

POLICY:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DATE ADOPTED:	General Manager's Report #13 Council 27 September 2017 Minute Book No.12588 Director Corporate Services & Finance's Report #1 Policy 5 December 2012 Council 6 February 2013 Minute Book No.11477
ORIGINAL ADOPTION:	General Manager's Report #1 Policy 6 April 2011 Council 20 April 2011 Minute Book No. 11095
FILE REFERENCE:	02.00003
OBJECTIVE:	To provide a framework for Council's commitment to delivering a high level of community engagement to its community

1. GUIDING PRICIPLES

1.1 To provide genuine support for meaningful and effective consultation

By recognising consultation as a valued part of strategic decision making.

1.2 To consult before making decisions

By referencing the Community Engagement Strategy (**refer to attachment 1**), Council will ensure the right level of consultation is applied in any given situation and matches the nature, complexity and impact of the issue, plan, project, or strategy The Strategy does not give participants the power to make final decisions but to be informed and contribute to the process.

1.3 To provide feedback

By establishing agreed standards of consultation at the start of every project, Council will ensure all participants agree on a feedback process and are aware of making a commitment to ongoing communication.

1.4 To be representative

By utilising the broad range of demographic and social profiling data available to Council, we will ensure we consult with the right people at the right time engaging true representative samples of the community.

1.5 Don't over consult

By accessing existing relevant research, databases and information as part of the engagement planning process, Council will ensure a free flow of information between

Council departments that reduces the risk of wasting valuable resources, including valuable community time.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

The following Community Engagement Procedures (2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4) have been developed to enable Council to implement its Community Engagement Policy:

2.1 Community Engagement Commitment

By adopting the Community Engagement Strategy Policy, Council makes a commitment to conducting quality consultation and a willingness to actively engage the community in decision making and information processes. A Community Engagement Strategy also ensures a consistent approach is taken by Council in relation to projects requiring community consultation and ensures the community is well informed about Council issues, strategies, projects or plans and has the opportunity for involvement in decision making and policy development. Community engagement will apply to all facets of Council's operations where appropriate, and the standard of consultation will be designed in line with the nature, complexity and impact of the issue identified. Accordingly, engagement methods, techniques and tools used will vary according to the issue or project.

2.2 Planning for effective consultation

In planning for a community engagement activity in relation to a specific issue, project, strategy or plan Council will reference its Community Engagement Strategy, determine what the objectives are for the project, identify the stakeholders impacted by the project, the level and forms of engagement to be utilised, the tools to be used, the measurable outcomes and evaluation processes.

2.3 Community Engagement Matrix

Council will determine what level of engagement is to be utilised for each specific community engagement activity based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation; with the level of engagement in line with the nature, complexity and impact of the issue, plan, project, or strategy. The levels of engagement as described by the IAP2 Spectrum are included below. :

Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to help them understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Consult	To obtain public feedback on 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 decision making including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution
Empower	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

2.4 Feedback and Evaluation

A commitment to meaningful community engagement requires ongoing and regular communications with identified stakeholders.

Council commits to including as part of the engagement process, feedback and evaluation of its community engagement. Council may use a variety of methods to deliver this feedback depending on the Community Engagement objectives and goals established in the planning process.

Community Engagement Strategy

Bathurst Regional Council



Introduction

This plan outlines Bathurst Regional Council's commitment to working with its community in the ongoing future development of the Bathurst Region. The Community Engagement Strategy outlines how and to what service level, Council will build a meaningful long term relationship with the community it serves in terms of an involvement in decision making.

The Bathurst Region is identified as the community either living, visiting or working in the Bathurst Regional Council Local Government Area.

Why Develop a Community Engagement Strategy?

Aside from it being a requirement under the NSW Government's Integrated Planning Process, a Community Engagement Strategy provides an opportunity for Council to review its consultation processes and develop tools and targets that will support a transparent governing environment. A community engagement strategy provides Council with a framework to develop meaningful dialogue and relationships with its community.

Council's Vision and Mission

The development of Council's ***Community Engagement Guiding Principles***, the first step in the Community Engagement Process, is made with reference to Council's Vision and Mission Statements.

BRC Vision	A vibrant regional centre that enjoys a rural lifestyle, the Bathurst Region achieves health and well-being through strengthening economic opportunities, planning for sustainable growth, protecting and enhancing our assets, and encouraging a supportive and inclusive community. A Region full of community spirit and shared prosperity.
BRC Mission	The equitable development and maintenance of services provided for the general health and wellbeing of the citizens of the Bathurst Region and the adjustment of these services to meet the changing needs.

A Community Engagement Strategy based on these principles works to further enhance the Council's strategic planning process. It provides a framework for decision making and standards to service delivery that are intended to inspire confidence and trust in the community that we will listen to and hear what the community has to say on important issues.

Our Community Engagement Commitment

By adopting the Community Engagement Strategy, Council makes a commitment to conducting quality consultation and a willingness to actively engage the community in decision making and information processes.

A Community Engagement Strategy also ensures a consistent approach is taken by Council in relation to projects requiring community consultation and ensures the community is well informed about Council issues, strategies, projects or plans and has the opportunity for involvement in decision making and policy development.

Community Engagement Guiding Principles

1. To provide genuine support for meaningful and effective consultation

By recognising consultation as a valued part of strategic decision making.

2. To consult before making decisions

By referencing the Community Engagement Strategy Council will ensure the right level of consultation is applied in any given situation. The Strategy does not give participants the power to make final decisions but to influence the process.

3. To provide feedback

By establishing agreed standards of consultation at the start of every project Council will ensure all participants agree on a feedback process and are aware of any commitment made to ongoing communication.

4. Be representative

By utilising the broad range of demographic and social profiling data available to Council we will ensure we consult with the right people at the right time engaging true representative samples of the community.

5. Don't over consult

By accessing existing relevant research, databases and information as part of the engagement planning process, Council will ensure a free flow of information between Council departments that reduces the risk of wasting valuable resources including valuable community time.

Community Engagement Procedure

After considering the Guiding Principles in the Community Engagement Policy the Community Engagement Procedure has been designed to provide a framework to guide Council's community engagement activities.

Procedures outlined in this strategy include;

1. Community engagement planning framework
2. Community Engagement Matrix
3. Feedback and Evaluation review

One of the greatest challenges of Local Government, is striking that balance between effective community consultation and limited resources. The Community Engagement Strategy provides a set of tools that will help coordinate Council's consultation processes and limit the very real risk of over-communication provided by a more ad hoc approach.

This strategy is intended to add to the ongoing and regular consultation conducted by Councillors in their general roles as representatives of the community and by no means replaces that role.

Community Engagement planning

By adopting this Community Engagement Strategy, Council is making a commitment to credible and competent planning of its community engagement activities.

In undertaking a consultation project it is imperative that:

- the aim and objectives of the project are clearly articulated
- stakeholders are identified
- determine the level of engagement (as guided by the IAP2) spectrum based on the complexity of the issue and the identified objectives
- determine the appropriate tools to use as part of the engagement process
- set clear expectations around what influence/input the community has on the issues, project or plan Council is seeking community input on
- Build in an appropriate level of evaluation as part of the of the engagement process

Community Engagement Matrix

Council will use tools and approaches as identified in the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum, as defined below, to determine the appropriate level of engagement to be undertaken on identified projects, issues, strategies or plans. Council has also invested in the Your Say Bathurst website as an online community engagement portal. The website is one of the engagement tools now available to Council and can be used alongside a suite of other engagement tools to support community engagement activities, based on the level of engagement being undertaken.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fact sheets ■ Web sites ■ Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public comment ■ Focus groups ■ Surveys ■ Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshops ■ Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen advisory committees ■ Consensus-building ■ Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Citizen juries ■ Ballots ■ Delegated decision

Feedback and Evaluation Review

A commitment to meaningful community engagement requires ongoing and regular communication with your target community/sample participants.

Council commits to including as part of that process, feedback and evaluation of its community engagement at all levels. Council may use a variety of methods to deliver this outcome depending on available resources and the Community Engagement Objectives established in the planning process.

This could include:

- Participant survey conducted at conclusion of engagement process
- Annual Council Community Survey (random sample)
- Specific Online survey through Council website
- Ratepayers newsletter direct mail to residents
- Written submissions
- Online participants forum

Conclusion

Council has made a commitment to developing a relevant and comprehensive Community Engagement Strategy. In adopting the Community Engagement Policy and associated Strategy Council makes a commitment to recognizing community engagement as a strategic tool in its decision making processes.

The aim of the Strategy being to provide guidance to Council in terms of ongoing community engagement and make a commitment to the community that outlines its intended service levels and a process for meaningful consultation.

The Community Engagement Strategy provides the framework to enable Council to make a genuine improvement in coordinating its community engagement practices. It is intended to compliment the activities of Councillors who are the elected representatives of the community, and have as part of their mandate, a role to play in consulting with the community through various formal and informal channels.

Community engagement is relevant across all Council's departments and operations and Council reports via its Council Business Paper each month on the level of engagement activities being undertaken and reported to the community via the Council meeting.