



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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Introduction

'Community Engagement' in a Local Government context describes all the ways in which Council will inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower the community. Our community includes ratepayers, residents, service providers, business owners, employees and visitors. From simple information sharing and the promotion of activities and events to encouraging debate on local issues and planning for the future; it is the way in which we continually build upon and strengthen the ties between Council and the community in order to achieve positive outcomes for the region of Yass Valley.

Community Engagement is not a substitute for decision making. It is part of the democratic process which informs the community of Council's decision making and vice versa.

Purpose

This Strategy will be used by Council officers when determining specific engagement activities, planning for these activities and evaluating their effectiveness. This Strategy is also applicable to our Councillors who as elected representatives of the community play an important role in communicating community aspirations and maintaining the information flow on a range of diverse and complex issues.

This Strategy does not prescribe any specific model for engagement. This is because our community engagement activities vary in urgency and priority, resource allocation and objectives. It also acknowledges that Council must adhere to certain legislative requirements and Acts of Parliament which stipulate how and when engagement should occur, this includes requirements under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* and the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2000*. At all times these requirements must be fulfilled first and foremost. The emphasis of this Strategy however is not about detailing our legislative obligations but upon encouraging a culture of good engagement across the organisation.

Objective

In accordance with s402 (4) *Local Government Act 1993* each Council must prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles for engagement with the local community when developing its Community Strategic Plan. The overarching plan for Council is the Community Strategic Plan which sits above all other Council plans and policies in the planning hierarchy.



Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual, 2013

Council is also required to prepare a Community Participation Plan under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* for exercising planning functions. Both these requirements are fulfilled through this strategy.

In its engagement processes Council is committed to:

- Building partnerships with the community and valuing input in decision-making processes
- Undertaking a diverse range of engagement approaches and applying methods suited to differing situations and stakeholders
- Implementing a high quality, disciplined and consistent approach to community engagement
- Utilising best practice online technologies
- Conducting engagement based on mutual respect, diversity and recognition of the need to work together to improve the environment and lifestyle of residents now and into the future
- Listening to and respecting the views of others
- Providing feedback to the community about Council's decisions

- Meeting the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*
- Providing information to the community that is in plain language and easily accessible
- Seeking views which are representative of the community

Application

Council will apply community engagement methodologies as appropriate to the specific activity, service or project and within resource and budget constraints.

An Engagement or Communication Plan will be developed by the project manager/responsible officer having regard to Council's Communication and Engagement Protocol. The plan will include a project overview, stakeholder identification, engagement/communication method/s. Engagement delivery, checkpoints and evaluation may also be included. The plan must be reviewed and endorsed by Council's internal Community Engagement Committee prior to proceeding.

Council will engage with the community when:

- Developing Council plans and policies which impact the LGA
- Decisions on crucial operational, infrastructure or services, service standards or resource management matters are required
- It seeks a broader understanding of the community's views and opinions on issues decisions are likely to have major impacts on a distinct community or the LGA as a whole
- A decision would benefit from external expert advice
- The community presents a sound case for community engagement
- There is a legislative requirement to do so
- Consultation is required on Development Applications, Planning Proposals, Development Contributions Plans, Local Strategic Planning Statements and Development Control Plans

Council may not engage with the community when:

- Council is confident that current and accurate data or information is available to make an informed decision
- Matters are administrative or routine management
- External timeframes imposed on council do not permit the inclusion of an engagement process
- Decisions are imposed by external agencies
- There is an emergency situation

When engagement is sought on a document or application it is notified in the 'Public Consultation' section of Council's website, at Council's office and/or promoted through Council's social media channels and may be published in a local newspaper. A notice will be published in the local newspaper where required by legislation.

Each document legislated to require consultation will be made available for comment for a minimum of 28 days, unless legislated to be available for a shorter or longer period of time.

Development Applications and applications to modify (other than for Complying Development Certificates, Designated Development, State Significant Development or Council Related Development Applications) will be made available for a minimum of 14 days.

The minimum public exhibition period for a council-related development application is 28 days. A council related development application means a development application, for which a council is the consent authority, that is—

(a) made by or on behalf of the council, or

(b) for development on land—

(i) of which the council is an owner, a lessee or a licensee, or

(ii) otherwise vested in or under the control of the council.

Note— Land vested in or under the control of the council includes public land within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1993.

Notification of Development Applications or modification requests may not be required for proposals that are:

- Consistent with the principal land uses permitted by the zoning
- Comply with the requirements of the Yass Local Environmental Plan
- Comply with the requirements of or meet the objectives of any applicable Development Control Plan or planning policy
- Unlikely to have a significant impact on adjoining or opposite properties

Planning Proposals/LEP amendments will be notified for the minimum period specified in the gateway determination for the proposal. If the gateway determination does not specify a period due to the minor nature of the proposal, no notice will be given.

Note: The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) will be excluded from the calculation of a period of consultation.

If written submissions are requested, they must be forwarded to Council during the period of notice concerning the matter. Before determining the matter notified, Council must consider all submissions made to it.

If a Development Application or Planning Proposal receives 10 or more submissions, a Planning Forum will be held with the Applicant and Submitters. The forum provides the opportunity for Submitters to address Councillors and provide a better understanding of issues prior to making a decision.

Council will advise the community of all Development Applications determined in the local newspaper and/or on the Council Website, including the decision and date. The assessment report will also be made available if required which includes reasons for the decision and how community views were taken into account.

Key Stakeholder Identification

For the purpose of community engagement, stakeholders are generally defined as:

- Children, young people and adults who live in the Yass Valley including resident ratepayers and non-rate paying residents
- Non-resident ratepayers
- Community based and volunteer agencies
- Special interest groups/communities
- Local businesses

- Internal staff and divisions
- Individuals who work in Yass Valley
- Individuals who visit Yass Valley
- Government agencies which have an interest in Yass Valley

For the purpose of Development Applications, the following stakeholders will be notified directly by mail or email:

- Land owners adjoining the site (which is the subject of the application) which share a common side or rear property boundary, and
- Land owners directly opposite the site (which is the subject of the application)

The stakeholder notification may be extended having regard to the particular application and its locality.

Identification of vulnerable and hard to reach populations

In 2016 Census there are 691 people or 4.3% of the population in Yass Valley reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. Council will also ensure its' website and notices meet best practice accessibility requirements for people with a disability. In 2016, 3039 or 18.8% of the population were primary or secondary school aged. Council will ensure it reaches out to this part of the community on relevant issues through using targeted engagement e.g. schools, library, social media.

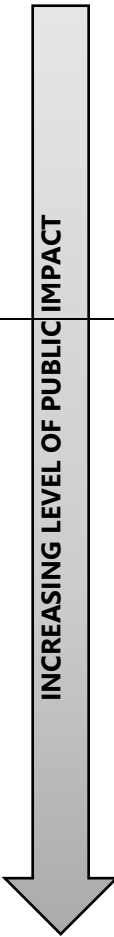
Engagement Strategies and Framework

There are five recognised levels of an engagement strategy, as outlined in the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum. Those five strategies are **INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE** and **EMPOWER**. IAP2 is an internationally recognised non-profit organisation that promotes and improves public participation.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum is a recognised tool designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role. It shows that differing level of participation and different methodologies are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. It also sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level.

A broad framework for community engagement in Yass Valley has been developed based on IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and is detailed below in **Attachment A**.

Attachment A

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
1. INFORM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FAQs</i> • <i>Customer Service enquiries</i> • <i>Rate/Water Notices</i> • <i>The Valley Views</i> 	<p><i>To provide stakeholders with appropriate information on Council, its decision making, services, events, projects and any associated issues.</i></p> <p>This is the primary form of community engagement and builds knowledge and skills in the community.</p> <p>For a number of people, depending on the nature of the issue, this may be the only form of community engagement they want.</p>	<p>We will keep you informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media releases ✓ Community newsletters ✓ Online: website, email, social media, forums, e-newsletters ✓ Distribution of in-house documents and publications ✓ Notification letters ✓ Public consultation ✓ Letter box drops ✓ Internal communication/consultation ✓ Official opening/launch
2. CONSULT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Development Applications</i> • <i>Council Policies</i> • <i>Planning Proposals</i> 	<p><i>Actively seeks stakeholder's views and input into policy, plans and decisions.</i></p> <p>Council retains overall decision making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will listen to you, consider your ideas and concerns and keep you informed.</p> <p>Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions, including how community views have been taken into account.</p> <p>Workshops or Committees established to provide input into Strategic Documentation, will be compiled into a report that will accompany our Documents while on Public Exhibition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media releases ✓ Community newsletters ✓ Paid advertising ✓ Online: website, email, social media, forums, e-newsletters ✓ Distribution of in-house documents and publications ✓ Notification letters ✓ Community meetings ✓ Surveys and questionnaires ✓ Public consultation ✓ Letter box drops ✓ Internal communication/consultation ✓ Official opening/launch ✓ Pre-application consultation re major Development Applications ✓ Planning Forums

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
3. INVOLVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery Program</i> • <i>Operational Plan</i> • <i>Planning Strategies</i> 	<p><i>To work directly with stakeholders to ensure that ideas, concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</i></p> <p>Involving a two way exchange of information that encourages discussion and provides an opportunity to influence the outcome.</p> <p>While ‘involve’ assumes a greater level of participation by stakeholders as they work through issues and alternatives to assist in the decision-making process, Council retains overall decision making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will work with you to ensure that your ideas, concerns and aspirations are considered and provide feedback</p> <p>Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions, including how community views have been taken into account.</p> <p>Workshops or Committees established to provide input into Strategic Documentation, will be compiled into a report that will accompany our Documents while on Public Exhibition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media releases ✓ Community newsletters ✓ Paid advertising ✓ Online: website, email, social media, forums, e-newsletters ✓ Distribution of in-house documents and publications ✓ Notification letters ✓ Community meetings ✓ Surveys and questionnaires ✓ Media releases ✓ Committees ✓ Public consultation ✓ Letter box drops ✓ Internal communication/consultation ✓ Official opening/launch
4. COLLABORATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community Strategic Plan (CSP)</i> • <i>Community Committee</i> 	<p><i>To work in partnership with stakeholders, incorporating their input and advice, jointly formulating solutions and/or options, and sharing agenda setting and deliberation of issues.</i></p> <p>Occurs when ownership of an issue is shared between Council and community stakeholders.</p> <p>May be some level of delegated decision making to community stakeholders, but Council retains overall decision making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will work together in seeking the best outcomes for Yass Valley.</p> <p>Workshops or Committees established to provide input into Strategic Documentation, will be compiled into a report that will accompany our Documents while on Public Exhibition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media releases ✓ Community newsletters ✓ Paid advertising ✓ Online: website, email, social media, forums, e-newsletters ✓ Distribution of in-house documents and publications ✓ Notification letters ✓ Community meetings ✓ Surveys and questionnaires ✓ Focus groups ✓ Forums and Workshops

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Media releases ✓ Committees ✓ Public exhibition ✓ Letter box drops ✓ Internal communication/consultation ✓ Official opening/launch
5. EMPOWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Very specific community projects where Council have the ability to delegate decision making authority.</i> 	<p><i>To place final decision making in the hands of stakeholders.</i></p> <p>Empowered communities share responsibility for making decisions and accountability for the outcomes of those decisions.</p> <p>Legislative and policy frameworks may give power to communities to make decisions. The community may have the power to make a limited range of decisions (e.g. on a specified issue or for a limited time) or it may have extensive decision-making powers.</p>	<p>We will ensure the collective position of the community is an integral part of the decision making process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By ensuring that the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence are apparent in all community engagement.