



REPORT: Draft 2023-2027 Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan)

DIVISION: Strategy, Partnerships and Engagement
REPORT DATE: 18 July 2023
TRIM REFERENCE: ID23/1801

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose	Seek endorsement	
Issue	Council has prepared a Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) 2023-2027 (attached in Appendix 1).	
Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To endorse the Draft 2023/2027 Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan)If adopted following Council consideration and public exhibition, the Draft Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) 2023/2027 will replace the former policies Community Participation Plan 2019 and Community Engagement and Communication Policy 2017.	
Financial Implications	Budget Area	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
	Funding Source	N/A
	Proposed Cost	N/A
	Ongoing Costs	N/A
Policy Implications	Policy Title	Community Participation Plan 2019 Community Engagement and Communication Policy 2017
	Impact on Policy	If adopted, the policies will be superseded and replaced by the Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) 2023-2027

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Towards 2040 Community Strategic Plan is a vision for the development of the region out to the year 2040. The Plan includes six principle themes and a number of objectives and strategies. This report is aligned to:

Theme: 4 Leadership

CSP Objective: 4.1 Council provides transparent, fair and accountable leadership and governance

Delivery Program Strategy: 4.1.1 Council encourages and facilitates two-way

communication with and between stakeholders and the community

Theme:	4 Leadership
CSP Objective:	4.1 Council provides transparent, fair and accountable leadership and governance
Delivery Program Strategy:	4.1.2 Council's decision-making processes are open, transparent and accountable
Theme:	4 Leadership
CSP Objective:	4.1 Council provides transparent, fair and accountable leadership and governance
Delivery Program Strategy:	4.1.3 Council provides quality customer service

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Draft 2023 – 2027 Community Engagement Strategy (including Participation Plan) be adopted by Council for the purpose of public exhibition.
2. That the Draft 2023 – 2027 Community Engagement Strategy (including Participation Plan) be placed on public exhibition for a period of not less than 28 days.
3. That following completion of public exhibition and community consultation, a further report be presented to Council for consideration, including the results of the public exhibition and community consultation.

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CC
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BACKGROUND

Council is required to undertake corporate planning and reporting activities in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, Local Government (General) Regulation 2021, and the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP and R) Guidelines Handbook 2021.

The Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) states that Council must establish and implement a Community Engagement Strategy. The Community Engagement Strategy must be exhibited for 28 days if it is combined with a Community Participation Plan, as per the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). Following consideration of community feedback, the strategy should be presented to Council for endorsement.

Under this legislation, Council is required to:

- Engage with the community to prepare a draft Community Engagement Strategy by 31 December in the year of the local government elections and review the strategy at least every four years
- Publicly exhibit the draft Community Engagement Strategy for at least 28 days and invite submissions.

All councils are required to prepare a Community Engagement Strategy to support the development of their plans, policies, programs and key activities. This includes those relating to Integrated Planning and Reporting. The NSW Office of Local Government recommends the Community Engagement Strategy be incorporated with the Community Participation Plan, which this draft strategy has done. The Community Participation Plan identifies how and when we will engage with our community on the planning functions Council performs under the EP&A Act. Council's Community Participation Plan was adopted by Council in November 2019 and this updated revision contains minor changes in relation to notification requirements, as per legislative changes.

The Community Engagement Strategy identifies relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outlines when, how and why each group will be able to provide input into Council's long-term planning and decision making.

Development of a Community Engagement Strategy was identified as an action in the 2022/2023 Operational Plan.

Previous Resolutions of Council

27 June 2022 CCL22/168	<i>In part</i> <i>1. That the draft 2022/2023 Delivery Program and Operational Plan (as amended and attached in Appendix 2), ... be adopted and commence operation on 1 July 2022.</i>
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REPORT

As noted in the strategy, Community engagement is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to play in participatory decision-making that shapes the places where we live, work, play and create. The strategy looks to articulate the roles for Council and the community in initiating, leading, participating in and delivering engagement activities.

A benefit of this strategy will be that Council's engagement methods are clearly outlined according to the level of community participation being sought, which can be determined by using the matrix. This is a key step in effectively managing stakeholder expectations and the directing of resources.

As an organisation in considering this strategy Council needs to embrace the concept that engagement is an ongoing looped process. It does not just relate to a public exhibition period, though this is often the seen as the operationalisation of engagement to inform a decision making process. Engagement is essential in gaining insight to the need or reasoning for a project, and initiative or decision. It is often required to actually help inform a report to Council even prior to a public exhibition period is endorsed. It is also important to note that engagement does not finish after submissions to a public exhibition close, and that community need to continue to be informed of decision making and project outcomes.

Development of an endorsed framework will support shared understanding with all stakeholders around policies and practices to ultimately support better engagement, increased community participation and informed decision making.

This framework is established through the strategy, namely:

What is Community Engagement?

- Engagement Principles
- Why community participation is important
- The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
- Roles and responsibilities
- Responsible behaviour

Our engagement approach

- How we engage
- Our stakeholders
- Inclusive and accessible engagement
- Levels of Community Participation
- Engagement Standard Matrix
- Engagement Methods and Resourcing

Implementation

- What we engage on
- When engagement is not required

What is Public Exhibition?

- Public Exhibition notification and timeframes
- Key points to note about Public Exhibitions
- Tips on writing an effective submission
- Should I sign a petition?
- What happens to my submission?

Our commitment to engagement

- How we listen and respond
- Evaluation and measurement
- Putting our commitment into action

Consultation

- A Councillor workshop was held on 6 April 2023 which explored effective community engagement practices.
- Internal consultation was undertaken with Council's Building and Development Services, Growth Planning, Integrated Planning, Environmental Systems, Corporate Governance, Recreation and Open Space and Customer Experience branches, and the Strategy Partnerships and Engagement division, as part of the preparation of the draft strategy.
- A Senior Leadership Meeting workshop was conducted on 6 July 2023 to engage internal stakeholders and obtain feedback on the draft strategy.
- The draft strategy was endorsed by the Executive Leader Team during the meeting on 28 June 2023.
- A Your Say project page will be developed for the community to view the draft Community Engagement Strategy and provide ongoing feedback.
- Endorsement of the strategy by Council will enable further consultation to be undertaken with the community.

Resourcing Implications

- Monitoring of strategy adherence and any resulting action required will likely have some impact to Engagement and Customer Insights staff resources as we raise the standard and consistency of service. However it is expected this will be managed within existing resources levels within the Customer Experience and Engagement Branch and improved capability will ultimately save resources across the organisation from the often reactive processes resulting from misaligned engagement and related practices.
- A business case is in development to be presented to the Director of Strategy Partnerships and Engagement for consideration of a reallocation of existing resources within the Customer Experience and Engagement branch to establish a position, focused on supporting the organisation to meet the expectations and standards of the strategy across a range of projects and services.

- Ongoing reviews of the strategy must be conducted at a minimum of three year intervals or as legislation changes and this will occur within existing resources and engaging with Local Government NSW for specific advice.

Preferred Option

- That the Draft Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) 2023-2027 be endorsed.

Planned Communications

- A detailed engagement program will support the exhibition period.
- Pending the adoption of the strategy Council staff to be made aware if the outcome and provided with access to a copy of the draft strategy to provide feedback.
- Pending adoption of the strategy, community be made aware of the outcome with the strategy uploaded to the website www.dubbo.nsw.gov.au under A-Z Council Policy Page and dedicated Your Say project page.
- Strategy to be uploaded to all consultation project pages within Your Say ongoing.
- Building internal capacity and capability on engagement through external training and local government industry will be continued and as a result greater support and development of staff across the organisation will be undertaken.

Timeframe

Key Date	Explanation
August 2023	Public Exhibition Period (no less than 28 days)
September/October	Further report to Council for final adoption

APPENDICES:

- 1⇒ 2023 - 2027 Draft Community Engagement Strategy (including Community Participation Plan) Provided under separate cover