

LEADERSHIP

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

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File Reference:	5704/9
Related Policies/Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016</i> <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> Code of Conduct Code of Meeting Practice Notification of Development Proposals Policy
Related Documents:	Community Engagement Strategy Communications Strategy Community Engagement Toolkit (internal doc) Privacy Management Plan Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021 Positive Ageing Strategy 2016 – 2026 Youth Strategy & Action Plan 2016-2026
Superseded Policy/GM Practice Note:	Community Engagement Policy 26/11/2014

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.



POLICY STATEMENT

Council views community engagement as important to its effective, transparent and accountable governance. Council recognises that a clear standard of engagement should be established appropriate to the nature, complexity and forecast level of impact associated with each decision made regarding major projects, policies, strategies and operational changes.

Council is committed to:

- offering opportunities for the community to contribute to the decisions made by Council;
- effective two-way flow of information between Council and the community;
- decision-making that is transparent and works in the interest of the community, considering its many and diverse stakeholders; and
- ensuring that effective internal processes and controls exist within Council to ensure good governance and effective community representation.

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 the framework through which all community engagement will be considered and delivered:

1. Council's community engagement activities are based on the belief that those who are potentially affected, negatively or positively, by a decision have a right to have their thoughts heard and understood in the decision-making process.
2. Council recognises that in a system of representative democracy, it is neither practical nor possible to undertake extensive community engagement on every issue; however when a decision has the potential to impact the local community significantly, Council will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or with an interest in a decision.
3. When undertaking community engagement, Council staff will present their views and professional recommendations in an open and respectful manner in order to inform the community and assist in the achievement of a knowledgeable outcome from each engagement opportunity.



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4. All materials and methods developed by Council to support community engagement will be genuine, unbiased, understandable and appropriate to ensure that the community can participate in a meaningful way.
5. When undertaking community engagement (consultation and higher on the IAP2 Spectrum described below), Council's commitment is that the community's contribution will be considered when making a decision. Council will also communicate to participants, where practicable, how their input was taken into account.

These principles are adapted from the International Association for Public Participation's *Core Values for Public Participation* (© IAP2 www.iap2.org) and are reflective of the philosophy of the *NSW Local Government Act and Amendments*.

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*.



DEFINITIONS

Community Engagement	<p>Council's definition of community engagement is based on the <i>United Nations Declaration on Community Engagement (2005)</i>.</p> <p>Council defines community engagement as a two-way process of dialogue by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of our local community and other relevant stakeholders are incorporated into policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment.</p>
Communication	The exchange and promotion of information between the 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live, work, study or conduct business or are involved in local community groups or organisations in the LGA. • Visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the LGA.
Stakeholder	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

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared as follows:

Councillors	<p>Councillors should ensure that all new proposals that are brought to their attention have the appropriate community engagement completed (or specified as part of the project report). Councillors should encourage a positive attitude to involving the community at the appropriate level.</p> <p>A Councillor's role is to listen to the community and consider various views when making decisions at Council. Community engagement processes provide valuable opportunities for Councillors to hear and understand the voice of the community and ensure that this voice is properly represented when Council meets and makes resolutions which impact the future of our community.</p>
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Executive	Executive should support the community engagement process and encourage the appropriate level of engagement by all staff.
Staff (Contractors and consultants undertaking engagement on behalf of Council are deemed employees for the purposes of this policy)	<p>Council employees need to be aware of the importance of community engagement and people directly involved in major projects should be trained to the appropriate level of the community engagement techniques and practices (or have access to trained advisers).</p> <p>A Council staff member's role in community engagement is to organise and facilitate the discussion, record, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community's views when making unbiased recommendations to Council or committees.</p>
All	Both Councillors and Council staff are encouraged not to dominate or direct community discussions, nor to dismiss the community's input. Instead, Councillors and staff should allow discussions to move forward in an open, respectful and inclusive way.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

While community engagement plans are generally tailored to the unique aspects of each key project, at a minimum officers are required to use the *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum* to define stakeholder roles and plan the process. They must also meet legislative requirements.

BREACHES OF THE POLICY

Breaches of this policy should be reported to Group Manager Corporate and Community who will investigate allegations and determine an appropriate course of action to resolve the matter.

APPROVED BY:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

10 April 2019

