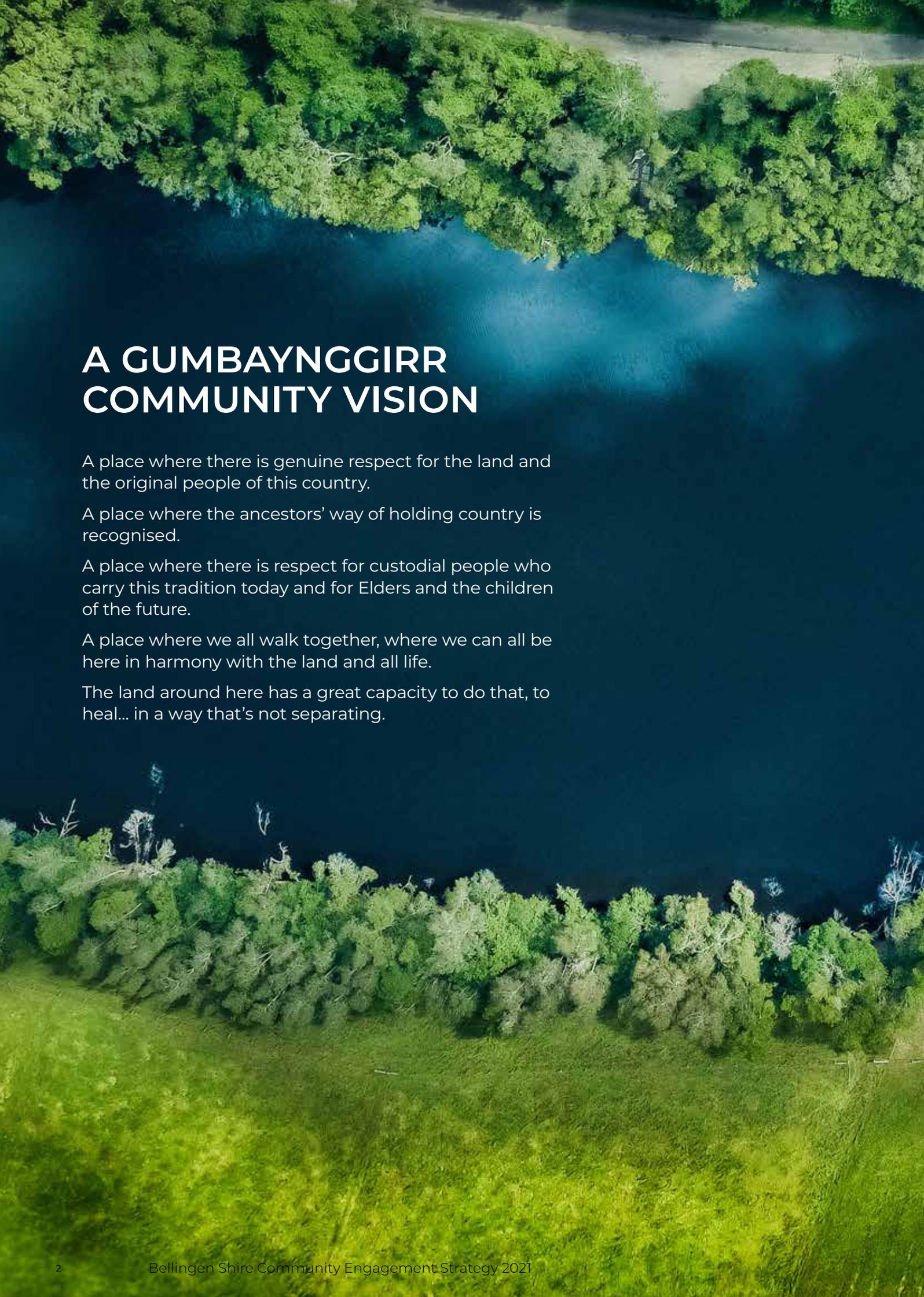




BELLINGEN SHIRE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021



BELLINGEN
SHIRE COUNCIL



A GUMBAYNGGIRR COMMUNITY VISION

A place where there is genuine respect for the land and the original people of this country.

A place where the ancestors' way of holding country is recognised.

A place where there is respect for custodial people who carry this tradition today and for Elders and the children of the future.

A place where we all walk together, where we can all be here in harmony with the land and all life.

The land around here has a great capacity to do that, to heal... in a way that's not separating.

VISION & VALUES

COMMUNITY VISION

CONNECTED, SUSTAINABLE, CREATIVE.

We are a community that is inclusive, connected to each other in our shire, and with connections beyond - regionally, nationally, and globally.

We strive to live sustainably to ensure that we have enough for all, forever.

We are a community that is creatively and culturally dynamic. We are ingenious and inventive in finding innovative solutions to problems and challenges.

OUR VALUES

We have developed core values to guide our organisation. These guiding principles dictate behaviour and help to achieve on our Community Vision and our major strategies.



Service Ethic /
Commitment



Professionalism



Respect



Teamwork



Integrity



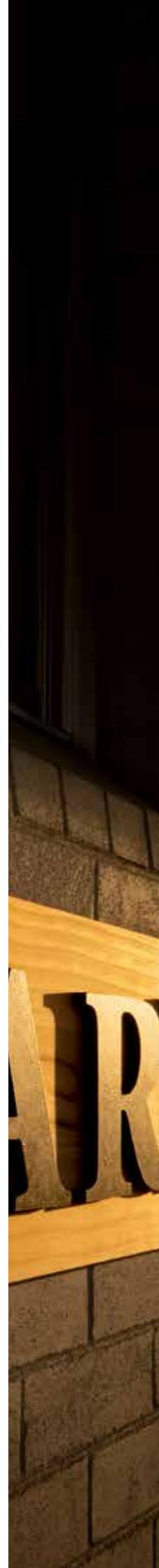
Communication

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

VERSION	YEARS COVERED	DATE ADOPTED
1.0	2021-2024	



TS SPACE

WHERE ENGAGEMENT FITS

The NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework encourages councils to better integrate their various plans and ensure a holistic approach is adopted for the future.

Council must prepare a number of plans, which provide details on how we intend to deliver works and services in the short and long term, based on priorities that have been identified through community consultation and engagement. The Community Vision (CSP) is supported by the following:

THE DELIVERY PROGRAM – outlining the initiatives and projects to be undertaken by Council in a four year period to deliver the community's vision.

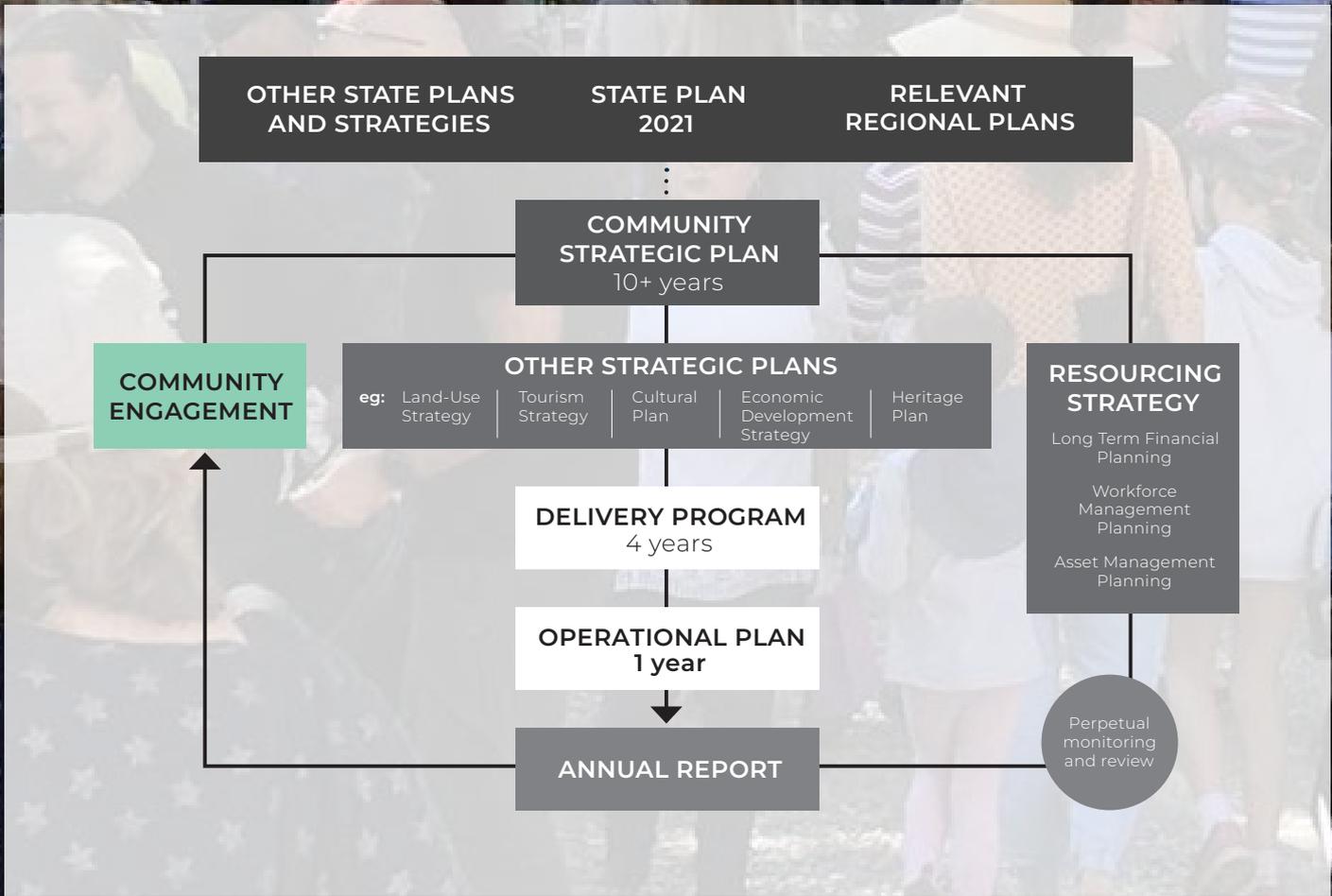
THE OPERATIONAL PLAN – detailing the specific actions, budgets and capital works Council will undertake in the financial year, including information on rates, fees and charges; and

THE RESOURCING STRATEGY – detailing how Council can help achieve and best resource these in terms of time, money, assets and people.

The Engagement Strategy is a critical component of Council's IPR Framework. It outlines the deliberative and transactional approaches Council takes towards engaging with our community to ensure our shared vision for the future of our Shire is realised.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework is depicted here.





INTRODUCTION

Background & Context

This strategy outlines the collaborative and routine approaches Bellingen Shire Council takes towards engaging with our community and forms part of Council's Community Engagement Framework.

The Community Engagement Framework includes:

- The Community Engagement Policy
- The Community Engagement Strategy
- The Community Engagement Toolkit
- The Community Engagement Plan
- The Community Participation Plan.

This strategy also defines Council's collaborative engagement vision and the use of both collaborative and routine engagement methods to strengthen our community's capacity to participate in a deliberative process with Council and enhance our decision-making processes and outcomes so we remain a connected, sustainable and creative community.





2 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this strategy and its Community Engagement Framework is to identify the structure and processes necessary to ensure future engagement activities are designed to suit specific circumstances, are deliberative in nature, take place at the right point in the decision-making process, and subsequently, strengthen our community's capacity to participate in a deliberative process with Council and enhance our decision-making processes and outcomes so we remain a connected, sustainable and creative community.

The purpose of this Community Engagement Strategy is to:

- establish standard processes to ensure both collaborative and routine community engagement activities are assessed and designed to suit specific circumstances
- establish standard processes for receiving and acknowledging community feedback.
- ensure those processes are implemented by Council staff and where appropriate by external organisations working with Council
- ensure that relevant decision making takes account of outcomes acquired from such processes along with relevant legislative requirements and other Council policies

The overriding purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that collaborative and routine community engagement activities are undertaken in accordance with the Community Engagement Policy adopted by Council.



Social Justice Principles

Council's approach to community engagement is based on the following social justice principles

Equity

The broadest cross-section of our community will have opportunities to be involved in consultation activities and every effort will be made to implement processes that are fair and equitable.

Access

Strategies will be put in place to ensure that all members of our community are included in consultation processes, including newly arrived residents, older people, people with a disability, indigenous Australians and young people.

Participation

A range of methodologies will be implemented to encourage participation. These will include face to face meetings, workshops and gatherings, written publications, committee and reference group formats and over time on-line and social media technology.

Rights

Every member of our community has the right to have their voice heard and Council will work together with our community to ensure their views and perspectives inform the decision-making process.

3

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Community engagement takes in a wide range of activities that are designed to inform, consult, involve and collaborate with our community.

Council engages with our community utilising a variety of methods including Routine and Collaborative Community Engagement methods, and dependent upon the level of engagement participation deemed as being appropriate, either method can be used.





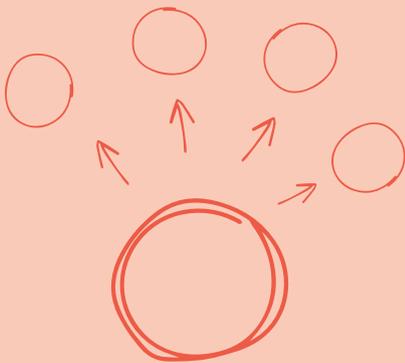
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What Is Routine Community Engagement?

Routine community engagement practices seek community input and aim to inform and consult with the community via traditional transactional tools including the use of advertisements, displays, surveys, media releases, online resources and letter box drops.

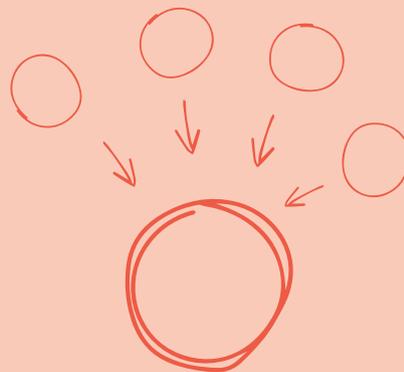
Council has adopted the community engagement principles of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) which identifies the following two levels of transactional public participation.

Inform



We can provide the community with information to help them understand a situation or problem.

Consult



We can consult with interested parties to obtain community feedback on alternatives / decisions.

Council will enhance its routine engagement activities by ensuring that when appropriate, collaborative engagement activities are utilised to provide feedback on these routine and important decision-making activities to enhance the linkage between council and our community.

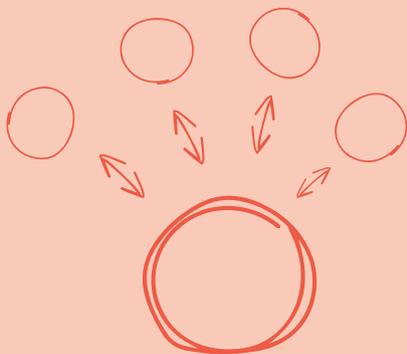
What Is Collaborative Community Engagement?

Collaborative community engagement is the process of consulting and engaging with our community by providing them with the opportunity to:

- participate in a **collaborative** process with Council and improve their understanding of Council initiatives, programs, policies and projects
- participate in a forum to consider and discuss the issues and options associated with Council initiatives, programs, policies and projects and the ability to provide input regarding these matters
- allow for the results of these deliberations to inform the subsequent decision-making process and acknowledge feedback from our community

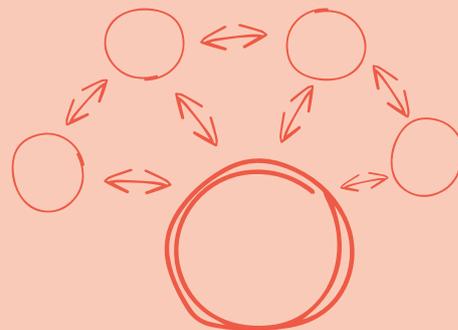
Council has adopted the community engagement principles of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) which identifies the following two levels of deliberative public participation:

Involve



We can work directly with our community throughout a process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered

Collaborate



We can also partner with our community in each aspect of a decision-making process including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.

Collaborative engagement resources and activities will be strategically focussed towards addressing complex problems where the solution does not entirely rest with Council and these activities should be designed accordingly to suit specific circumstances

3

What Are The Benefits Of Community Engagement?

Effective community engagement has many mutual benefits including:

- Empowering our community to become involved in and influence decisions that affect them.
- Building a better understanding of our community's wants, needs and concerns.
- Strengthening relationships between our community and Council as a result of transparency in decision-making.
- Increased confidence in our community regarding Council's ability to provide feedback about decisions made.
- Building mutual respect for the views of our community and Council's need to make decisions to respond to the present and future needs of our community.
- Supporting our valued and proactive community's efforts to build partnerships and develop a greater sense of ownership.

Council still has to make difficult decisions

Council recognises that community engagement does not replace appropriate decision making by elected representatives, rather Council recognises that these decisions can be enhanced through a deeper understanding of the needs of the community and the impact of these decisions.



Principles For Engagement

Council's engagement for projects and processes will be informed by the following principles:

- **COMMITTED** Community engagement will be conducted in a way that demonstrates a genuine commitment to quality consultation and a desire to hear our community's views and aspirations.
- **COORDINATED** Community engagement strategies will be well planned and directed towards achieving a better understanding of our community's views on issues of importance to them.
- **TIMELY** Community engagement must seek to engage our community at the earliest stage possible and continue to keep them informed and involved throughout the process.
- **INCLUSIVE** Community engagement will be designed so that the broadest cross section of our community is involved, especially those in our community that are hardest to reach. Particular strategies may be required to gain involvement when barriers may limit participation (e.g. young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or people with a disability).
- **CLEAR** Consultation objectives should be well defined from the outset. The role of our community in the decision-making process will be made clear and recognise the decision-making responsibilities of elected representatives.
- **TRANSPARENT** Information featuring plain language which is clear, concise, organised and audience appropriate will be provided to our community for all communication and engagement activities.
- **ENGAGING** Differing innovative methodologies will be used to encourage inclusive participation and engagement of the whole community.
- **MEANINGFUL** Consultation activities will provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue and input from key our community.
- **ACCOUNTABLE** Strategies will be incorporated into community engagement plans to ensure that feedback is provided to our community about the progress of the project or plan and which also demonstrate how our community's input has influenced the decision-making process.

Council's principles are consistent with the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights as prescribed by the Local Government Act 1993.

4

WHEN AND HOW WILL WE ENGAGE?

Council is not able to engage on all matters, and the level of community involvement in decision making will vary according to the nature of the project or issue.

It is also acknowledged that our community will have different views on what projects and issues are important and Council will take into account a range of factors when deciding how and when to involve our community.

These include the:

- need to involve our community in matters that will affect them
- complexity of the issues, the history of a project or extent of community stakeholders
- degree that issues are of importance across the Shire
- need to build trust and respect
- desire to be community-led and making space for our community to develop local initiatives and solutions
- legislative requirements

Council acknowledges it is important to give people time to get informed, become involved and consider their input in Council matters and, when possible, Council will endeavour to go beyond the minimum timeframes and requirements for engagement to give everyone in our community the chance to contribute to the conversation.



Examples of projects where we will engage include:

Corporate plans including the Community Vision 2027, Local Housing Strategy 2020-2040, Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020-2040, Development Control Plan (DCP) 2017, Asset Management Policy and annual Operational Plan.

Strategic plans and policies that will have a significant impact on residents, community, the environment, business and the economy.

Land-use and development plans including the Local Environmental Plan, and Development Control Plans.

Where legislation requires community notification or consultation.

When the solution does not entirely rest with Council and where appropriate, deliberative engagement resources and activities will be strategically engaged.

LEVEL OF IMPACT	EXAMPLES
Level 1 High Impact – Bellinghen Shire	Community Strategic Plan Decisions that could have a major environmental impact Removal of a Council facility or service Coastal Zone Management Plan
Level 2 High Impact – Local	Redevelopment of a sport ground Local street road closure increase or removal of car parking
Level 3 Lower Impact – Bellinghen Shire	Improvements to a Shire-wide service – i.e: Emergency Services / Library services Changes to customer service process – i.e: payment of rates Annual survey, Community Vision activities
Level 4 Lower Impact – Local	Upgrade of local playground Changes to a local activity – i.e: venue, time, location

In accordance with the Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and other relevant legislation, Councils must prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) for the purpose of outlining how and when Council will engage with the community regarding its land use planning functions.

This CPP, as a standalone component of the Bellinghen Community Engagement Framework, seeks to provide a single document that the community can access, that sets out all of council's community participation requirements under land use planning legislation, including all minimum mandatory exhibition timeframes, and should be referenced in accordance with this Strategy.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN & TOOLKIT

This Community Engagement Plan & Toolkit has been developed as a resource to assist Council staff and representatives in the delivery of community engagement activities. Thirty-two (32) community engagement methods are described with information provided on situations under which they might be used, potential advantages and disadvantages, and tips on things to consider for their effective use.

This Toolkit captures methods that are currently used or likely to be used by Council in community engagement activities with respect to the level of resourcing required and most engagement methods in this Toolkit are adaptable and could be effectively tailored to specific issues in the community. Although the engagement methods in this toolkit are categorised according to levels of engagement, some of the methods can be used for more than one level on the engagement spectrum.

Community Engagement Planning



1. Establish purpose
2. Define Scope
3. Identify and analyse stakeholders
4. Select level(s) of engagement
5. Select tools and techniques



6. Community Engagement Plan
7. Organise resources
8. Conduct engagement activities
9. Receive community input



10. Collate and analyse data
11. Report back
12. Evaluate process

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Level of Engagement - Inform



Advertisements		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Paid advertisement in print media.</p> <p>Useful for promotion of engagement activities or projects.</p> <p>Changes to the Local Government Act have removed the requirement to advertise tenders, development approvals and other information.</p> <p>Council is still required to publish council related information on its website.</p>	<p>Opportunities exist for Council advertisements in the Don Dorriggo Gazette and Coffs Harbour News of the Area.</p> <p>Potentially reaches most households, however not all parts of the Shire are reached by these publications.</p> <p>Advertising can be expensive.</p>	<p>Be aware of the cut-off dates to submit an advertisement for publication that meets your needs or the legal requirement where it applies.</p> <p>Ensure draft advertisements are approved by Manager, DGM and GM and that a Purchase Order is raised.</p>

VMS Boards, Signage, Posters & Notice Boards		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>VMS Boards, Notice Boards and large outdoor signs located along major roads and /or thoroughfares.</p> <p>Mainly used for high volume promotional campaigns about single issues and targeted at passers-by and motorists.</p>	<p>Can be placed in single or multiple locations to capture the attention of members of the public.</p> <p>Potential to reach large audience driving or passing by.</p> <p>Only limited information can be given.</p>	<p>Should contain a single simple message.</p> <p>Use very large text size.</p> <p>Use graphics and / or images to re-enforce the message – i.e: water restriction levels.</p> <p>QR Codes can be incorporated for mobile users.</p>

Rates Notice		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Information flyer included with scheduled utility bill or Council rates notice.</p>	<p>High probability that target recipients will be informed.</p> <p>It is an economical use of existing mailing activities.</p> <p>Can only be used at specific times as rate notices are distributed periodically.</p> <p>May be taken as junk mail and disregarded.</p>	<p>Flyer should be well-designed and reader friendly.</p> <p>Use reliable third party for graphic design, printing and distribution.</p>

Level of Engagement - Inform

Direct Mail / Letter Drop

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Personalised or bulk letters mailed directly to interested or affected community members or stakeholders.</p> <p>Personalised letters are a legal obligation in some circumstances. They convey information to recipients and are useful for requesting direct feedback.</p> <p>They are often suitable for issues that are highly sensitive.</p>	<p>Effective in building relationships and when engagement timeframe is short.</p> <p>High probability that target recipients will be informed.</p> <p>Letter drop can potentially reach all households in a postcode.</p> <p>It can target specific villages or the entire Shire. It can be low cost but requires time to prepare.</p>	<p>Keep it short and simple.</p> <p>Ensure content complies with legal requirements where necessary.</p> <p>Use envelopes that indicate it is an official communication.</p> <p>Use reliable third party for distribution if not done by Council staff.</p>

Email & Councils online Create Engagement Portal email distribution list

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Allows you to send emails to a list of registered persons. With emails, someone creates a message and sends to a distribution list.</p> <p>It is a convenient means of reaching directly a preselected audience with information and receiving feedback.</p>	<p>Information passed can be easily passed on to other members of the public not on your mailing list if you have so requested.</p> <p>Saves time and is cost free.</p> <p>Sometimes, emails fail to deliver to the target or get dropped into spam folders and could therefore be missed by the recipient.</p> <p>Only those with an email address and internet connection can be reached.</p> <p>An effective way of providing information on outcomes and decisions to participants in community engagement activities.</p>	<p>Keep it short and simple.</p> <p>User-friendly text styles and sizes is necessary.</p> <p>Make sure to create and / or use the correct distribution list.</p> <p>Observe privacy laws and do not share email distribution list with external persons.</p> <p>Always use blind copy to ensure recipients do not see the email address of others.</p> <p>Ensure your distribution list is up to date.</p>

Local Radio & Television

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Notifications in the form of announcements and / or interviews via local radio or television can be useful for informing the public on proposed initiatives or Council's decisions.</p>	<p>I Able to reach a wide and diverse audience.</p> <p>Can be effective in campaigning for behavioural change.</p> <p>Prime 7 News North-Coast will need colour, movement, and a BSC spokesperson to film.</p> <p>2BBB and ABC Coffs Coast radio stations will need an informed BSC spokesperson to talk to.</p> <p>People can sometimes find it hard to remember details if they don't write it down</p>	<p>Refer to Council's Media Policy.</p> <p>Timing of announcements is important, depending on your target audience.</p> <p>Liaise with Council's Communications and Engagement Specialist about Council's media protocols.</p>

Media Release

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A media release is provided to journalists to publish for free through their media organisation. Media can be print, broadcast or online.</p> <p>Media releases are useful in keeping the media informed on important community issues and Council's position. They are often suitable on issues that are highly political.</p>	<p>Media releases are often perceived as more credible by the public because it has been vetted by an independent third party (the media organisation).</p> <p>If the media organisation deems the issue to be pertinent, they are likely to make further enquiries on it.</p> <p>This can help disseminate information quickly and broadly.</p> <p>Media response can be poor if the issue is considered not new worthy.</p>	<p>Be clear about the specific information you wish to communicate and do your research.</p> <p>Council's Communications and Engagement Specialist can assist you when you draft your media release.</p> <p>The Mayor and the General Manager are the official spokespersons of Council.</p> <p>Provide media with contact details for further enquiries.</p>

Level of Engagement - Inform

Printed Fact Sheets / Brochures / Flyers / Newsletters

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>These are information updates issued around specific subjects. Can be used to inform, receive feedback and update the community on issues.</p>	<p>Provides an overview and not in-depth analysis.</p> <p>Great way to provide feedback on Council decisions and engagement outcomes to the community.</p> <p>Q & A format usually effective. Encourages written responses if comment form is enclosed.</p> <p>Can be passed on from one person to another but no guarantee material will be read.</p> <p>Needs a good distribution network to be effective. Information materials can be inserted within local newspapers.</p>	<p>Keep it short and simple.</p> <p>Use reader-friendly graphics.</p> <p>Encourage response via enclosed postage-paid comment form.</p> <p>Provide contact details for further enquiries.</p>

Reports

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Official document reporting research, policy findings or providing an account of actions that have taken place.</p> <p>It is useful for providing detailed information to the community.</p>	<p>Able to provide thorough information on issues or decisions.</p> <p>People with literacy or language difficulty may find it challenging.</p> <p>Suitable for engaging at the closing stages.</p>	<p>Use plain English.</p> <p>Format document to be reader-friendly, e.g. use appropriate font type and size, page the document, etc.</p> <p>Use graphs and charts where appropriate.</p> <p>Report should have a brief introduction, body and conclusion.</p>

Public Display

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Display of information or drafts in public spaces like libraries, community halls and local markets.</p> <p>Useful for providing information to the public with the opportunity to provide feedback and build relationships when display is manned by Council staff.</p>	<p>Takes the information to the people and can generate immediate response from interested people.</p> <p>Can reach a large number of people in the local area.</p> <p>Information booth can be moved from one location to another.</p> <p>Information needs to be kept up to date.</p>	<p>Set up in high traffic locations with space for people to wait and engage.</p> <p>If unstaffed, make sure writing materials (comment forms, pens, etc.) are provided. Check the stand regularly.</p> <p>If staffed, anticipate and prepare to answer questions from the public.</p> <p>If possible, provide take away promotional materials, e.g. FAQs.</p> <p>Consider locations such as Council's Administration Centre, libraries and local markets / events.</p> <p>Use graphics in written materials to generate interest.</p> <p>Make prior booking arrangements with relevant authorities, event organisers and facilities.</p> <p>Make sure you have booked / access to marquees, tables, chairs, water.</p>

Level of Engagement - Inform

Council Website / Social Media & Other Digital Platforms

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>The use of Council's website home page or dedicated pages to convey information to the public.</p> <p>Could be static (basic and simply delivers information) or dynamic like Social media platforms which have the capability for interaction between Council and the community, e.g. discussion board, the public can upload document or add information, etc.</p> <p>A dedicated community engagement project blog can be created to receive feedback on specific issues or projects.</p> <p>Video messages and photo posts can convey quick and effective messaging</p>	<p>Effective in getting information to the general public on demand and in real time.</p> <p>It is cost effective and can deliver detailed information in alternative formats, e.g. video, audio, images.</p> <p>Suitable for many hard-to-reach audiences.</p> <p>According to ABS 2016, 70.8% of households in Bellingen Shire had internet connection and 24.3% did not have internet connection.</p>	<p>Ensure content is reviewed by relevant Manager and approved by the Deputy General Manager.</p> <p>Use pictures to enhance visual appeal and ensure text is easy to read.</p> <p>Work closely with Council's Communication & Engagement Specialist to understand Council requirements.</p>



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Level of Engagement - Consult



Door Knocking

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Door-to-door house visits to engage with affected residents.</p> <p>It is used to identify stakeholders' position on issues and encourage engagement participation.</p> <p>Council personnel conducting road works and / or resilience and community education activities may choose this method to target directly affected / interested residents.</p>	<p>Personalised contact with individuals in their comfort zone helps build relationships.</p> <p>It is useful when there is low trust, low interest and community feedback or action is important.</p> <p>It is staff intensive and takes time.</p> <p>An effective method for engaging hard to reach audiences, discussing issues of high emotions and mobilising the community to take action.</p> <p>May be suitable for high impact issues within local communities.</p>	<p>Conversation takes place at the door of the house, not inside.</p> <p>It is better to go in pairs.</p> <p>It is helpful to have a set of questions (5 or less is advisable) prepared to ask at each house visited.</p> <p>Provide published information to leave behind.</p> <p>Keep record of houses visited and the response received immediately.</p> <p>Doorknocker must be easily identified, e.g. carry an ID, uniform, PPE etc.</p> <p>Be friendly and aware not everyone will be friendly towards you.</p> <p>Stay on message; don't get side-tracked into endless or irrelevant discussions.</p> <p>Arrange briefing for doorknockers before the activity incorporating WHS, cultural awareness, etc.</p>

Level of Engagement - Consult

Fairs & Events		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Events incorporating fun activities such as entertainment and food with activities to provide information and raise awareness of specific or a variety of community issues.</p> <p>It is used in making engagement more appealing and to reach audiences who would not normally attend formal meetings.</p>	<p>Provides opportunities for relationship building and information sharing in a cordial environment.</p> <p>Effective for reaching families with children, young people and hard to reach groups.</p> <p>Engagement can be incorporated into existing community fairs or events. It can be costly and staff intensive to run if the event was organised specifically for the purpose of engagement.</p>	<p>Use location close to public transport and accessible facilities.</p> <p>Choose a date and period that works for families, e.g. school holidays.</p> <p>Be intentional and creative about how to incorporate engagement activities.</p> <p>Provide motivations to participate, e.g. prizes.</p> <p>Make the engagement activity simple and short, e.g. brief interview, comment form, etc.</p>

Focus Group		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A form of structured interview in which a small group of stakeholders are asked questions about their views, opinions or attitudes towards an issue or project. The facilitator allows for an open discussion guided by the questions but may follow the flow of participants' discussions.</p> <p>It is useful for gaining in-depth understanding of a target population's opinion of issues and for testing ideas before implementation.</p>	<p>It is effective for reaching target audience or particular segments of the community.</p> <p>Less formal and intimidating than public meetings.</p> <p>It is useful for exploring issues before broader consultation takes place.</p> <p>Selection of participants may be biased and some may request incentives before they participate.</p> <p>Usually needs to be combined with other engagement methods before making an informed decision.</p>	<p>A skilled focus group facilitator is required.</p> <p>Record the discussion by have someone take notes.</p> <p>It is more effective when a group is not more than 15 individuals.</p> <p>Explain the purpose and the process to participants at the beginning.</p> <p>Participants must be representative of the target population.</p> <p>Provide refreshments.</p> <p>Use location that is convenient to participants.</p>

Forum / Briefing / Information Session

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Presentations and discussions with community or stakeholder groups to provide information and gather feedback, ideas or opinions.</p> <p>It is useful in identifying the needs of stakeholders and getting them involved in the decision-making process.</p>	<p>It works well with existing stakeholder groups and can be held during their usual meeting time.</p> <p>Effective for small and large groups, including hard to reach audiences.</p> <p>Provides opportunity to increase stakeholders' awareness, build capacity and relationships.</p> <p>It is suitable for issues that are highly emotional, highly political or where there is a need to understand the impact of Council's actions or decision on specific issues.</p> <p>May leave out people who are not part of or active in the existing group.</p> <p>Can be formal or semi-formal, depending on the audience.</p> <p>Some people find face-to-face public engagement intimidating.</p>	<p>Requires good facilitator and presenter that understand the issue and the stakeholders/ audience.</p> <p>Consider the transport needs of participants.</p> <p>PowerPoint is a good tool to use.</p> <p>Keep presentation short and simple.</p> <p>Allow for question and answer time.</p> <p>Take records of attendance.</p> <p>Use of other methods, e.g. suggestion box, comment form, works well with this method.</p> <p>Advertise widely.</p> <p>Request people to RSVP and provide other relevant information, e.g. meal, language, access requirements, etc. so you can prepare ahead.</p> <p>Provide refreshments.</p> <p>Timing and date of the event is important to encourage attendance and depending on the needs of the stakeholder group.</p> <p>Provide publications to take away as necessary.</p> <p>Give opportunity for one-on-one chats after the session.</p>

Level of Engagement - Consult

Interview		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>One-on-one conversation with stakeholders to gain information for developing or refining community participation and to build consensus. Key informant interviews collect information from a wide range of people, e.g. community leaders, professionals, residents, who have firsthand knowledge about the community.</p> <p>It is useful in building relationships, trust and exploring issues in-depth.</p>	<p>Very useful at the early stages of engagement to build trust.</p> <p>It can provide deeper insight into community issues and an opportunity for Council to test ideas.</p> <p>It can be time consuming for the interviewer.</p> <p>Suitable for hard to reach audiences and can be effective in dealing with complex issues.</p>	<p>Carefully select interviewees who are knowledgeable about the issue and/or are representative of interested or affected stakeholders.</p> <p>Recognised community leaders are often suitable as key informants.</p> <p>Interview discussion should be documented.</p> <p>Ask probing questions, e.g. why, not just clarifying questions, e.g. what.</p> <p>Requires active listening skills.</p> <p>Consider the interview location – make it convenient for both parties.</p> <p>It is important that the atmosphere is cordial.</p> <p>Use this method alongside other methods.</p>

Open House

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A public information session incorporating a series of displays or stations staffed by resource persons who guide participants through the exhibits. The displays/stations address different issues and participants tour the house at their own pace.</p> <p>It is useful in providing information to the community and receiving feedback in a more informal setting.</p>	<p>It can be effective for engaging on complex or multiple issues within a short timeframe.</p> <p>It can facilitate the identification of problems and opportunities, understanding of public reactions and build relationships.</p> <p>It is staff intensive and can exclude hard to reach audiences.</p> <p>It can foster small group or one-on-one conversation.</p> <p>It can be challenging documenting the conversation.</p>	<p>Advertise widely.</p> <p>Explain proceedings to participants at the door, including emergency exit, toilet location, etc.</p> <p>House should be accessible for persons with disability.</p> <p>Participants need to fill out attendance sheet.</p> <p>Provide comment forms.</p> <p>Consider available space. Each station should be able to take 6-10 participants at a time.</p> <p>The pace of the activity can change very quickly, e.g. many people coming at the same time or leaving at the same time. Put a plan in place to manage crowds.</p> <p>Consider asking for RSVP but be prepared for anyone to turn up.</p> <p>Make information sheets available to take away.</p> <p>Consider participants' access to parking and public transport.</p> <p>Provide refreshments.</p>

Level of Engagement - Consult

Suggestion Box		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>On-site box that allows members of the community to provide feedback or share their ideas on specific issues or for general purpose. It can be adapted to an online format where participants type in their comments into Council's Create Engagement Portal.</p> <p>It is useful for participants to provide feedback that enables services to be improved.</p>	<p>It is appealing to those who may not wish to speak up in group settings.</p> <p>Often complements engagement activities that require a public gathering.</p> <p>Respondents may choose to be anonymous.</p> <p>It often requires participants to go to where the box is located.</p>	<p>The location of the box should be accessible.</p> <p>Use a bright coloured box to attract attention.</p> <p>Keep the box securely fastened.</p> <p>Advertise the suggestion box.</p> <p>Where possible, contact the person making the suggestion to acknowledge receipt and provide assurance their issue will be considered.</p> <p>Provide writing pen and paper with spaces for comment near the box.</p> <p>If the suggestion box is for a specific issue, be clear about it in the advertising and labelling.</p>

Polls

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Community members indicate their preference (vote) from one or more options. It is usually informal and non-binding.</p> <p>It is useful in understanding public reactions, opinions, and preferences.</p> <p>Polls can be conducted via a variety of methods including Council's online engagement portal Create, Survey Monkey and printed materials.</p>	<p>It is suitable for small groups, large groups or the general public.</p> <p>If done online, it is easy to set up, convenient to participate and result can be determined almost immediately.</p> <p>Lacks the ability to provide in-depth feedback and may exclude those who don't feel very strongly on the issue or limited by the options provided.</p> <p>Effective in raising awareness of issues.</p> <p>It can be divisive, especially for highly emotional issues.</p> <p>It can also be fun and used for simple things.</p> <p>It is often a game of numbers but results can be misleading if the question is not appropriately framed.</p> <p>Anonymity of the process encourages people to speak their mind.</p>	<p>Be very clear about the procedure, voting period, eligibility, etc.</p> <p>Ask carefully considered direct questions.</p> <p>Communicate clearly the purpose of the poll, e.g. will it form a decision, recommendation or provide insight?</p> <p>It might be necessary to provide sufficient information to enable informed voting.</p> <p>Make sure poll is statistically valid.</p>

Level of Engagement - Consult

Survey		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A series of questions provided to a sample of people which are representative of the stakeholders to collect information on their views, opinions or concerns on an issue or a range of issues. The information collected is analysed to understand stakeholder's perspective on the issue/s.</p> <p>Types of surveys include online surveys or written surveys. They could be mailed out via email or surface mail.</p> <p>They are useful in understanding the community better, identifying issues and generating ideas.</p>	<p>Council's Create Engagement Portal is an effective tool for online surveys.</p> <p>It is effective for hard to reach audiences and people who are unlikely to attend engagement events.</p> <p>The confidentiality results in more candid responses.</p> <p>It can be used in small groups, large groups or the general public.</p> <p>It takes time to plan and develop an effective survey.</p> <p>It is possible and sometimes advisable to use different types of surveys (online and written) to gather feedback as this can facilitate greater participation.</p> <p>People with literacy or language difficulties may find it challenging.</p>	<p>Ensure sufficient sample size and representativeness of the survey community is achieved.</p> <p>The officer designing the survey should be knowledgeable about the issue/s and every question must have a clear purpose.</p> <p>Before the questions, provide brief overview of the purpose of the survey, how the information gathered will be used and estimate time to answer the questions.</p> <p>Assure respondents of confidentiality.</p> <p>Request some demographic information. Make the survey as anonymous as possible.</p> <p>Provide incentive for participation, e.g. prize draw.</p> <p>Keep it short and simple.</p> <p>For easier collation, provide tick box options or provide space for comments where necessary.</p> <p>Always test the survey in a pilot to identify possible pitfalls and make amends before making it public.</p> <p>Allow time for participation (2-3 weeks is considered sufficient).</p>



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Level of Engagement - Involve



Deliberative Engagement

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Brings together broadly representative groups of citizens to 'deliberate' on key initiatives and provide advice and options for the way forward.</p> <p>A deliberative panel generally runs for a whole day or longer; and involves comprehensive briefings and access to subject matter experts to help participants provide informed, quality, and meaningful input.</p> <p>Panellists do not require specific knowledge or interest in the topic to be discussed to participate as panel members should demonstrate a broad range of views and interests from across the community.</p>	<p>Gives decision makers insight into what the community would think if they had more time and information about the issue.</p> <p>Can produce a wide array of arguments and views.</p> <p>It is useful in identifying problems and opportunities, understanding community reactions and could involve between 10 to 30 people.</p> <p>Requires the commitment of participants and can be resource intensive.</p> <p>Effective for engaging when the community is likely to have little information on the issue or when the decision to be made depends on trade-offs.</p>	<p>Hire a skilled facilitator.</p> <p>Do not expect or encourage participants to develop a shared view.</p> <p>Hire a third party to certify background reading materials are unbiased.</p>

Community Leaders

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Leaders of various communities or interest groups are briefed, and they disseminate the information to their groups to elicit their views and opinions.</p>	<p>It is able to reach larger numbers of community members than would direct communication by Council.</p> <p>It is low cost, facilitates the development of relationships and may be effective for some hard to reach audiences.</p> <p>Depends on the availability of leaders, their skills and standing with our community.</p>	<p>Engage leaders who are affirmed by our community.</p> <p>Consider providing take away published materials, e.g. fact sheets.</p> <p>Be cautious when engaging with communities where factions exist.</p> <p>May be necessary to brief community leaders one-on-one.</p>

Level of Engagement - Involve

Committee		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A structured small group of community or stakeholder representatives that meet regularly and operate under a term of reference. May also have members from Council (elected or employee). Can vary from members providing their own feedback or ideas to planning processes, to members acting as conduit between the broader community and Council.</p> <p>The committee offers expert and community advice on policies, plans, issues, and initiatives. Committees are statutory requirements in some circumstances.</p> <p>The Local Government Act 1993 empowers Councils to establish special committees on such terms and for such purposes as it thinks fit.</p> <p>Council numerous S.355 Committees inclusive of the following: Bellingden Memorial Hall Committee, Bellingden Citizens Centre Committee, Dorrigo Recreation Grounds Committee, Dorrigo Saleyards Committee, Hickory House Committee, Mylestom Hall Committee.</p>	<p>It is a ready audience formed around common theme, suitable for long term engagement and addressing complex issues, highly political or high emotion issues.</p> <p>Can be effective for understanding the broader community better, improving quality of policy, strategy, and plans, building community capacity for engagement, and developing relationship.</p> <p>Committee members gain understanding of other perspectives, leading towards compromise.</p> <p>It is time and labour intensive and members may not achieve consensus.</p> <p>Valuable for checking views before going out to the wider audience.</p> <p>Committee's recommendations may not be embraced by the general public and it can be dominated by a few individuals.</p>	<p>Define roles and responsibility up front.</p> <p>Be forthcoming with information.</p> <p>Use a consistently credible process.</p> <p>Interview potential committee members in person before selection.</p> <p>Council must accept need for give-and-take.</p> <p>Record of all meetings should be properly documented.</p> <p>Representativeness is vital.</p> <p>Consider the expertise that is required in the committee.</p>

Conversation Café

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Open, hosted conversations set in cafes or other places where community members would ordinarily gather. It is used to understand issues and identify opportunities and solutions.</p>	<p>It is effective in small groups (not more than 10) and helps build relationships.</p> <p>It is semi-formal and therefore not intimidating.</p> <p>The conversation can be dominated by an individual or persons.</p>	<p>Invite interested stakeholders and keep the size small.</p> <p>Use a familiar venue where conversation can be had while sharing a meal or drink.</p> <p>Consider using a venue with disability access and close to public transport.</p> <p>Keep it short (not more than 2 hours).</p> <p>The host does not facilitate, but rather simply sets the tone for the conversation.</p>

Working Group or Working Party

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A small ad hoc group of individuals with diverse and complementing expertise collaborating to achieve specified goals.</p> <p>The goal may be to study and report on a particular question and make recommendations based on its findings, develop a policy or implement a program.</p> <p>It might involve council staff from different departments, representatives of community groups, government officials or citizens.</p>	<p>Good for drawing on the expertise of a range of people to help develop policy or solve a problem.</p> <p>Useful for exploring issues before broader engagement takes place.</p> <p>Effective for internal consultation and the development of proposals.</p> <p>May be time consuming to set up.</p>	<p>Ensure all the required expertise is represented.</p> <p>Identify and directly invite persons with the required skills for the assignment.</p> <p>Keep meetings brief.</p> <p>Allow enough notice for members to plan ahead.</p> <p>Be forthcoming with information.</p> <p>Requires strong leadership.</p>

Level of Engagement - Involve

Public Meeting		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A formal meeting where Council can share information or make a presentation to the general public and respond to questions asked by members of the public. It is usually a large group and is open to all interested members of the community to attend and ask questions.</p> <p>It has legislative requirements in some circumstances. See Part 6 of the Local Government Act 1993.</p>	<p>It is transparent and enables addressing immediately and directly any misconception and concerns.</p> <p>It may be helpful in understanding community reactions, implications of propositions and building relationships.</p> <p>The depth of the discussion is sometimes limited.</p> <p>Those attending may not be representative, meeting can be hijacked or dominated by individuals or groups and can quickly escalate out of control because emotions are high.</p> <p>Some people find public meetings intimidating.</p> <p>It can result in low turnout and can lead to bad public image if things go wrong.</p> <p>Suitable for engaging within a tight timeframe.</p>	<p>Ensure compliance with legislation where required.</p> <p>It is better to have a single issue up for consideration.</p> <p>Advertise widely, including details of date, time, venue, and subject of discussion.</p> <p>Give enough notice for people to prepare ahead, e.g. organise childcare.</p> <p>Use accessible venue that will be big enough for the meeting.</p> <p>Consider day and time of the meeting.</p> <p>Arrange for knowledgeable guest speakers where necessary.</p> <p>Review all materials and presentation ahead of time.</p> <p>Set up the venue to allow for interaction between Council and the public.</p> <p>Set the rules that will guide the meeting from the very beginning.</p> <p>It is helpful to hire an external community engagement professional to facilitate the meeting. This will help avoid the perception of bias.</p> <p>People have different commitments, and it may be appropriate to hold the same meeting twice, at different times.</p> <p>Take meeting minutes to record meeting outcomes.</p> <p>Allow enough time for questions and answers.</p> <p>record meeting outcomes.</p> <p>Allow enough time for questions and answers.</p> <p>record meeting outcomes.</p> <p>Allow enough time for questions and answers.</p>

Site Tour

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Community and stakeholders are invited to an organised site tour incorporating information sharing and the opportunity for conversation between Council and the community/ stakeholders.</p> <p>It is used to inform participants of the details of a proposed site or development, and gain understanding of participants' concerns, gain new ideas, observe progress, or change perspectives.</p>	<p>It can build relationships, increase awareness, and help to identify problems and opportunities.</p> <p>Suitable for small or large groups.</p> <p>It is more productive at the early stages of the development of a project.</p> <p>Could result in low turnout, attendance may not be representative and particular group/s may dominate the conversation.</p>	<p>Conduct site assessment to identify risks and put plan in place to mitigate them.</p> <p>Provide necessary personal protective equipment (PPE).</p> <p>Consider inviting key stakeholders, influencers, community leaders, etc.</p> <p>Plan question and answer session.</p> <p>Prepare an itinerary.</p> <p>Provide refreshments.</p>

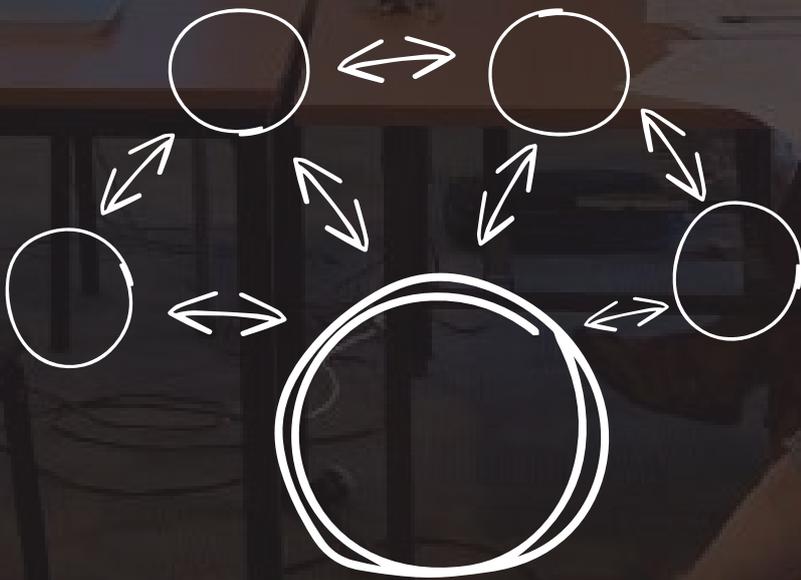
Level of Engagement - Involve

Workshops & Co-Author Consultations		
Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A structured method where a small group meet to explore specific complex issues and develop solutions. It is typically interactive and involves a facilitator, invited stakeholders, information sharing in a plenary session and small group exercises/breakout sessions to consider different aspects of the issue under consideration.</p> <p>It is useful for in-depth consideration of issues, problem identification and generating solutions.</p>	<p>Can provide a more open exchange of ideas and facilitate mutual understanding.</p> <p>Useful for dealing with complex, technical issues and allowing for in-depth consideration.</p> <p>Can be targeted at particular stakeholder group.</p> <p>It is most effective for a small number of participants and therefore other interests may not be represented.</p> <p>Effective in improving the quality of policy, strategy, or plan.</p> <p>It fosters stakeholders' ownership of problems and solutions, fosters communication, and builds credibility.</p> <p>Can run for between an hour and a full day.</p> <p>May be resource intensive depending on size of the workshop.</p>	<p>Small (12-20) to medium (21-40) size workshop works better. Workshop with more than 40 participants may be difficult to manage and create challenges for participants to actively engage in workshop activities and exercises.</p> <p>Requires skilled facilitator to manage the workshop and may require extra facilitators for small workshop activities or breakout sessions.</p> <p>Focus on a single theme with identified sub-topics.</p> <p>Use a venue that is convenient for open interaction and breakout sessions.</p> <p>Provide morning tea and lunch as may be necessary.</p> <p>Start and end the workshop in a plenary session, with the breakout session in between.</p>



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Level of Engagement - Collaborate



Deliberative Engagement

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>Brings together broadly representative groups of citizens to 'deliberate' on key initiatives and provide advice and options for the way forward.</p> <p>A deliberative panel generally runs for a whole day or longer; and involves comprehensive briefings and access to subject matter experts to help participants provide informed, quality, and meaningful input.</p> <p>Panellists do not require specific knowledge or interest in the topic to be discussed to participate as panel members should demonstrate a broad range of views and interests from across the community.</p>	<p>Gives decision makers insight into what the community would think if they had more time and information about the issue.</p> <p>Can produce a wide array of arguments and views.</p> <p>It is useful in identifying problems and opportunities, understanding community reactions and could involve between 10 to 30 people.</p> <p>Requires the commitment of participants and can be resource intensive.</p> <p>Effective for engaging when the community is likely to have little information on the issue or when the decision to be made depends on trade-offs.</p>	<p>Hire a skilled facilitator.</p> <p>Do not expect or encourage participants to develop a shared view.</p> <p>Hire a third party to certify background reading materials are unbiased.</p>

Symposium

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A formal meeting for the public discussion of a particular topic in which a panel of experts share their knowledge on the topic or experts give presentations to the audience.</p>	<p>People learn new information on different sides of the topic.</p> <p>It provides a foundation for informed engagement by the people.</p> <p>Commonly used for issues of high complexity or highly political topics.</p> <p>Can build community capacity but may convey very technical information difficult to understand by non-experts.</p> <p>Depending on the complexity of the issue, may occur in half a day or over a few days.</p>	<p>Needs strong publicity.</p> <p>Requires upfront planning to identify appropriate speakers.</p> <p>Seek out experts with different views on the topic.</p> <p>Allow for questions and answer session from members of the public.</p> <p>Provide for professional fees for speakers.</p> <p>It may be necessary to issue a communiqué at the end of the symposium.</p>

Level of Engagement - Collaborate

Appreciative Inquiry

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A structured process for engaging stakeholders that focuses on building on strengths (what works well) rather than deficiencies (what are the problems).</p> <p>Appreciative inquiry attempts to use ways of asking questions and envisioning the future in order to foster positive relationships and build on the present potential of a given situation. Stakeholders follow four stage process of Discover (identifying processes that works well), Dream (envisioning of processes that would work well in the future), Design (planning and prioritizing processes that would work well), and Destiny (implementation of the proposed design).</p>	<p>Connects the community by celebrating stories that reflect the best of what is and has been.</p> <p>Fosters positive, grassroots level action.</p> <p>Creates commitment to long term engagement.</p> <p>Council needs to be truly committed to the outcome.</p> <p>Given the high level of engagement, people expect to see changes as a result of the process.</p> <p>Participants need to own and co-create the process.</p> <p>It is suitable for engaging small or large groups on issues of high complexity or high emotions.</p>	<p>Participants should be representative of the potentially affected public.</p> <p>Requires high level of engagement by all parties involved.</p> <p>Allow enough time as the process may take days, weeks, or months.</p>

Round Table

Description & Use	Think it Through	Best Practice Note
<p>A facilitated discussion where participants freely share their views on an issue, reflect on the views of other participants and seek to reach a shared understanding of the issue. Every participant gets to say something and contribute to broader thinking of the issue. Typically, the discussion is held with participants seated at a round table.</p> <p>As the name suggests, it has no head, implying that everyone who sits there has equal status. It is useful in building trust, understanding stakeholders' needs, achieving a balance between needs and expectations, and improving the quality of a proposed action.</p>	<p>Can provide stakeholders with a better understanding of each other's position and result in more realistic expectations and willingness to work in partnership.</p> <p>To have credibility, all key stakeholders should be present.</p> <p>Potential to resolve conflicts and build relationships.</p> <p>Works well for small groups and could exclude important stakeholders.</p> <p>Effective for long-term engagement.</p> <p>Some participants may want to be domineering.</p>	<p>Requires a professional facilitator and must be carefully designed to avoid any perception of bias.</p> <p>Ensure participants have the trust of their constituencies.</p> <p>Make written notes of discussions and shared understanding.</p> <p>Consider another opportunity for further discussions on issues that require better mutual understanding.</p> <p>Emphasise the need for mutual respect.</p> <p>A group of not more than 12 will be efficient.</p>

Community Engagement Plan

 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN	
1. ABOUT THE PROJECT	
Title of Project	
Brief description of Project: (What is the purpose and timeline?)	
Key Issues: (Identify any current and historical issues that may have an impact on this project, especially if there are contentious issues)	
Community Engagement Objective/s: (What information do you need? What will you do with it? What outcomes are you after by this engagement?)	
Authorisation of Community Engagement:	
<input type="radio"/> Council Resolution (Date of Council meeting) _____	
<input type="radio"/> Annual Plan (Identify Reference) _____	

Legislative Requirement (Identify Act/Regulation) _____

Other (e.g. Project Management) _____

2. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF IMPACT

Level 1 – High impact on Bellinggen Shire LGA

Level 2 – High impact on Local Area

Level 3 – Lower impact on Bellinggen Shire LGA

Level 4 – Lower impact on Local Area

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Inform

Consult

Involve

Collaborate

4. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS TO BE ENGAGED

Council Stakeholders *Please make aware of the scheduled community engagement activities at the earliest possible time, as a matter of courtesy.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office of General Manager*			
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor and Councilors*			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Committees (List, if applicable)			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (List, if applicable)			

Community Stakeholders	<input type="radio"/> Bellingen Shire wide <input type="radio"/> Local area/s (list) <input type="radio"/> Business community <input type="radio"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community <input type="radio"/> Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community <input type="radio"/> Families and children <input type="radio"/> Service Networks <input type="radio"/> Young people	<input type="radio"/> Persons living with disabilities and their carers <input type="radio"/> Other government agencies <input type="radio"/> Community associations/clubs/organisations <input type="radio"/> Older people <input type="radio"/> Other (List)		
5. ENGAGEMENT METHOD AND COMMUNICATION PLAN				
Phase	Stakeholder	Engagement Method	Timeframe	Responsible Officer/s
Pre-Engagement Phase (What needs to occur prior to engaging with stakeholders?)				
Phase	Stakeholder	Engagement Method	Timeframe	Responsible Officer/s
Engagement Phase (How are you going to engage stakeholders?)				
Phase	Stakeholder	Engagement Method	Timeframe	Responsible Officer/s
Post Engagement Phase (How will you report back to stakeholders?)				

6. EVALUATION			
Identify measures to evaluate engagement (e.g. attendance number, number of responses, diversity, etc.). Consider the tool for the evaluation			
7. REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY MANAGER			
Details for staff responsible for project		Section/Department:	
Name:		Email:	
Position:		Phone Ext:	
Manager		Sign:	
Deputy General Manager		Sign:	
Community Engagement Plan saved into ECM (under Community Engagement Plans)		<input type="radio"/> YES <input type="radio"/> NO	



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