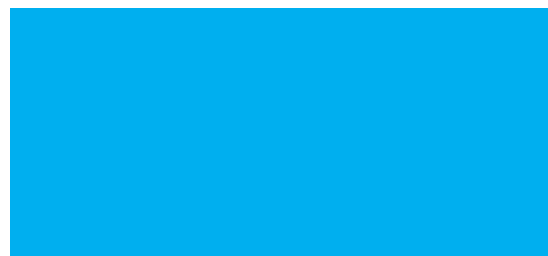


Community Engagement Strategy

October 2017



Quality Information

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 Purpose: Requirement under *Local Government Act 1993* for purposes of preparing a Community Strategic Plan with discretionary capability to use the strategy in relation to other local government purposes.
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Executive Summary

Kyogle Council understands the importance of engaging with our local communities. Due to the nature of local government, and the services we deliver, everyone in the community has an interest in Council business, its operations, and the associated planning and decision making. Meaningful engagement can help deliver outcomes that help us to meet the expectations of the community and give the community a sense of ownership in the decision making process.

Kyogle Council's *Community Engagement Strategy* has been prepared to provide guidance on how Council intends to engage with its communities. The purpose of the Strategy is primarily to guide Council in delivering effective community engagement, and to provide the community with a clear understanding of the avenues available for meaningful public participation in Kyogle Council's decision making processes.

The strategy identifies a spectrum of levels of consultation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) that Council can employ depending on the project, issue or topic for discussion. The levels of engagement are listed below from the lowest level of community participation and influence to the greatest:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

The Strategy identifies a number of engagement activities and techniques that would be appropriate for each of these levels of engagement. These are provided for guidance and are not intended to represent a full and complete list of the activities and techniques that will ultimately be utilised.

Council is committed to the principle of open and honest government. Our goal is to ensure that the Council decision-making process is accessible, and that the reasons for decisions and actions are conveyed to the community in a timely manner. Council also believes that its decision-making is enhanced by the degree to which it consults with the community.

Council's future community engagement activities will be undertaken in accordance with practices, strategies and tools identified in the **Implementation** section of the Strategy. This section includes an engagement matrix that is used to determine the level of engagement to be employed based on an assessment of the likely level of community interest, degree of complexity of the issue, potential community impacts and political interest, amongst other considerations. The Strategy also identifies specific stakeholder groups with which Council should carry out targeted consulting, where the issue is relevant to that group. These groups include indigenous people, older people, disadvantaged groups, specific industry sectors and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The Strategy provides prompts to assist Council staff to ensure that stakeholder needs relevant to the engagement process are appropriately determined.

It is also important to recognise that community engagement should enhance, but does not replace, the decision-making functions of Council. Council makes decisions on a daily basis that affect residents and communities and it is not feasible or practical that Council consults on every issue and before every decision. That said, Council is committed to undertaking a wide range of consultative activities across the breadth of its programs and activities.

1 Title

This Strategy may be cited as Kyogle Council's *Community Engagement Strategy* (the Strategy).

2 Adoption

The Strategy was adopted by way of Council Resolution CO/1017/13 at Council's Ordinary Meeting on 9 October 2017.

3 Authority

- *Local Government Act 1993*

The Council's Charter under the *Local Government Act 1993* (LG Act) includes requirements to:

- Undertake due engagement as part of its services and facilities delivery;
- Exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and promotes social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights; and
- Facilitate the involvement of councillors, members of the public, users of facilities and services and Council staff in the development, improvement and co-ordination of local government and keep the local community and the State Government (and through it, the wider community) informed about its activities.

The Council must establish and implement a strategy (its Community Engagement Strategy), based on social justice principles, for engagement with local community when developing and reviewing its *Community Strategic Plan*. This Strategy can also be used to prepare and review any subordinate plans under the Community Strategic Plan. While there is no statutory requirement to have a specific community engagement strategy or policy for other aspects of the Council's operations, the Council has resolved to utilise its Community Engagement Strategy as a basis for its community engagement in relation to its other operational requirements – notably those referred to in the LG Act.

The Council may, by resolution, change the strategy as required.

3.1 Related legislation

This Strategy is to be used by Council in the application of any of its community engagement requirements for its operational functions referred to under the LG Act and any legislation that applies to such functions. Specifically, this includes but is not restricted to the following:

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (Aboriginal cultural heritage)

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the EP&A Act) includes public consultation requirements for both strategic planning (e.g. public exhibition of draft local environmental plans) and development assessment matters (e.g. designated development, and other development applications that are referred to in the Council's Development Control Plan). The basis on which such consultation is to be undertaken, other than minimum statutory notice periods and required media criteria, is not specified in the

EP&A Act and is left to individual councils' administrative processes and policies. This Strategy provides a more detailed guiding basis to consider the form of public consultation that may be required for specific environmental planning and development related matters.

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* provides for actions to be taken by local governments to ensure equitable access to services and opportunities for any person with a disability. This is reflected in the Council's adopted *Disability Inclusion Action Plan*. A significant part of the actions is reliant on effective communication and engagement with affected community members. This Strategy provides a further basis by which such engagement can be managed.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* requires consultation to be undertaken by development proponents where proposals may affect Aboriginal cultural heritage. While protocols are contained in State guidelines, this Strategy reinforces the Council's recognition of the area's Aboriginal communities as significant community stakeholders for the local area, not only in terms of cultural heritage protection needs but also for the area's cultural diversity and broader community needs that may arise.

3.2 Provisions of legislation take precedence

Where specific community engagement provisions apply under legislation or guidelines referred to by legislation or regulation, such provisions will take precedence over any similar or conflicting provisions referred to in this Strategy.

4 Local Government Social Justice Principles

The Council's strategy must, under the provisions of the LG Act, be based on the NSW Government's Social Justice Directions Statement and the underlying social justice principles of:

Equity – there should be fairness in decision making, and 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.

The Council also follows disability inclusion action principles and actions as contained in its adopted *Disability Inclusion Action Plan*.

Aboriginal Reconciliation, including aspects of Native Title entitlement and Aboriginal cultural ties to Country, also play significant roles in shaping the community's value beliefs and practices and provide an important pillar of the community's cultural diversity and history.

5 Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is primarily to articulate the Council's Community Engagement Strategy as required under the LG Act. Specifically, the strategy is to:

- Promote good governance and guide Council in effective community engagement to support good and consistent decision-making in the public interest.
- Provide the community with a clear understanding of Council's governance role and the avenues available for meaningful public participation in Kyogle Council Local Government Area (LGA) decision making.
- Provide meaningful avenues for the Kyogle LGA community to contribute to shaping its future, and to participate in tackling local problems and meeting local needs.

6 Objectives

- Strengthen organisational community engagement capacity by establishing within Council, a model that encourages a coordinated approach to community engagement across Council.
- Establish clear processes, to be applied across all Council activities, including tools to assist with planning and decision making for engagement activities.
- Build community capacity by offering appropriate opportunities for members of the community to respond to and engage with Council in its decision making processes and by building skills, relationships and networks in individuals and communities.

7 Principles

Apart from the social justice principles required under the LG Act, the following community governance principles will apply to the management of the Council's community engagement activities:

- Council is committed to the principle of open and honest government where the Council decision-making process is accessible, with the reasons for decisions and actions conveyed to the community in a timely manner.
- Council believes its decision-making is enhanced by the degree to which it consults with the community.
- Council makes decisions on a daily basis that affect residents and communities and it is not feasible or practical that Council consults on every issue and before every decision.
- Community engagement should enhance, but does not replace, the decision-making functions of Council.
- Council is committed to undertaking a wide range of consultative activities across the breadth of its programs and activities.
- Council believes that as the level of government closest to the people, it is ideally placed to undertake community development activities to enhance social capital, community capacity and reciprocity and social cohesion.

8 Scope

The strategy applies to elected members, employees and to any agents of the Council, including its contractors and sub-contractors.

The 'community' to which this Strategy is directed refers to individuals or groups associated with the Kyogle Council Area (LGA), including, but not limited to, residents, ratepayers, businesses, shopkeepers, community groups and organisations, schools and educational institutions, and State and Federal Government agencies.

Apart from the principles stated in this Strategy, it also relies on the principles and actions of the Council's adopted *Disability Inclusion Action Plan* in the implementation of the stated community engagement principles.

9 Strategy Review

This Strategy will be reviewed at least once during the term of an incumbent elected Council prior to any review of the Council's *Community Strategic Plan* by the elected Council.

10 Conceptual Frameworks and Concepts

10.1 Governance

Community engagement forms a key aspect of the Council's effective community and organisational governance frameworks for the Kyogle LGA. Good governance forms the hallmark of local government being the level of government "closest to the people". Effective governance is characterised by open leadership and constructive responsiveness to citizen's needs and community aspirations.

Constructive interaction with the community is regarded as a cornerstone of delivering evidence-based and tested decisions as well as effective governance. Careful management of its community engagement processes forms a mandatory requirement in ensuring that engagement is well constructed and achieved with community stakeholders in a way that is focused on timely and supportable outcomes. The complexity and diversity of the different issues that may confront the Council and its community will require an adaptable approach in the engagement methods considered appropriate at the time and will solely remain at the discretion of the Council other than where legislative requirements require otherwise.

10.2 Public participation

Public participation is an important aspect of an effective community engagement strategy. The **Public Participation Spectrum** is a tool developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which has been used as a basis for the public participation approach adopted by this Strategy. It represents differing levels of participation across a continuum. The spectrum moves from informing the public, which involves the lowest level of public participation, through to consultation, engagement and empowering, which requires the greatest degree of community participation, trust and delegation. The further along the spectrum, the process involves a greater commitment to the relationship between Council and citizen participants. Each of the levels is legitimate, depending on goals, time frames, resources and levels of interest in the decision to be made. This is one of many such tools and is used in this framework as a key point of reference.

(<http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/un-declaration/the-united-nations-brisbane-declaration>)

10.3 Community

Community is a broad term used to define groups of people connected by geographic location, similar interest, identity or affiliation on a large or small scale. The Council will keep a separate **Community Stakeholder Register** which is able to be amended and updated as required to identify key community stakeholder contact and interest details affecting the Kyogle LGA.

10.4 Community engagement

Community Engagement for the purposes of this Strategy is applied in accordance with the differing levels of the Public Participation Spectrum framed by the IAP2. The term is interchangeable with public participation for the purpose of this Strategy and covers the activities referred to in Table 1.

Table 1 IAP2 Community Engagement Processes

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower ¹
<p>Public Participation Goal: To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</p>	<p>Public Participation Goal: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</p>	<p>Public Participation Goal: To work with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</p>	<p>Public Participation Goal: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and Identification of preferred solution.</p>	<p>Public Participation Goal: To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</p>
<p>Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed.</p>	<p>Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>Promise to the Public: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>Promise to the Public: We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Promise to the Public: We will implement what you decide.</p>
<p>Example Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets • Web sites • Open Days • Newsletter 	<p>Example Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus Groups • Surveys 	<p>Example Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop • Deliberate polling 	<p>Example Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Advisory Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making 	<p>Example Techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Statutory polls and referendums² • Delegated decisions³

¹ Note: Empower is no longer a specific engagement activity referred to by the IAP2 process but has been retained by numerous government agencies as a valuable activity which recognises the occasional need for high and valued community involvement in decision making.

² E.g. as provided for under the *Local Government Act 1993* for certain circumstances

³ E.g. to Trusts or other incorporated bodies

Inform - To provide information to increase understanding of Council decisions, activities and issues and to increase access to services.

Consult - To obtain public feedback on proposals, usually putting forward options, alternatives which will be considered in arriving at a decision.

Involve - To work with the community throughout a process, incorporating ideas and concerns into the decision-making and where they will be directly reflected in the final decision.

Collaborate - To partner with the community on each aspect of the decision-making process seeking direct advice and ideas to formulate the decision.

Empower - To place the final decision-making in the hands of the community, implementing what is decided.

10.5 Benefits of community engagement

The Council recognises and promotes the following benefits through the implementation of this Strategy:

- A stronger democracy
- Greater accountability and transparency
- A stronger and more connected community
- More inclusive decisions and services
- Greater community ownership of decisions made on its behalf
- More effective and relevant decision making

11 Key Stakeholders

11.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

Kyogle has a range of Aboriginal cultural interests throughout the LGA, broadly forming part of the Bundjalung people. The primary point of contact is through the different Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC) in the LGA, being:

- Gugin Guddaba LALC
- Muli Muli LALC
- Jubullum LALC
- Casino-Boolangle LALC

The NSW Office of Local Government has produced a more detailed resource kit addressing considerations for, and more effective ways of, engaging with Aboriginal communities, entitled “*Engaging with local Aboriginal communities A RESOURCE KIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES, 2007*” – see:

<http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/Aboriginal-resource-kit.pdf>. This resource kit guide should be used by the Council in developing any of its specific strategies for community engagement with its local Aboriginal communities.

11.2 Older people

Older people form a growing and significant part of Kyogle's community. Council will ensure that it works closely with the various networks that exist within the LGA to represent older people's needs and aspirations as well as providing opportunities for group interactions. This is to ensure that engagement activities are tailored to ensure maximisation of awareness coverage for, and participation by, older people in community engagement activities.

11.3 Young people

The community's young people are likely to be the most important beneficiaries of today's strategic planning and decision making. Ensuring the views of younger people, their priorities and preferred ways of addressing outcomes, are included in Council's decision-making processes, is an important part of inclusiveness as well as effective future planning.

Council will ensure that it recognises its Youth Advisory Committee as a potential reference group for youth affairs and general community issue and opinion canvassing. It will also have regard to preferred media and other engagement platforms preferred by younger people as a means of ensuring effective awareness and participation campaigns are implemented.

11.4 People with disability

The Council has an adopted *Disability Inclusion Action Plan* which specifically addresses inclusion needs and actions affecting people with a disability within our community. The principles of the DIAP form an integral part of this Strategy.

11.5 Disadvantaged and homeless

The Council will work with agencies that support disadvantaged and potentially homeless people in the area to ensure that they have opportunity to be equally involved in community awareness matters and in accordance with any other legislative requirements. Such engagement material should be tailored to ensure that messages are properly conveyed.

11.6 People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Kyogle is largely a homogenous Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking society with a small percentage of non-Australian born but principally English speaking residents. While non-Australian ethnicity forms a minor part of the community make-up, its contribution to the community's diversity and vibrancy and future is considered to be significant, warranting appropriate capture as part of the Council's community engagement processes. This is also extended to people who may wish to become a part of the community from other regions or countries either as a visitor or future resident. Where possible, the Council will have regard to the need for multi-lingual awareness information and access to State and Commonwealth supported translation services for people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

11.7 Industry sector groups

The Kyogle area has a strong history and culture of cooperatives and other sector organisations, notably representing the interests of agricultural producers and communities. These have, and are expected to continue to form, an important part of the community's identity. Council will ensure that appropriate representatives of such groups form an ongoing part of its **Community Stakeholder Register** and its community engagement activities affecting broader areas of the local government's rural areas or activities.

Urban areas – towns and villages – are also represented by a range of commercial interest groups including Chambers of Commerce and other commercial groups. These will continue to form a part of the Council’s community stakeholder groups to be consulted especially where town or village community planning matters are related.

11.8 Non-government and special interest community groups

Kyogle is host to a range of resident or non-industry interest groups, including those that from time-to-time, may be interested in special or specific matters. Such groups will be given equitable opportunity to participate in Council community engagement processes in order to adequately canvas community concerns, potential suggestions and solutions to achieve the community’s strategic objectives.

12 Implementation

12.1 Practices

The Council will apply the following community engagement practices in relation to its activities affecting the community.

- Council will apply community engagement methodologies appropriate to the issue, project or activity under consideration and its significance and impact on the community in accordance with the desired outcomes and objectives of the matter before Council; the Community Engagement Matrix referred to in this Strategy is intended to serve as a guide to Council to assist it in determining appropriate forms of community engagement.
- Where the matter to be considered is significant and community engagement is necessary, including the review or preparation of a new *Community Strategic Plan*, Council will formulate a specific Community Engagement Plan identifying the nature of the engagement and the specific engagement methodologies that will be applied.
- Council will, when undertaking community participation activities for its *Community Strategic Plan*, at the outset establish the nature of the engagement, the objectives of the engagement, the time frame, the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved and the limitations and scope of the public participation including the community input that is expected to influence the final decisions and outcome.
- Council will engage the community in time to use the results to inform the decision-making processes and early enough to help identify issues at the beginning of the process when reviewing its *Community Strategic Plan* or undertaking other major strategic projects (notably those that are referred to in the *Community Strategic Plan*) or for the preparation of policies under the LG Act.
- Council will be clear about the timeframe and stage at which community input is required in a project and communicate this to project stakeholders.
- Council will inform all stakeholders of the outcome of significant community engagement exercises in a timely and open manner.

12.2 Strategies and tools

Council's commitments and indicative strategies and tools to deliver its commitments are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 Council Commitments, Indicative Strategies and Tools

Commitment	Strategies and Tools
<p>Council is committed to open and accountable government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will hold regular formal Council Meetings in accordance with its adopted Standing Orders which will include Questions from the Gallery and Public Access opportunities for participation by members of the public. • Council will undertake periodic Mayoral Outreach Meetings throughout the LGA's villages for councillors and staff to attend and listen to community deputations.
<p>Council is committed to an informed community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delivery of quality information and advice through a well-informed courteous customer service. • The maintenance of Council website, social media and newsletter to provide current, comprehensive information about Council services, community directory, projects, policies, events and forms. • Readily accessible information made accessible by the Council in partnership with the Richmond-Upper Clarence Regional Library Service.
<p>Council will inform the community of major issues and will inform communities of significant changes to programs and service levels that directly affect them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings • Press releases • Letter drops • Council website
<p>Council will undertake community development neighbourhoods and local precincts to plan and develop local area projects and to review or improve local service delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Annual Operational Plan and Delivery Plan detailing the annual community development program. • Partnerships with agencies and community groups.
<p>Council will engage with the community using extensive consultation on projects of large scale which impact on the whole community –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Environmental Plan development, implementation and application • Major capital works projects and strategic issues • Strategic plans and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's long-term community plan is Council's principal tool for engaging with the whole of community, understanding needs, setting direction and reviewing progress. • Public meetings, focus groups, interactive web applications, surveys.
<p>Council will involve and collaborate on specific issues with community groups, partners where opinion and expertise are sought on a project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific interest groups. • Specialist services and organisations. • Organisations or groups or citizens with specialist expertise. • Working parties, workshops, reference groups, focus groups.

Commitment	Strategies and Tools
<p>Council will undertake community development activities across a wide range of projects and activities, in order to understand the needs and aspirations of the community and to grow community capacity and develop community governance opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council’s <i>Community Strategic Plan</i> and its Annual Operational Plan and Delivery Plan will set out major projects and community issues to be addressed through community development processes. • Council’s adopted <i>Community Strategic Plan</i> will serve as the primary cornerstone reflecting the community’s strategic direction and vision, through which ongoing broad and specific targeted consultation and project development will be delivered by the community stakeholders working closely with Council.
<p>Council will embrace Aboriginal reconciliation principles as a key part of its community engagement and will endeavor to listen to and account for any specific Aboriginal community views and issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will engage with the Local Aboriginal Land Council representatives on issues on an ongoing basis. • Council will continue to support the Kyogle Reconciliation Committee as a key stakeholder committee for discussion concerning Aboriginal matters affecting the local government area.

12.3 Community Engagement Matrix

The selection of a level or levels of community engagement will be driven by the expectations of internal and external stakeholders. Consideration will be given by Council, but not solely restricted to the following:

- Background information, including Council reports, briefing papers, project scopes and reviews.
- Level of interest from community as perceived by internal stakeholders (Council members and staff).
- Level of interest being shown by the community.
- Underlying values and views of internal and external stakeholders.
- Degree of complexity – is there a single issue or multiple issues?
- Degree of potential community impact and/or outrage – what is the general community perception of the issue/s?
- Degree of political sensitivity – is there potential for individuals/groups to use the situation to make political gains?
- Availability of human, material and financial resources?
- Media interest?

The Council will also have regard to any resource implications – human or financial – that may affect the Council’s ability to implement any particular community engagement activities as well as directions it may have from State Ministers or agencies or from Council resolutions.

The Community Engagement Matrix (see Figure 1) is a tool intended to help identify possible preferred community engagement approaches for different sets of community issue circumstances. The matrix is based on risk management principles and is expressed in terms of the combination of the following factors:

1) Degree of complexity

- There is one clear issue and/or problem that needs to be addressed (low); or
- There are more than one or two issues and/or problems that can be resolved (medium); or
- There are multiple issues and/or problems and it is unclear how to resolve them (high).

2) Degree of potential community impact and ability to influence outcomes

- The project will have little effect on communities and they will hardly notice any changes (low); or
- The project will fix a problem that will benefit communities and the change will cause minor inconvenience (medium); or
- The project will create a change that will have an impact on communities and the living environment, and the degree of impact/outrage and acceptance will vary (high).

3) Degree of political sensitivity or community interest

- The project has acceptance throughout communities (low); or
- There are groups in communities who may see potential in raising the profile of a project to gain attention for their cause (medium); or
- Community expectations about the project are different to those of the decision makers and there is high potential for individuals and groups to use the uncertainty to gain attention (high).

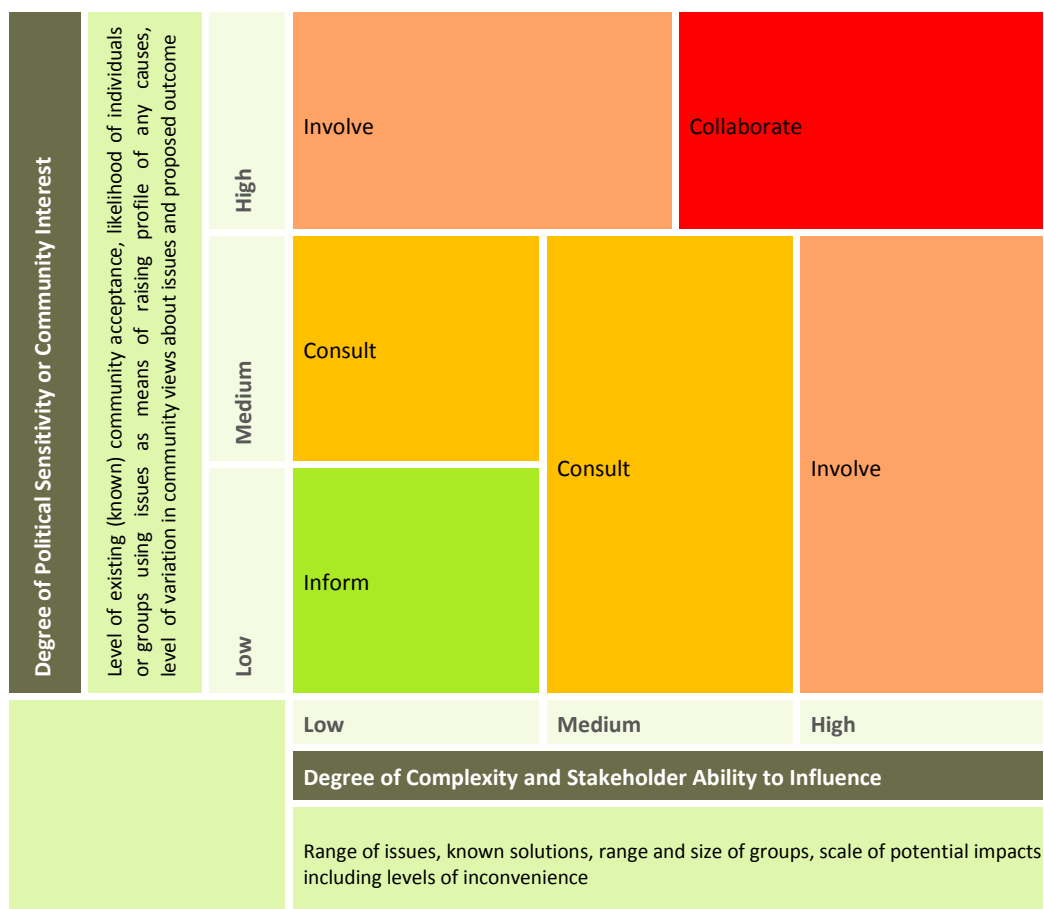


Figure 1 Community Engagement Matrix

Factors 1) and 2) are combined and represent the likely complexity of the issues being considered and the likelihood of stakeholder influence occurring once the issues are known by relevant community stakeholder. Factor 3) represents the probability of influence occurring with potential change. The figure illustrates the in principle preferred minimum level of community engagement that should be contemplated.

Figure 1 should only be used as a guide. Circumstances may occur where relatively minor appearing issues can flair into more significant community engagement exercises. Local information regarding past circumstances or knowledge of affected community stakeholders can be very significant in determining preferred community engagement approaches and should form a key part of the Community Engagement Strategy for individual matters.

12.4 Stakeholder needs determination

When engaging with community stakeholders, the Council will have regard for likely stakeholder needs by ensuring that their interests are able to be well represented, understood and accounted for. Key guiding considerations will include:

- What level of information do stakeholders need to make an informed decision about the issue(s) that require consideration?
- What level of information are stakeholders likely to seek?
- Will all stakeholder contributions influence the matter being considered equally?
- Is a community leader available to assist with the community engagement process?
- Will everyone interested in, or potentially impacted by, the matter(s) being considered have an opportunity to become involved?
- Have efforts been made to include under-represented community groups in all community engagement processes (e.g. younger people, older people, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds)?
- Are there any anticipated barriers preventing stakeholder participation such as physical, communication, economic, language, cultural and social barriers?

12.5 Specific Methods of Engagement

Potential methods of engagement can vary significantly, depending on the type of engagement preferred and the nature of outcomes expected. It is also possible, and often desirable, to undertake multiple types of engagement to ensure that a broad enough cross-section of stakeholders are engaged and given appropriate opportunity to have sufficient information conveyed and enable responses to be provided.

Indicative types of community engagement, including some key considerations, benefits and risks for each are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Indicative Engagement Activities

Activity	Considerations	Level of Participation				Benefits	Risks
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate		
<p>Printed material (e.g. brochures, fact sheets, newsletters, issue papers, media releases, newspaper advertisements)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep short and simple • Make visually interesting and engaging but not too busy (e.g. media release with text and photos) • Proof-read all documents • Engage at least three random Council staff for feedback before finalisation and distribution • Use language that is inclusive and jargon free • Include opportunities for comment and feedback including possible use of reply paid forms or envelopes • Explain how comments will affect decision • Be mindful of deadlines for publication (e.g. newspapers) • Ensure printed material is suited to distribution form (e.g. brochures able to sustain weather for letterbox drop) 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach a large target audience • Public look for information in regular format e.g. Newsletter, media column • Allows for technical and legal reviews • Written comments returned in reply paid format • Documentation of public involvement facilitated • Mailing list development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution planning inadequate • Materials do not reach the mark • Materials not read • Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts • Information misinterpreted

Activity	Considerations	Level of Participation				Benefits	Risks
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate		
<p>Displays (e.g. Council Offices, libraries, community centres, shopping centre, schools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish regular sites if possible to build on community culture Develop a distribution list Make sure personnel at locations know what materials are about and where they are located and who to contact for further information Consider electronic displays, e.g. touch screens, TV video loop presentations Make sure materials are removed when past their use by date 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is accessible to the public at relatively little cost Public use the distribution locations to look for materials Public visit Council facilities and may learn more about service provision Public ask for further information at Council distribution sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution sites are overcrowded with information and the materials get lost among the collection of materials There is no active promotion of the materials Upkeep of information at sites is not well managed
<p>Website Information directly into the household</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs to be visible and easy to navigate Keep information updated 	✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost Popular information resource 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People without access disadvantaged Technical difficulties Hard to navigate
<p>Email Feedback (e.g. can be used with existing website or invitation to send email feedback to specified email address through other advertising means – e.g. newspaper)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify exact nature of feedback being requested Preferably provide clear and easy to remember email address 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be easy way to obtain ideas from public on an issue or range of issues Flexible format approach can put submitter at ease thereby eliciting more direct response Quick form of participation Allows people to raise 'questions' thereby showing areas of insufficient clarity in issues. etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emails must be tracked and can establish additional administration requirements Emails may 'ramble' and not address issue being considered or raise non-related issues

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Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts should be short, sharp and pose questions to increase interaction • Posts with video content generally receive the greatest interaction • Twitter requires a following to be built first and works best with a memorable hashtag • Weekends are often the best time to get interaction – notably for Instagram which has the highest ‘likes’ on Sunday • Instagram has higher participation and interaction from younger cohorts 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High usage levels • Good for overcoming geographical constraints • Useful means of sharing information by others • Good means of raising awareness for projects quickly amongst a broad number of people • Useful in promoting discussion amongst interested community • Ability to provide visual content – notably through Instagram • Able to catch attention of people who are less likely to interact based on detailed information availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on short messages may miss critical information that becomes apparent as engagement activity proceeds • Limited space to convey information – notably for Twitter – 140 characters • Risk of trivialising issue through inadequate description • Ability for others to place a ‘spin’ on message being conveyed by Council with risk of contaminating message
Digital Video (e.g. YouTube)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased internet traffic turning to video • Ensure that presenter is well versed and presents to meet audience expectations • Beware of inappropriate use of humour • Keep videos short and sharp • Be aware of the lack of control in the comments that can be posted and have a plan in place to manage it (i.e. for YouTube) 	✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides visual context • Great for virtual site tours • Good for helping complex planning issues using visual context • Gives a ‘face’ to a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology constraints – speed of access • Informal style • Lack of control over comment (YouTube)

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<p>Online Survey Tools (e.g. Survey Monkey)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quick and effective way to get a snapshot of community sentiment • Need to prepare questions • Ensure questions are those that the community wants to have answered – ask the questions most likely to be on the community’s minds • Consider promotion of opportunity to participate in survey – how will they know about it? • Minimise use of open questions where practicable • Allow at least some scope for an open ended answer to enable broader community expression 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for fast data and community in relation to emergent issues • Provides quantitative data • Relatively cost effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little scope for more complex data • Little opportunity to interrogate data in more detail
<p>Information hotline (e.g. 1 800 number with recorded message; person to answer questions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message must be clear and all-inclusive of any key aspects of the issue(s) being considered • Message must be non-partisan and factual • Explain what the information is intended to achieve – informative or feedback requested • If feedback is invited to be given, ensure that clear directions are provided how this can be done • Ensure that further contact details are provided if the listener wishes additional, detailed information/clarification 	✓				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates single point of contact for information • Enables consistent message to be communicated • Allows community members to speak directly to an informed Council person, when manned, about their concerns and questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activation of community is required to generate interest • Manned hotline availability may not coincide with best time community is able to make use of service – i.e. outside of normal business hours

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<p>Briefings (e.g. Council staff, elected members, technicians, consultants, key stakeholders, community groups (including marginalised groups))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it short and simple Use clear, jargon free, inclusive language Use easy to read diagrams and visuals that are consistent with the verbal and written content 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control of information/presentation Opportunities to clarify misinformation Reach a wider variety of people Build community capacity Evaluate and readjust approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some groups may be left out of briefings Inaccurate information may be passed on to community Expectations may be raised Information may be used inappropriately
<p>Mailed Surveys/ Questionnaires/Response Sheets (e.g. for blanket, random or selected distribution)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys/questionnaires should be developed using specific guidelines and trialled before distribution Collection and method of analysis to be considered and clarified Level of engagement and parameters need to be clear 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can gather information from people other than those with special interest Gather information from people who might not attend meetings Can gather specific information Statistically tested results have more credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response rate can be poor Communities over surveyed Can be labour intensive Questions may be misinterpreted Results not trusted Results not fed back to communities effectively
<p>Technical Assistance (e.g. including attendance by selected Council staff to explain detail at: briefings, meetings or workshops)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical resource persons must be perceived as credible by communities Ensure technical resource persons have access to information about the communities attitudes 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build credibility and address public concerns about equity Facts in dispute can be debated and consensus reached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource availability may be limited Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns
<p>Open House (e.g. communities engage at their own pace in a comfortable environment, drop in to individually to view plans, ask questions, give opinions, have an informal chat and a coffee, tea etc)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be there when you say you are going to be Consider the demographics of the area and time sessions accordingly Greet people at the door and explain the format, provide comments sheet Give people a task e.g. “good/ bad” dots to place on the displays to record their preferences 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates a wide variety of people Break down perceived barriers Fosters communication More convenient for people Engages people more effectively Minimise aggressive approach to Council staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special interest groups may boycott or disrupt Groups may use “dots” to lobby for special interests Staff resource intensive May not be accessible to people who rely on public transport

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Feedback Register (e.g. resident or visitor detail/information depository – book or electronic file - for feedback)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check register content is relative to required purpose 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathers input from a broad range of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register maintenance can be resource intensive
Focus Groups (e.g. used to test message with randomly selected people or to gain input to assist planning for engagement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set clear tasks Ensure relevant representation is provided by participants Requires skilled facilitation 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test material Verify prior assumptions Raise unexpected additional benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants may feel restricted by the approach May be perceived as exclusive May be costly
Telephone surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technique used to obtain structured responses on specific issues to obtain quantitative measurable results 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good way to quickly assess current awareness and attitude of respondent to issues A simple vote can provide an indication of awareness Opportunity to capture views of community stakeholders that may not otherwise be able to participate in alternative engagement processes Can provide input from statistically relevant random population sample Likely to receive higher response rate than mailed surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More expensive to deliver and more labour intensive than mailed surveys
Interviews (e.g. face to face, telephone, on-line chat, Skype)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be clear and open about the intent Consider questions carefully to gather relevant information Ensure effective information recording methods Be inclusive Be equitable 	✓	✓	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather clear understanding of public concerns and issues Individuals feel inclined to provide input based on personalised format Able to reach more people by varying timeframe for interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather clear understanding of public concerns and issues Individuals feel inclined to provide input based on personalised format Able to reach more people by varying timeframe for interviews

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<p>Workshops (e.g. commence with presentation and allow for interaction in small groups with feedback to larger group to bring all the information together at the end of the workshop)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know how you plan to use public input before the workshop How you are going to manage the group – rules for engagement Use trained facilitators and give them clear instructions to ensure the aims of the workshop are achieved How are you going to feedback outcomes of workshop to participants 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants can use the opportunity to raise their concerns, needs, issues Foster equity and credibility Opportunity to hear the “silent” voices Special interest groups get to listen to other voices Unexpected additional benefits Relational benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small numbers of participants Resistance to breaking up into small groups by some participants Special interest groups monopolise the workshop Participants alter the agenda Facilitators not impartial or not skilled enough to deal with some behaviours Information session format used rather than workshop format Feedback not recorded effectively
<p>Field Trips (e.g. tour of project site or comparable site for stakeholders, elected members, community groups, media)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up booking system to manage demand effectively Make accessible to diverse groups Provide itinerary/tour guide Plan question/answer session Plan refreshment break and provide water during the trip Consider safety 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to develop rapport with stakeholders Increase knowledge of issues and process for all involved Unexpected additional benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of participants can be limited by resource availability Intention can be misinterpreted Project site may reveal unintended conditions Aggrieved participant may take the opportunity to monopolise captured audience
<p>Design Charrettes (e.g. sessions where participants become involved in the design of a projects features)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan how the “Design-in” will take place Provide clear information and guidelines for participants Provide clear parameters Provide technical support Provide opportunities to foster creative ideas 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can create effective partnerships and working relationships with communities and individuals Can develop sense of trust for all concerned Can identify issues and concerns in early stages of projects Can result in improved outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants bring unrelated agenda to the session/s Not enough time allowed for sessions Small representation of community None of what is discussed in the session/s is incorporated into the final design Future expectations cannot be met

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Public Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to have strong chairperson who can make the meeting flow properly – neutral chair is preferable • Everyone needs to have a chance to speak • Based on a central theme, participants should agree on issues that are important • Record each discussion and provide a way that participants can access them at the end of the event • Ensure that venue is suited to likely attendance – capacity and ability to be heard 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers the community to opportunity to attend and have their opinion heard in the one place at the one time • Allows for the most important issues to be raised and enables people who have regard for such issues the opportunity to discuss them • Can enable community members to share issues and ‘move on’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to get a nuanced understanding from a single meeting • Can be challenging for quieter community members • Tendency to focus on those that are most confident to speak – often the ‘squeaky wheels’ • Potential for mob mentality to form which may lead to refuting of valid discussion points or facts
Citizen Juries (e.g. group of citizens selected to learn about an issue and then examine the data by questioning decision-makers, technicians, and interested parties – all of who are witnesses to the process; the jury makes recommendations based on their evaluation of the discussions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the sessions are managed by a skilled facilitator • Be clear about how the results will be used • Ensure a cross-section from the community • Consider current levels of expertise of participants 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue • Positions of interest can shift • Limitations and possibilities can be identified • Can dispel misinformation • Can build credibility • Can provide unexpected benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group selection can be mistrusted • Participants may not show up on the day • Sessions can lose focus • Cost can be extensive

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Steering Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually consists of high-level stakeholders or experts who can provide guidance on key issues Make clear to members what their likely responsibilities and time commitments will be Consider rotating responsibility of chair to engender a sense of ownership Include external representatives to allow different perspectives to be considered Set performance indicators – terms of reference or charter Ensure clarity of individual and groups roles Produce minutes that include clear action lists that align with scope/charter Create time for debate at meetings Issue papers at least one week before meetings to enable attendees to be sufficiently prepared Demonstrate Steering Group recognition/value with attendance from decision-making body representative(s) 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility to allow complex issues to be considered over set timeframe Stakeholder-led decision making – shared ownership of ideas Enhanced authority for ideas and recommended actions due to membership credentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential poor working relationships due to significant conflict between members Steering Group has poor leadership and/or accountability leading to irrelevant or ineffective discussions and recommendations – poor recommendations Potential conflict between Steering Group recommendations and decision-making body Information gathered and decisions made may not be demographically representative

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Community Reference Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A structured group of stakeholders and community representatives that meet regularly and operate under terms of reference Generally seek broad-based recruitment from suitably qualified individuals Advertise and promote extensively to encourage broad cross-section of representation Establish clear parameters on make-up of group (e.g. government community or sector stakeholder groups; citizen participation) Have clear terms of reference incorporating purpose, goals, voting 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group can be issue specific Membership can vary greatly based on issue and/or purpose of individual membership – e.g. providing feedback or acting as conduit to broader community or organisation group Decisions regarding recommendations are stakeholder-led 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overwhelming power dynamics which skew power and influence to individual members at the cost of others Information gathered and decisions made may not be demographically representative
Deliberative Polling (e.g. selecting people from communities to measure informed opinions; essential elements required to ensure a democratic deliberative process are, influence, inclusion and deliberation, Carson, Hartz-Karp, 2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a skilled facilitator is used Commit to full process Consider resources required and check against budget and hidden costs Aim for a cross-section of participants from communities Plan to develop capacity in communities 			✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants can be exposed to views and arguments from different backgrounds Special interest lobbying can be diffused Can develop capacity in communities Can provide unexpected benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mistrust of the organisers and unfamiliar process can hamper participation People do not have the time required to commit to the process Timeframes are unrealistic Agenda too ambitious or not specific enough
Mediation, Negotiation and Dialogue (e.g. designed to create shared meanings through effective listening and reflective questioning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish firm guidelines Ensure the role of the mediator/negotiator and participants are clear Seek commitment to the process 	✓	✓	✓	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps participants towards an understanding of others' viewpoints Forward thinking approach sets new directions Win/Win outcomes Promotes accountability on both sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to identify who the parties are and who and what they represent Time and resource intensive Knowledge and skill base required to facilitate mediation/negotiation not acknowledged

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<p>Community Events (e.g. specially created for project or attendance at an existing community event – fairs or markets)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up interactive displays at booths Consider using methods such as stickers, comment cards, graffiti walls or map or plan making as ways of collecting information Ensure that appropriately informed staff are able to attend to provide information and encourage people to participate 	✓	✓			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows people to make comments and work on evolving community response Community attendees able to have their ideas influenced and evolve from earlier participants' comments/input Opportunity to use more engaging tools Useful technique to deal with people less confident to provide other forms of feedback Potential to engage broader age cohorts Able to take matter to neutral or stakeholder ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activation required to generate the event External factors affecting event attendance Potential lack of control over exposure to public at event

Note:

- Engagement types are indicative only; variations of the types listed can be considered for different circumstances
- Adapted from various references including: Queensland Government, *Draft community engagement toolkit for planning*, 2017; Government of South Australia, *Community Engagement Handbook*, 2008; Tamworth City Council, *Community Engagement Strategy*, 2014