

Community Engagement Strategy 2023



Strategy Title: **Community Engagement Strategy**

Section Responsible: **Communications**

Minute No/Ref: **22/300**

Doc ID: **8342**

The *Local Government Act* 1993 requires Council to have a Community Engagement Strategy to support the development of all plans, policies, programs and key activities such as the Community Strategic Plan.

This Community Engagement Strategy is a formal expression of Council's commitment to undertake meaningful engagement with the Narrandera Shire community through the use of appropriate, effective and inclusive practices in the development, adoption and review of its strategic documents.

SCOPE

Narrandera Shire Council is committed to a process of meaningful communication, including full and transparent consideration of input and response to community members engaged in the process using the following social justice principles:

1. Equity
2. Access
3. Participation
4. Rights.

Community engagement does not replace the decision-making functions of Council. Rather this is designed to assist in the decision-making process ensuring that Council has access to a broad range of information, feedback, opinions before decisions are made.

Examples of community engagement include informing the community through face-to-face interaction, using the website of Council, social media, digital communication such as email public or traditional media such as printed material or television or radio.

OBJECTIVE

Within the Community Strategic Plan titled 'Our Narrandera Shire 2034', Theme 5 contains two aspirations for 'Our Civic Leadership' being:

1. Have a Council that provides leadership through actions and effective communications
2. Promote a community spirit that encourages volunteerism and values effective partnerships.

Narrandera Shire Council supports the spectrum of engagement activities as advocated by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), which includes five levels of engagement being:

1. Inform
2. Consult
3. Involve
4. Collaborate
5. Empower

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum is designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any community engagement program. The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made.

STATEMENT

Narrandera Shire Council will inform the community about Council decisions, and engage with residents during the development of plans, policies and projects that have the potential to affect the Narrandera Shire community by ensuring that both identified stakeholders and general stakeholders:

1. are informed on issues and decisions that could significantly impact them
2. are given opportunities to have their say on Council issues, in a way and at a time that suits them, and
3. can be certain their views and advice have been genuinely considered before decisions are made.

Council is committed to ensuring that its decision-making process is open, trustworthy and accountable.

Council business papers, minutes and live streamed recordings of meetings will be available both online through Council's website.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council is committed to providing the community with accurate and timely information about Council activities, opportunities and initiatives that may impact or interest them.


The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum will be used for this purpose and a number of sample toolkits can be used and adapted for use by Council, these toolkits can be viewed from the following link: [IAP2 Knowledge Base – Toolkits](#).

Below is an infographic to assist in understanding the IAP2 process:

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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1.1 Inform

Council initiatives to inform its community during the development, implementation and review of strategic documents will include:

1. Use of Council's website at www.narrandera.nsw.gov.au
2. The use of traditional print media such as notices in the Narrandera Argus (or other relevant newspaper), newsletters, signage or other material relative to the consultation
3. Social media including the Facebook page of Council and other social media platforms such as Instagram
4. Media releases
5. Direct mail-outs.

1.2 Consult

Council will actively seek the views of its community and facilitate the exchange of ideas and information.

Council provides a number of opportunities for the community to directly participate in community consultation – an example of this was the recent development of the new Community Strategic Plan adopted in June 2022 titled 'Our Narrandera Shire 2034' and the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026.

Consultation initiatives may include but not limited to:

1. Face-to-face discussions
2. Surveys
3. General feedback sought
4. Draft documents placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days unless there is a legislative provision to vary this period of time
5. The receipt of either written submissions or digital submissions on public exhibition documents
6. The Narrandera Shire Community Survey – usually held early in the year of an ordinary Council election
7. The opportunity for members of the public to address the public forum at the beginning of each monthly Council meeting

1.3 Involve

When dealing with an issue or matter that has significant impact on identified groups, Council has the opportunity to work directly with the community by bringing stakeholders into the decision-making process.

Council may seek direct input from Council committees, working groups, community committees or other groups and seek recommendations.

Groups may include but not limited to:

1. Community Forums
2. Community Reference Group
3. Section 355 Committees or Advisory Groups.

1.4 Collaborate

Similarly, when dealing with difficult issues Council will partner with the community during each aspect of the decision-making process including the development of alternatives where possible and guidance to the best solution and outcomes.

1.5 Empower

Examples of empowerment in engagement include:

1. Council elections.
2. Referendums
3. Deliberative processes to understand community attitudes and issues to a broad scale issue or project and may consider trade off scenarios.

A Project Assessment Tool should be used – a template is provided below:

ACTIVITY

Step 1

List all the individuals and groups potentially affected by this project/program/ initiative (known as the stakeholders). Consider each of these stakeholders as you answer the questions in Step 2.

Step 2

Answer the following questions and add up the total score.

TITLE OF PROJECT/PROGRAM/INITIATIVE:

Indicate either 1 – 5 from the scale below:

← 1	2	3	4	5 →
Not applicable to my project	No	I don't know	Maybe	Yes

Question		Response from scale	Comment
1	Do you need to understand the community's needs and/or ideas?		
2	Does the project/program/initiative have the potential to impact on the reputation of Council positively or negatively?		If yes, how?
3	Is there a potential for community interest?		
4	Has this project/program/initiative been controversial in the past?		If yes, how?
5	Does this project/program/initiative or physical location have a history or sensitivity?		If yes, what history?
6	Is there a likelihood of a particular group being interested in this matter?		If yes, name group(s)

7	Is there a potential impact on vulnerable or minority groups?		If yes, what is this impact?
8	Is there a regulatory requirement for community engagement on this matter?		If yes, which legislation and sections?
9	Does the project/program/initiative have potential financial implications that may impact on stakeholders ?		If yes, estimate the \$\$\$ impact.
10	Does the project/program/initiative have potential financial implications that may impact on Council ?		If yes, estimate the \$\$\$ impact.
11	Is there potential disruption for stakeholders?		
12	Is there potential for stakeholders to perceive that they will be disadvantaged by this project/program/initiative?		
13	Will stakeholders have additional obligations/responsibilities as a result of this project/program/initiative?		
14	Is there political interest at Federal, State, Regional or local level?		
15	Has there been media interest so far?		
16	Is there a key motivational driver for this project/program/initiative?		If yes, please name
17	Has there already been interest in this project/program/initiative so far?		If yes, please comment
TOTAL			
<p>Note: Does the project/program/initiative meet the criteria for an Office of Local Government (DLG) Capital Expenditure review? (Cost is > 10% of annual rates revenue)</p>		<p>If yes, the OLG requires evidence of community engagement, regardless of score above.</p>	

Step 3

Discuss your responses with your colleagues and Deputy General Manager to determine whether community engagement may be required, and if so, the level of engagement necessary (as identified through the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation).

Score	Action
<40	Consider any questions that scored a '5', and assess the level of engagement required, (consult IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation). Present your responses to Step 1, 2 and 3 to your Manager or Deputy General Manager for sign off, action and placement into ERDMS.
40-50	Community/stakeholder engagement may be required. Consider any questions that scored a '5', and assess the level of engagement required, (consult IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the Procedure). Discuss with your Manager or Deputy General Manager to determine the most appropriate engagement type.
50+	Community/stakeholder engagement is required. Discuss with colleagues to determine the most appropriate engagement type (consult IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the Procedure). Provide this recommendation to your Manager or Deputy General Manager and if appropriate, refer the engagement type to Council through the Executive Leadership Team.

LEVEL OF IMPACT

All strategic planning and major projects, programs and new initiatives are assessed using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to determine the level of community engagement required.

This process is to be used when planning the year's works program, service programs and exhibition scheduling but can also be very useful for lesser significant projects where risks are identified and or where there is a requirement to assess and understand community needs.

DEFINITIONS

- **Community engagement:** also referred to as 'public participation'.
- **IAP2:** International Association of Public Participation.
- **NSC:** Narrandera Shire Council.
- **Public participation:** involving those who are affected by a decision in the decision-making process. It promotes sustainable decisions by providing participants with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way, and it communicates to participants how their input affects the decision (source: IAP2 - Australasia).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager / Deputy General Manager / Managers

The General Manager, Deputy General Managers and Managers are to ensure all strategic planning and major projects, programs and new initiatives are assessed using the Community Engagement Procedure.

Governance & Engagement Manager

To update this strategy in accordance with Section 402A of the *Local Government Act* 1993 and the Integrated Planning & Reporting documents issued by the Office of Local Government in September 2021.

Communications Officer

Oversee the community engagement framework to build organisation capacity and practice through provision of advice, resources, and tools, and build and maintain place-based relationships with community. Ensure community engagement planning and delivery is consistent with this policy.

RELATED LEGISLATION

- *Local Government Act* 1993
- *Local Government (General) Regulation* 2021

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Community Strategic Plan 'Our Narrandera Shire 2034' – adopted 21 June 2022
- POL047 Media and Public Relations Policy – adopted June 2021
- POL056 Social Media Policy – adopted 21 June 2021
- Community Participation Plan – Planning - adopted November 2019
- IAP2 International Association for Public Participation guidelines www.iap2.org.au

VARIATION

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this strategy in accordance with legislation, regulation and award changes, where applicable. Council may also make changes to this policy and the relevant procedures from time-to-time to improve the effectiveness of its operation.

PREVIOUS VERSIONS

This strategy was adapted from Council's ES310 Community Engagement Policy (2014).

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Responsible Officer	Communications Officer		
Approved by	General Manager		
Approval Date	23 February 2023		
GM Signature <i>(Authorised staff to insert signature)</i>			
Next Review	By 31 December 2024 (year following an ordinary election)		
Version Number	Endorsed by ELT	Endorsed by Council	Date signed by GM
1 Adopted	30/06/2014	10/12/2014	12/12/2014
2 Reviewed	-	14/12/2022	23/02/2023
3 Reviewed	DD/MM/YYYY	DD/MM/YYYY	DD/MM/YYYY

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