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To: Kyogle Council
Subject: SUBMISSION: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

The General Manager, Kyogle Council

SUBMISSION: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

The strategy is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public participation, or community engagement: the two terms are synonymous. The spectrum starts at *Inform* and rises through the levels of *Consult*, *Involve*, *Collaborate* and *Empower*, although it is noted that the draft strategy for Kyogle Council does not include *Empower*, stopping at *Collaborate*. All levels of this spectrum are appropriate for different levels of engagement. A higher level on the spectrum is not necessarily more appropriate than a lower level.

The first point I wish to make is that the entire document suffers from many inconsistencies, poor grammar and inaccurate information. It needs a thorough edit and content checking.

One important instance of inconsistency is those several occasions where the strategy refers to various elements of council “consulting” with the community. It should, instead, refer to council “engaging” with the community as it does in the first dot point of section 5, Purpose. It is after all a *Community Engagement Strategy* not a *Community Consultation Strategy*.

To be referring to community consultation also suggests a lower level order of engagement has been decided upon. The notion of broad ranging engagement, rather than narrow focused consultation should become part of council’s lexicon.

Section 12.3, the Community Engagement Matrix, notes a number of points council will consider including: "Degree of political sensitivity – is there potential for individuals/groups to use the situation to make political gains?"

This appears entirely naïve and certain to cause problems. This potential always exists and it is unclear how a response to this question would be used. Certainly it would call into question issues of trust.

The matrix of methods would be easier to read with reorganisation and re-ordering within the spectrum range of *Inform*, *Consult*, *Involve* and *Collaborate*. This would start firstly with all methods that are *Inform*, followed by *Inform* and *Consult*, then *Inform*, *Consult* and *Involve* and finally *Inform*, *Consult*, *Involve* and *Collaborate*. At the moment methods that are *Inform* or *Consult* can be found to the end of the matrix, among *Collaborate*.

The range of methods included in the matrix is limited. While this is indicated to assist possible engagement methods, without being limited to these methods, a review of a broader range of methods is recommended. I appreciate there is a cost associated with community engagement but one missing method is a kitchen table discussion, where concise information

is provided in a format suitable for a small group discussion. This is an easy way in to an issue for many people who may lack the time or confidence to engage in a public forum or deal with a large amount of written information. And it doesn't have to be kitchen based.

Workshops are noted as a method to Collaborate which is incorrect, but greater consideration should be given to the range of suitable methods to Collaborate. This is the level at which the highest level of community engagement can be achieved.

The Objectives of the strategy include “strengthening organisational community engagement capacity” and establishing “clear processes Including tools, to assist with ... engagement activities.” These objectives are central to the strategy but providing tools alone will not suffice. Successful implementation of the strategy requires committed and appropriately trained and supported staff. Much of this could be done in-house drawing on existing skills and experiences.

I have experience in community engagement and am qualified in the IAP2 methods that the strategy is based upon. I would be happy to discuss the strategy further should you wish.

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