

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Responsible Department: Corporate and Community Services

Responsible Section: Governance and Risk

Responsible Officer: Manager Governance and Risk

Effective Date: 24 August 2022

Introduction

Policies, protocols, and processes help Narrabri Shire Council (Council) achieve its goals, ensure compliance with legislation, guide decision-making, manage risks, and provide a roadmap for innovative operations and positive outcomes for local communities. Governance documents protect Council and Council Officers from non-compliance and define and shape culture by communicating an organisation's values, what officers can expect from the Council (benefits), what Council expects from its officers (Code of Conduct), and what the community can expect from Council.

Chapter 1 – Purpose, Objectives and Scope

This document intends to establish a Policy Framework, standards and principles for the development, approval, implementation, management, and review of Council's governance documents (policies, operational protocols, and related processes).

1. Objective

1.1. The objectives of Council's Policy Framework are to:

- (a) develop a suite of governance documents that are easily accessed, written clearly in easy-to-understand language and reflect governance best practices;
- (b) set a hierarchy of governance documents;
- (c) achieve compliance with legislation and other regulatory requirements;
- (d) enable Council to consistently achieve its strategic objectives, make decisions, manage risks, be effectively resourced, innovate and maximise quality and efficiency across all operations;
- (e) provide appropriate quality assurance and monitoring processes for policy and operational protocol development, amendment and review and de-activating or removing policies and protocols that are no longer relevant; and
- (f) increase community, officer and organisational satisfaction by ensuring the framework is person-centred, supports cultural safety and wellness, outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities of quality governance and includes measures of success and indicators of poor-quality governance.

1.2. The governance of Council is underpinned by Council's Policy Framework, which outlines how Council operates in a fair, responsible, and transparent way. Council's Policy Framework intends to guide people

regarding appropriate content and categorisation for seamless governance and reduced administrative burden.

- 1.3. The framework will provide the consistent, logical structure, principles, and critical considerations for managing the Council's Policy Register (the official source of Council's governance documentation), policies, and protocols documents.

2. Scope

- 2.1. Council's Policy Framework applies to the Mayor, Councillors and Committees of Council, Council's Senior Staff, the General Manager, Council officers (employees, contractors, and subcontractors) to ensure Council is accountable, fair, and transparent in its relationship with the community.
- 2.2. For the purpose of the Policy Framework, Council must comply with various legislation.

Chapter 2 – Definitions

Term	Meaning
Australian Law	Australian common law, federal laws enacted by the Parliament of Australia, and laws enacted by the Parliaments of the Australian states and territories.
Author	The responsible Council officer(s) assigned to draft, amend, or review a document.
Council Officer	A person authorised in writing by Council to undertake duties for Council (including Council's employees, contractors, and subcontractors).
Delegated Authority	A Committee of Council or Council officer that Council has delegated a function under the Delegations Register or by other resolution or measure.
Delegations Register	The register of Council officers or Committees of Council that have been delegated approval functions under sections 377, 378, and 379 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW) or by other legislation or resolution.
Governance Document Suite	A collection of mandatory documents including Australian Law (legislation and associated Regulations), a By-law, an Office of Local Government (OLG) Guideline, Circular, or Code under section 23A of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW), a Policy, or Operational Protocol.
Legislation	An Act or Regulation created by the Parliaments of New South Wales and/or the Commonwealth of Australia.
Operational Protocol	A Council-wide, strategic, and operational document describing how the Council implements a mandatory standard and required practice or policy through a series of prescribed actions or tasks that must be performed to achieve a specific intent or outcome.
Policy	A high-level, Council-wide, strategic document with an overarching statement or mandatory principle guiding Council's intentions or objectives through decision making, which has been approved and adopted by Council.

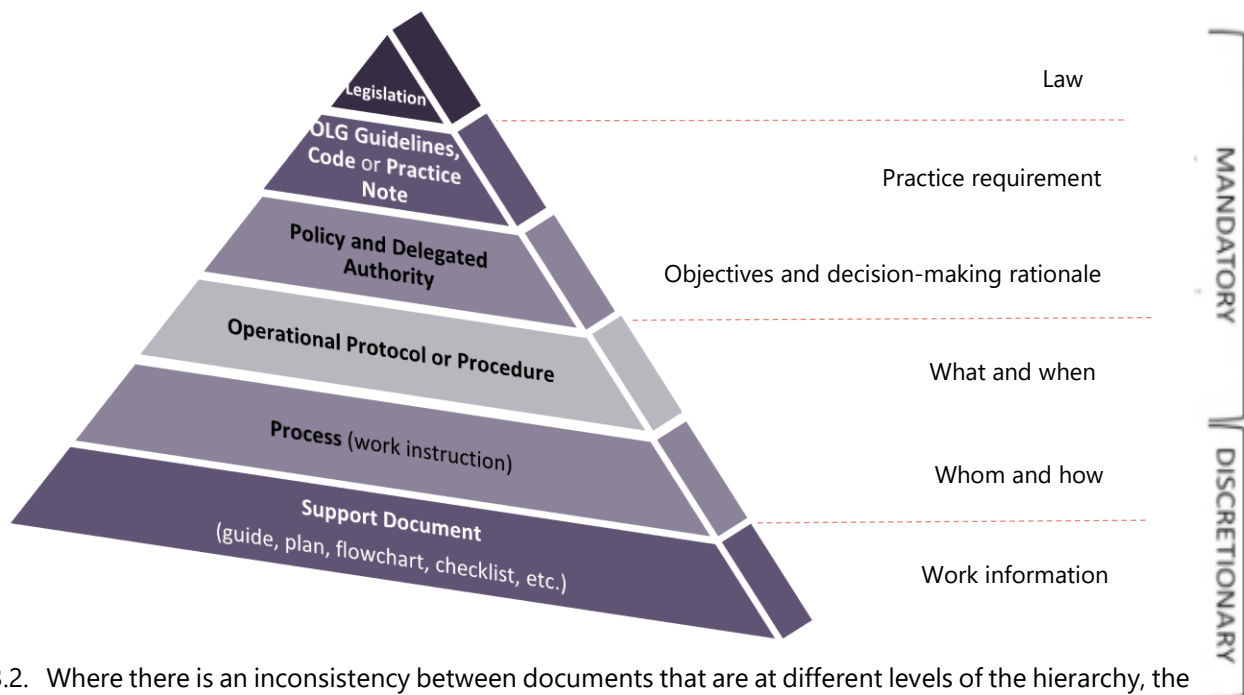
Term	Meaning
Process	Refers to a document usually established by a department Supervisor that provides detailed direction toward best practice, that tells how an officer should perform a series of sequential steps and sub-steps to achieve a specific task or outcome. Processes promote collegiality (seeking an informed second opinion from an experienced colleague) and are flexible as they afford discretion and judgment involving comparing and evaluating possible courses of action or decision-making after considering various possibilities.
Rescind	The retraction, removal, or deletion of a document in the Policy Suite deemed to be obsolete.
Senior Staff	Those Council officers who are employed under contract in accordance with section 338 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW), and who are identified as such in Council's organisational structure.
Support Document	All documents, information, and records, regardless of their form, medium or author, that officers use to implement, evidence, or review "good practice" and trace actions, steps, decisions, outcomes, and recommendations for improving processes.

Chapter 3 – Policy Statement

3. Hierarchy

3.1. Council's Governance Document Suite operates in the following hierarchy (from highest to lowest):

- (a) Legislation;
- (b) OLG guidelines, codes, circulars, and practice notes for functions that Council carries out under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW);
- (c) Policies that prescribe mandatory obligations about Council's strategies and operations and approval responsibilities contained in Council's Delegations Register;
- (d) Operational Protocols that prescribe mandatory obligations and operational procedures, responsibilities, or a series of Council functions;
- (e) Processes (work instructions) that explain in detail how to implement, manage, and review work tasks, steps, and sub-steps from start to finish;
- (f) Support documents (guides, plans, flowcharts, checklists, tutorials, maps, diagrams, photos, screenshots, illustrations, videos, notes, templates or supporting evidence) provide further information or improve clarity for how Council officers perform a task or step.



- 3.2. Where there is an inconsistency between documents that are at different levels of the hierarchy, the higher level document will prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.
- 3.3. If there is any inconsistency between peer level documents, the approval authority for those documents will decide the appropriate interpretation.

4. Principles

4.1. Council requires Council's Governance Document Suite to:

- (a) be concise, written in plain English, and logically sequenced;
- (b) articulate policy separately from protocols;
- (c) provide a discernible distinction between strategic governance and operational management;
- (d) mitigate all relevant risks to the extent possible and articulate expectations, responsibilities and consequences for actions and decisions;
- (e) uphold and be consistent with:
 - (i) applicable legislation and standards;
 - (ii) any document higher in the Governance Document Suite hierarchy;
 - (iii) Council's strategic plan, vision, and values;
 - (iv) the principles and requirements set out in Council's Code of Conduct;
 - (v) community expectations.

4.2. The development, implementation, management, and review of all documents in the Council's Governance Document Suite must:

- (a) be systemic and systematic;
- (b) identify the department which is primarily responsible for administration and scheduled review;
- (c) be appropriately consultative; and
- (d) be informed by principles of continuous improvement and sector best practices.

4.3. A schedule, annexure, or another appendage to a document in Council's Governance Document Suite forms part of that document.

4.4. Adopted Council Policies must be published on Council's website and recorded in Council's Policy Register. These policies are:

- (a) In force from the time specified as the 'effective date'; and

- (b) remain in force until the document is rescinded by decision of Council or superseded by another inconsistent policy.

5. Approval Authorities

- 5.1. Council Policy is established by a resolution of the Council.
- 5.2. Operational Protocols are established by directive of the General Manager or their delegate.

6. Implementation and review

- 6.1. Once a policy is adopted, it:
 - (a) Is in force from the document's, resolution's, or approval's stated "effective date", if stated;
 - (b) Is in force from the date immediately following the approval or adoption, if no effective date is stated; and
 - (c) Remains in force until the document is rescinded, superseded, or suspended.
- 6.2. The General Manager must ensure that each Council Policy and protocol is reviewed within 12 months following an Ordinary Council Election to examine whether the document remains relevant, current, and effective.
- 6.3. Circumstances that may also trigger the development of a new document or review of an existing document may include:
 - (a) legislative, audit or other external needs;
 - (b) changes to Council's strategic direction or structure;
 - (c) content gaps or overlaps;
 - (d) mitigation of specific risks; or
 - (e) scheduled reviews.
- 6.4. Any amendment of an existing Policy deemed minor and administrative (i.e. changing position title, legislative details, organisation references or correcting typographical errors) may be implemented by the General Manager.
- 6.5. Any amendment of an existing Policy that changes its intent or constitutes significant re-wording must be submitted to Council for resolution.
- 6.6. Details about Policy reviews and amendments (minor or significant) will be recorded in the "History" of the Policy document.

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
MINUTE 267/2022	23 August 2022	Adopted