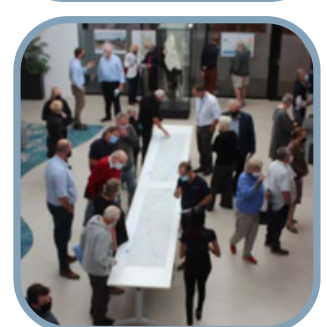
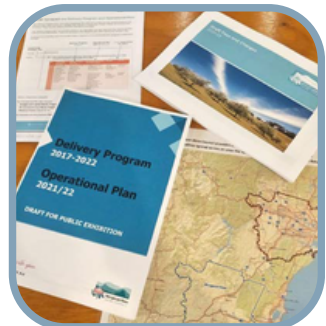
To ensure successful engagement, careful consideration is given to methods, tools and timing. How we engage will depend on the level of engagement we need to undertake.

Consideration is given to levels of community and stakeholder interest, political sensitivity, opportunities for partnerships, the level of social, economic and environmental impact, legislative requirements, accessibility, timeframes, resources and monetary constraints.

A range of tailored approaches are then considered.

Some of the options available include:

- Interviews and one-to-one meetings
- Surveys and polls - online, intercept and phone
- Storytelling and submissions
- Mapping and drawing
- Briefings and presentations
- Displays and information sessions
- Listening posts and drop-in events
- Focus groups, field trips and walking tours
- Brainstorming idea generation
- Moderated online forums
- Committees and working groups
- Workshops and forums
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Dotmocracy and World Cafe
- Community group meeting attendance
- Committees and working groups
- Online consultation hub www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au



Snap shots of engagement



Case Study 1
David Wood Playing Fields
Playspace Upgrade



Case study 2
Robertson Village Place
Plan



Case study 3
Community Research
Project 2022

Why the
engagement took
place:

A draft concept design for a new and improved inclusive adventure playground was shared with the community to ensure the park meets the needs of residents and children.

To develop a community-led strategic plan for Robertson. The Robertson Village Place Plan is a holistic place-based plan to address the housing, economic, social and cultural needs of the Robertson community, both now and into the future.

Council sought to gain community insights on the challenges and opportunities facing the Shire over the next 10 years along with peoples' satisfaction with Council's performance.

Who was
engaged:

Wingecarribee Shire residents with a focus on users of the playspace and people local to the project.

The Robertson Community

A representative sample of Wingecarribee Shire Residents.

How we engaged:

Via a project page on Council's online consultation hub, Your Say Wingecarribee, along with a drop-in session on site and a meeting for neighbouring residents.

A mix of methods was used to actively involve the community; from online surveys and discussions, to face to face sessions, a photo competition, an interactive word map and other activities.

A telephone survey was conducted and over 400 people participated.

What happened to your
feedback:

Feedback received was considered and then incorporated where possible into the detailed design. The result was a more inclusive playspace for the local community.

Community input directly informed the draft Robertson Village Place Plan. The result was a place plan that considers a longer-term, vision for the village.

Information is being used to inform Council's Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Budget and future service reviews. Results also help us to prioritise resources. The goals and strategies within the Community Strategic Plan will also be updated to reflect the community's priorities.



What happens to your feedback

We value the community's feedback. That's why a priority of this Strategy is to ensure that people are kept informed about how feedback was considered and what the final decision was.

How we provide feedback will often depend on the level or scope of the engagement.

In many cases, particularly whereby a group of people are directly impacted by a project or issue, we will work to contact individual participants once a decision has been made. We usually do this through email or letter. Occasionally, this may require a personal phone call.

When reporting outcomes for larger scale projects that have wider implications for the Shire, we will provide updates on our website or through a formal report to Council.

Staff are responsible for advising you at the start of the process, exactly how and when feedback will be provided.

Evaluating our approach

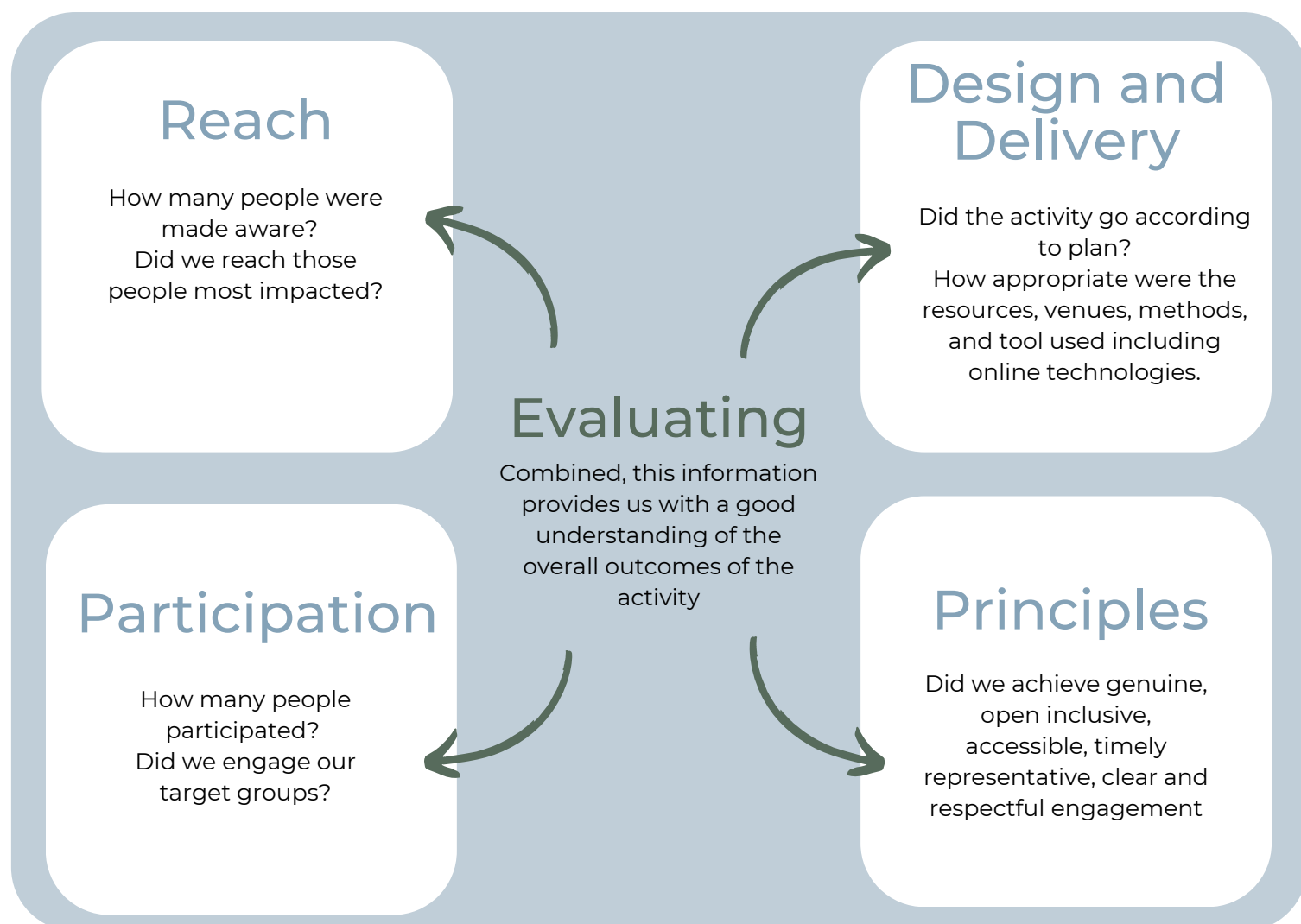
There are several ways in which we evaluate our approach.

Staff are encouraged to debrief after completing community engagement activities and assess the effectiveness of the activity against a set of criteria. This helps us to continuously improve upon what we do.

We often seek feedback from people who participated in the activity, usually through the use of surveys or questionnaires. We may ask questions about the process, methods and tools that we used, along with the overall experience.

The larger the scope and impact of the community engagement, the more formal the evaluation process and documentation will be.

We consider the following when assessing the effectiveness of individual community engagement activities and their outcomes.



Community Participation Plan

This section of the Strategy relates specifically to how we engage the community on planning and development matters.

Council has a responsibility to deliver the objectives of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) which stipulates mandatory and minimum requirements for community participation in strategy development, plan making and making decisions on proposed development.

The level and extent of community participation will vary depending on the location, scope of the proposal under consideration and potential impact of the decision.

When it comes to planning and development, Council's discretion over types and levels of engagement is sometimes limited. Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act identifies minimum requirements for the public exhibition of strategic planning and policy documents, as well as applications submitted to Council for determination. These minimum requirements are set out in Table 1.

Local Environmental Plans (i.e.: rezoning and alternative use) Development Control Plans and Development Contributions Plans must be advertised for a minimum of 28 days and submissions considered. But where relevant, Council will seek to extend this timeframe and also use additional forms of engagement in accordance with this Strategy.

Some Development Applications (DAs) are classified as 'Exempt' or 'Complying' Development and may be assessed by private Certifiers rather than Council staff. In these cases, there may be little or no consultation.

Consultation on other DAs is carried out in accordance with Table 2 Notification Requirements and varies according to the scale and expected impacts of each proposal.

Typically, these DAs are neighbour notified for at least 14 days or advertised for 30 days, with submissions then considered before decisions are made – usually by a senior member of staff acting under delegated authority. However, for a small percentage of applications Councillors may require further public consultation and/or call up the matter to a Council meeting in order to make the decision itself.

Proposals for very large and/or costly developments are determined by the Joint Regional Planning Panel or by the State government. Consultation on these proposals is normally guided by the minimum statutory requirements.



Submission process

Well founded, balanced and factual submissions can inform, and influence assessment processes and Council can obtain valuable information on localised issues that may apply to the matter being considered.

Making a submission is not mandatory however it is helpful to receive supportive as well as critical feedback.

Submissions made in response to notification or advertisement of a development application, strategic plan or policy document must:

- Be made in writing
- Identify the Application Number and Property Address of the development application
- Clearly indicate the name, address, email and phone number of the party making the submission
- Clearly state the reasons or grounds for support of or objection to the proposal

Objections should not be focussed on civil disputes and should be based on planning grounds generally related to detrimental effects or unmanageable impacts such as:

- Ground levels or views to and from the land
- Privacy, overshadowing and solar access
- Amenity impacts (such as potential noise, traffic, access, odour, light or other impacts)
- Visual aspects of the building in relation to streetscape including heritage considerations
- Other localised issues such as natural hazards and stormwater / drainage

Council will acknowledge receipt of any submissions received at the conclusion of the assessment process and advise that the submission has been taken into account. Basic information on the outcome may also be provided.

For more information about lodging submissions, along with planning and development processes, please visit our website - www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/Development.

Reporting outcomes

In relation to applications for development consent, and applications for the modification of a development consent which was publicly exhibited, Council will publish details of:

- the land parcel and a description of the proposed development
- the decision and date on which it was made
- the reasons for the decision (having regard to any statutory requirements applying to the decision)
- how community views were taken into account in making the decision

TABLE 1 - Minimum exhibition timeframes

Plan Making Mandatory requirements		(Schedule 1, Part 1, Division 1 (1) of the EP&A Act 1979)
Draft community participation plans		28 days public exhibition
Draft local strategic planning statements		28 days public exhibition
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination		28 days public exhibition or: a) if a different period of public exhibition is specified in the gateway determination for the proposal—the period so specified, or b) if the gateway determination specifies that no public exhibition is required because of the minor nature of the proposal—no public exhibition.
Draft development control plans		28 days public exhibition
Draft contribution plans		28 days public exhibition
Development Assessment Mandatory requirements		(Schedule 1, Part 1, Division 2 (2) of the EP&A Act 1979)
Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for State significant development)		14 days public exhibition or: a) if a different period of public exhibition is specified for the application in Table 2—the period so specified, or b) if Table 2 specifies that no public exhibition is required for the application—no public exhibition.
Application for development consent for designated development		28 days public exhibition
Application for modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations		14 days or the period (if any) determined in Table 2.
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.		28 days public exhibition

Notes:

1. Clause 17 in Schedule 1 to the Act states that if a particular matter has a different exhibition or notification period that applies under Part 1 of Schedule 1, the longer period applies.

2. Division 3 (18) states a public authority is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason.

3. Public exhibition involves :
a) giving notice to individual landowners,
b) setting an appropriate exhibition timeframe,
c) advertising the exhibition and how submissions can be made, and
d) making documents publicly available

4. The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

5. Submissions relating to applications and other exhibited documents must be made in writing and be lodged with the Council within the period specified in the notice (the exhibition period).

TABLE 2 Notification requirements

Development Type	Neighbour notification (14 days)	Advertised development (30 days) *	No notification or exhibition requirements
New Residential Single Storey Dwellings	●		
New Residential Single Storey Dwelling (and Residential alterations and additions) with change in ground level >600mm and not in an urban release area and has identifiable impacts on adjoining or adjacent properties in the opinion of a Council assessing officer	●		
New Residential Two Storey Dwellings or ancillary two storey buildings in all residential zones (and two storey residential alterations and additions) unless the subject site is located within a mapped urban release area	●		
Outbuildings that are ancillary to a residential usage of the land (e.g., sheds, pools, garage and carports)	●		
Residential accommodation where there is two or more dwellings being proposed on any one site (includes secondary dwellings and dual occupancies)	●		
Residential accommodation where there is three or more additional dwellings being proposed (Including Boarding Houses, Multi Dwelling Housing and Residential Flat Buildings)	●	●	
Demolition (unless in a heritage conservation area or an item of heritage)			●
Commercial			
New Commercial Premises and Industrial Premises		●	
Additions and Alterations to a Commercial Premises	●		
Change of Use	●		
First Occupancy of a new premises	●		
Signage	●		
Subdivision			
Subdivision of land into two or more lots	●		
Boundary Adjustments	●		
Strata Subdivision			●
Subdivision of existing approved dual occupancy			●
Tourist and Visitor accommodation			
New Facilities		●	
Alterations and additions to existing facilities or a change of use	●		
Rural industries			
Rural industries	●		
Industries / storage			
New Industry / Factory Buildings	●		
Alterations and Additions to Buildings	●		
Change of use	●		
Tower used to site telecommunication facilities		●	
Extractive industries			
Extractive Industries -Not designated		●	
Extractive Industries - Designated Development		●	
Hospital / Religious / Education Establishments			
New		●	
Alterations and Additions	●		
Temporary use of Land			
Uses under Clause 2.8 of the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan	●		

TABLE 2 Notification requirements

Development Type	Neighbour notification (14 days)	Advertised development (30 days) *	No notification or exhibition requirements
Other Development types			
Applications where a variation to Council's policies are being proposed (which is greater than 10%), e.g., building lines, setbacks and height, excluding controls relating to cut and fill.	●		
All new development in Heritage Conservation Areas or upon the site of a Heritage Item, where the proposed works are visible from a public street (excluding mapped urban release areas)	●		●
Minor Environmental Protection Works			●
Other Development not listed - All other development types that are not required by legislation to be notified will not be notified. However subject to assessment of impacts by Council's assessing officer, where it is found to have uncontrolled or unmanageable impacts on surrounding properties the assessing officer shall determine the level of notification required.			
*Advertised development includes an advertisement on an approved website (NSW Planning Portal or Council's website) and also a sign on the development site in a prominent location.			

Notes:

Any notification provides for fourteen (14) days for written submissions to be received by Council from the date of the notice of proposed development. In the case of advertised development, the advertisement period is 30 days.

Council will exclude any days where Council notifies or advertises a development proposal between 20 December and 10 January.

Notification of amendments to Plans and Documentation (cl.55), Modifications (s.4.55) to Development Consent and Requests for Review (s8.2).

The plans for a proposed development may be amended by the applicant prior to its determination under clause 55 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 or modified in the case where an application is determined by way of approval. Amended plans can also be considered by Council following a request for review of determination under section 8.2 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

a) Amendments

The applicant may submit amended plans in order to address concerns raised by Council or to address concerns raised by an objector in a submission in response to the notification process. In these circumstances it is not expected that Council will renotify the development proposal.

Where issues have not been addressed through the submission of amended plans and supporting documentation, or where there is a significant change in the proposed application which will create detrimental or unmanageable impacts, Council's assessing officers may at their discretion re-notify the proposal.

b) Modifications following determining an application by way of consent

For applications that have been determined by way of approval, a section 4.55 modification application may be submitted to Council for consideration. These applications can be of a minor nature (s4.55(1) and s4.55(1A) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 involving minimal environmental impact or addressing an error or misdescription in an application. More significant modifications will be considered under (s4.55(2)). Council will generally not notify applications made under section 4.55(1) and s4.55(1A), however in the case of a s4.55(2) or a s4.55(AA) modification, if the original development application was previously notified or advertised, any future modification involving environmental impact will be notified or advertised in the same manner.

c) Review of determination

In the case of where an application has been determined by way of refusal or in the case of an approval where a condition(s) of consent have been imposed, a proponent may request a review of determination under section 8.2 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Where a request is made under this section, Council shall notify the section 8.2 application in the same manner as the original development application was notified or advertised.



Reviewing the Community Engagement Strategy

The Community Engagement Strategy will be comprehensively reviewed at least every four years with an updated Strategy to be adopted by Council in December of a local government election year.

The next review is scheduled for December 2024.

In the meantime, we will regularly evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the Strategy using performance indicators including:

- Community satisfaction with Council's level of communication
- Community satisfaction with provision of information to residents
- Community satisfaction with opportunities in Council decision making
- Progress made towards actions that support our objectives
- Results of community engagement activities

Getting involved

Participating in community engagement activities has many benefits. Not only does community input help to shape the future of the Shire it provides people, and communities, with opportunities to come together.

By getting involved in community engagement activities you can:

- have your say on issues affecting the Shire
- gain insights into new issues
- learn more about Council's services and projects
- learn how the Council makes decisions
- meet new people

We use a variety of channels to promote ways to get involved. You can also sign up to our regular eNewsletter to keep up to date on activities and projects. [Council's Agency Information Guide](#) also aims to promote a better understanding of Council's work in the community and inform members of the public about the ways in which the community can participate in Council's decision-making processes.

For more information you can:

- visit our website - www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/Community/Consultation
- call our Customer Service on 02 4868 0888
- email us at mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au
- visit us at

The Civic Centre
68 Elizabeth Street
Moss Vale NSW 2577



We're With **YOU**



Acknowledgements

This Community Engagement Strategy, 2022/23 edition, could not have been developed without input from our community.

We wish to thank all those people who informed this review by participating in focus groups and surveys.

The Council also wishes to acknowledge the following community engagement frameworks, policies, and strategies:

- Bega Shire Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2019
- Blacktown City Council Community Engagement Strategy 2022
- Casey City Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2021
- Cessnock City Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2020
- City of Parramatta, Community Engagement Strategy 2020
- City of Ryde, Communications and Engagement Strategy 2014
- Knox City Council, Community Engagement Policy 2021
- Mid Coast Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2019-2022
- Northern Beaches Council, Community Engagement Framework 2017
- Penrith City Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2019
- Some of the concepts included in this Strategy are featured in the NSW Office of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Handbook, 2021 edition.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and use of the Public Participation spectrum.

