

Community Engagement Policy

Responsible Department:	Planning, Strategy and People
Responsible Section:	Corporate Planning and Risk
Responsible Officer:	Manager Corporate Planning and Risk

Objective

- To build trust and foster positive relationships between Narrabri Shire Council and the community and other stakeholders.
- To enable community members to understand and, where appropriate, provide input to planning and decision making on Council's projects, services, and initiatives.
- To enable more efficient delivery of Council projects, services and initiatives based on a clearer understanding of community needs, interests, and expectations.
- To provide a consistent framework for community engagement across Council.
- To enable engagement activities to be delivered as effectively as possible

Introduction

Narrabri Shire Council may from time to time, need to engage the local community and stakeholders who live, work, invest and visit the Narrabri Shire Local Government Area.

Policy

The Policy demonstrates Narrabri Shire Council's commitment to community engagement and provides a clear and consistent framework for undertaking engagement. When undertaking any community engagement or consultation in the Narrabri Shire Local Government Area, Council Officers (including staff and contractors) should first ensure they have the relevant delegation prior to proceeding. Council Officers should also ensure that they have involved the Community and Customer Relations Team through the 'Request to Advertise' process.

All community consultation and engagement undertaken by a Council Officer should be performed in accordance with the most recent adopted Community Engagement Strategy or the Community Participation Plan (for any Planning and Development matters).

The Policy provides guidance to Council staff undertaking engagement associated with a wide range of strategy development, projects, and activities. It supports staff to actively seek out and consider community views as part of the planning and delivery of projects, services and activities.

Effective Community Engagement:

Effective community engagement:

- informs decision making;
- drives better community outcomes by providing insight into people's aspirations and priorities;
- increases community understanding of Council's role and the rationale behind decisions;
- establishes Council as an engaging and responsive organisation;
- drives overall community satisfaction; and
- enables the creation of effective partnerships with the community and other key stakeholders.

Narrabri Shire Council's approach focuses on the five (5) main intentions of community engagement, as recommended by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2):

- **Inform:** One-way communication providing balanced and objective information to promote understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened. This typically occurs throughout a project and after a decision has been made.
- **Consult:** Two-way communication designed to obtain public feedback about ideas, alternatives and proposals to help inform decision making
- **Involve:** Two-way communication to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** Two-way participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making.
- **Empower:** Placing final decision making in the hands of the public.

All engagement processes will need to inform, many will include consultation, and some will involve active participation.

Level of Engagement

Council also recognises four (4) levels of engagement, based on the scale and likely impact of the proposed strategy, project or activity:

	Shire-Wide	Local
High	<p>Level 1 High, Shire-Wide Impact</p> <p>High level of real or perceived impact or risk across the Narrabri Shire. This may include any impact on health, safety, or wellbeing of residents.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's Community Strategic Plan. • Removal of a facility or service that caters for the whole Shire. 	<p>Level 2 High, Local Impact</p> <p>High level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities Management Plan. • Re-development of a sports ground. • Local street closure.
Low	<p>Level 3 Low, Shire-Wide Impact</p> <p>Lower level of real or perceived impact or risk across the Narrabri Shire.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Council's Customer Service processes. • Satisfaction Survey. 	<p>Level 4 Low, Local Impact</p> <p>Lower level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group(s) of a specific facility or service.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local street upgrade. • Playground or park upgrade. • Changes to a local program or event (such as time or location).

Council will plan and deliver activities targeted to the engagement purpose and level and in accordance with the principles set out below.

Scope

This Policy applies throughout the Narrabri Shire Local Government Area. All staff, contractors and consultants are responsible for adhering to this policy.

Legislative Context

The services and projects undertaken by councils in NSW are subject to a range of legislation, some of which has implications for community engagement. The following legislation has particular engagement requirements:

- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW)
- *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW)
- *Environment Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (NSW)

In undertaking community engagement, staff should ensure that they comply with strategy, project, service or activity specific requirements set in any other applicable legislation or policy.

This policy ensures that Council's community and stakeholder engagement practices are in line with the:

- *Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement – International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2)*
- *A1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard 2015.*

Principles

The following principles will guide Council in the planning and delivery of all engagement activities:

- **Proactive:** Council anticipates and acts on community needs for information and involvement from the beginning of a project.
- **Accessible:** Council's engagement materials and activities are easy to understand, find and participate in.
- **Timely:** Council prepares early to ensure it engages in the right way, at the right time, with the right people.
- **Consistent:** Council's approach to community engagement consistently reflects the scale and likely impact of the project.
- **Realistic:** Council sets realistic expectations about the purpose of engagement and communicates this clearly.
- **Evidence-based:** Council understands and uses the engagement approaches that work best for the community and stakeholders.

Responsibility

- All Council Officers (including staff and contractors) are responsible for complying with this Policy.
- All managers are responsible for informing their staff about this Policy.
- The Manager Corporate Planning and Risk is responsible for review of this Policy.

References

- Narrabri Shire Council 2021/2025 Community Engagement Strategy
- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* (NSW)
- *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW)
- *Environment Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (NSW)

Effectiveness of this Policy

Council will monitor and evaluate its community engagement activities through a wide variety of methods, including:

- Monitoring participation in engagement events and activities;
- Analysing submissions; and
- Seeking feedback from participants.

This Policy will be reviewed at least every four (4) years, based on the outcomes of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
MINUTE 202/2021	23 November 2021	To be Adopted at the conclusion of the Public Exhibition Period in January 2022.