



# Kyogle Council

“Sustaining our LGA”

## Community Engagement Strategy

## 1. Introduction

The recent Sustainability and Benchmarking Report issued by the NSW Treasury Corporation (TCorp) dated March 2013, considered (based upon historic financial information and the most recent Long Term Financial Plan) Kyogle Council to be in a weak financial position primarily due to an asset funding shortfall.

The TCorp report recommended:

- Further improvements to the Long Term Financial Plan.
- The community's view on desired service levels need to be defined and agreed and incorporated into future editions of its Asset Management and Long Term Financial Plans
- Council is aware that if funding levels cannot be increased then reduced service levels will need to be agreed in consultation with the community and that Council will have to manage the associated risks involved

Additionally, the NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) in their draft report "Future Directions for NSW Local government – Twenty Essential Steps" dated April 2013 recommends that Kyogle Council consider amalgamation with Lismore and/or Richmond Valley Council(s).

It is therefore appropriate for Council, to consult with our community to review the basis of these recommendations and consider what action (if any) should be taken.

The aim of this strategy is to outline the ways in which Council will engage the local community on these key issues and to use the findings to update the content/strategies contained within its current Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and associated plans and programs

Council is ultimately responsible for the content and adoption of the CSP, however council and our community will need to have important discussions about funding priorities, service levels and preserving local identity and to plan for a more sustainable future.

This Strategy relates to the review of our CSP and does not override or replace Council's existing Community Consultation Policy or related documents.

This Strategy will continue be reviewed and further developed throughout the CSP preparation process as Council explores the best and most effective way to involve and engage our community in decision making.

## 2. Engagement Activities and Timelines

The CSP process will follow three stages.

Date: 14 August, 2013	2025 Strategic Plan – Community Engagement Strategy Page 2 of 9
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## **Stage One – August 2013 – October 2013**

### Distributing information and obtaining feedback

- Provide access to the TCorp and ILGRP reports
- Provide access to summary/fact sheets on issues.
- Inform/educate the community on issues.
- Survey the community to ascertain its views on priority areas, service levels and options for a more sustainable future.

Council will need to use a broad range of media and plan for broad-range information sessions to ensure as many community members as possible are aware of the issues faced by Council and have an opportunity to provide.

## **Stage Two - October 2013 – November 2013**

### Developing Strategies

Using the survey results and feedback obtained from stage 1, we will then look to develop proposed solution(s) and amend the CSP and associated documentation accordingly.

Use of targeted discussions with focus groups will be appropriate at this stage.

## **Stage Three – December 2013**

### Presenting a revised Draft CSP, Resourcing Strategy & Delivery Program

This is the stage where the community will get an opportunity to comment on and refine the revised CSP.

Council will need to plan for broad-range information sessions to ensure as many community members as possible are aware of the draft CSP and the Delivery Program and the impacts of any changes.

### **3. Past community consultation**

Over past years, council has consulted the community on a range of issues and has received a significant amount of valued community feedback and input e.g. prior surveys, special purpose committees and reference groups.

Previous strategic plan consultation has also utilised engagement tactics such as media, newsletters, advertising and workshops.

All of the information obtained from this past consultation will also be useful during this process.

It is important that we build on past experience and avoid the notion of ‘over consultation’, where stakeholders feel they have provided the same opinions and advice to Council on the same or similar issues. It is also important that contributors’ are acknowledged.

#### 4. Guiding Principles

“Community Engagement is any process that involves the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to assist in making decisions” (International Association for Public Participation, 2006).

Council needs to be responsive to the needs of the community that it serves. Through community engagement the community can:

- learn about what the Council does or plans to do;
- express views on decisions that affect them; and
- suggest how the Council may improve the way it plans for and provides services and facilities

The process of engaging with the Community will at all times reflect the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, principles which also underpin the Community Strategic Plan itself.

The NSW Government’s social justice strategy is based on the following interrelated principles:

**Equity** – there should be fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances

**Access** – all people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life

**Participation** – everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives

**Rights** – equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

*(Taken from the Planning & Reporting Manual for local government in NSW, 2010)*

Engagement activities have been planned to encourage involvement from all sections of the population, including minority or hard to reach groups. Key stakeholder groups include young people, older people, people in the workforce, parents, people with a disability and their carers, women, children, Aboriginal people and people from different cultural and language backgrounds.

## 5. Who Are Our Stakeholders?

Stakeholders include all individuals and groups based in and outside the Local Government Area who have an interest in the future of the Council.

It is intended that all stakeholders will be provided with the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the development of the CSP. A range of methods will be employed to maximise involvement. Consideration will also be given the diversity of the community and those whose voices may not normally be heard in community discussions. This includes the following target groups have been identified as part of the Social Justice Principles:

- People with disabilities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Children and young people
- People in geographically isolated areas
- Single parents, and
- The elderly.

Our stakeholders include (but are not limited to) the following key groups:

Residents	People who live or own property in the Local Government Area.
Visitors/ Residents From Neighbouring LGA'S	People who travel to/through the LGA or use assets and infrastructure provided here.
Landowners/Developers	Landowners (that are not residents, business operators, government departments or infrastructure providers) in the LGA.
Businesses/Industry	Owners, operators and employees of small, medium and large businesses. Also includes business chambers and industry groups.
Education and Training	Local primary and high schools (public and private), TAFE and other training providers.

Government Departments and Agencies	State and Federal Government Departments and agencies and statutory authorities including emergency services.
Adjoining Local Government Areas	Includes Lismore City Council, Richmond Valley Council, Tweed Shire Council, Clarence Valley Council, Tenterfield Shire Council, Scenic Rim Council, Southern Downs Regional Council
Infrastructure & Service Providers	Includes Roads and Traffic Authorities, Railway organisations, Bus operators, Telecommunications suppliers, Energy suppliers
Interest Groups	Includes representative groups with an interest in particular issues such as youth organisations, arts, museum and heritage, economic development, theatre and music.
Community Organisations and Groups	Includes not-for-profit organisations, groups and networks. For example, Clubs, Church Groups Village Progress Associations, Local Aboriginal Land Councils etc. Also includes sporting and recreation clubs and associations.
Local Councillors and Staff	All Kyogle Council Councillors and all staff, including those in office and field-based positions.

## 6. What Groups Will Be Hard To Reach?

There will be some parts of our community that will be harder to reach than others. These groups are outlined below. Whilst people who identify with these groups may choose not to participate in any activities, it is Council's role to ensure that the methods used do not exclude people from the process either directly or indirectly. Any form of communication used during the engagement process will be flexible enough to consider the needs of the following groups.

- People with disabilities
- Homeless people
- Commuters
- Children and Young people
- Carers / parents
- Transport disadvantaged
- Socially or physically isolated
- Uninterested / Apathetic
- Aboriginal community
- Multicultural community
- People with literacy issues

- Older people
- Tourists
- Property owners who do not reside in the area

## 7. Communication Challenges

Challenge/Issue	Impact/Implication	Overcoming the challenge
To engage with community members who would not normally be part of the consultation process.	Without their participation, community input provided might not reflect the views of the entire LGA.	Extensive marketing to promote the CSP. Council going out to the community. Use a wide range of engagement methods based on social justice principles and incorporating the best of new technology and traditional methods to make it easy to have your say.
Many people are time poor these days. How do you get the average person to provide their comments on their vision	Unless they are engaged, community input provided might not reflect the views of the entire LGA.	Use engagement methods that are not resource or time intensive, provide 24/7 access and allow members of the community to contribute when, where and how it suits them. Community information sessions that cover both business hours and after hours.
The Draft Community Strategic Plan and associated reporting requirements are complex and might be difficult to digest for some members of the community.	Scale and complexity of the project could prevent participation and input from groups and individuals.	Use plain english and no jargon to explain the process and reporting requirements. Create a list of Frequently Asked Questions. Design the CSP so it is easy to read with clearly defined themes. Break the plan and the process of its formulation into smaller, easily understood sections using graphics rather than text. Ensure background information with detail is easily accessible for those who wish to get more information.

## 8. Project Delivery Timeframe

Timeframe	Purpose	Method	Target Audience
August - October 2013	Public Exhibition of Engagement Strategy, TCorp & ILGRP reports and fact sheets. Develop Discussion paper(s) Background Papers for Social, Economic, Environment and Civic Leadership identifying current	Media Releases, Newsletter, Website, Social Media, Advertisements, Community displays	All Stakeholders

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>
	issues and opportunities including current levels of service.		
September 2013	Awareness of Issues facing Council and available options.	Community information sessions. Information dissemination via Newsletter, Media releases, Email, Website, Social Media, Direct Mail.	All stakeholders
October 2013	To gather data from the community on preferred service levels and future aspirations/priorities.	Survey	Community
October - November 2013	To analyse the results of the survey and community conversations etc. to formulate possible solutions and opportunities and to 'update' long-term vision and objectives	Forums, Reference Groups, Council workshops, discussion boards.	Community
November 2013	Clarify priorities and information on vision, goals, challenges and opportunities  Continue discussions about levels of service and resourcing.  Evaluate effectiveness of community engagement	Community/Stakeholder workshops, Media Releases, Discussion papers, Web site, community exhibits.	Community
December 2013	Draft revised CSP Resourcing Strategy & Delivery Program prepared and adopted for exhibition and feedback sought.	Workshop, Formal Meeting	Councillors, Staff
December 2013	Launch Draft CSP, call for submissions and thank community and stakeholders	Media Releases, Newsletter, Website, Advertisements, Direct Mail, Letter to residents	Councillors
January – February 2014	Review of the Draft CSP, submissions, Evaluate effectiveness	Workshop	Councillors, Staff

Timeframe	Purpose	Method	Target Audience
	of community engagement, Review of Resourcing Strategy & Delivery Program		
February 2014	Adoption of Final CSP and accompanying plans	Presentation to Council	Councillors

Our engagement will aim to:

- Acknowledge people for their contribution
- Keep people engaged during the process via regular updates.
- Provide feedback mechanisms and ongoing opportunities for people to be involved in the refinement and evaluation of the CSP.

## 9. Success Indicators

A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to assess the success of the community engagement process.

This will include:

- Requests to Council to present at community/stakeholder forums
- Number of people attending face-to-face sessions
- Number of visits to CSP area of website
- Number of followers on social media sites.
- Contributions people make at workshops, meetings and on-line forums.
- Formal submissions received
- Media coverage
- Survey results
- Adoption of the plan by Council.
- Engagement methods and techniques have reached all relevant stakeholders.
- Data and information gathered through engagement activities is of high quality and integrity and informs the development of the Community Strategic Plan.
- The views, visions, aspirations and priorities of the community are heard and accurately recorded.
- Diversity of representation
- Quantity and quality of input received