Singleton

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION PLAN

SINGLETON COUNCIL

FOR DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS AND PLANS FOR GROWTH AND CHANGE

Purpose

This plan sets out how and when Singleton Council will undertake community participation when exercising relevant planning functions under Part 2, Division 2.6 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Acknowledgement

Singleton Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to all Elders past, present and future.

DISCLAIMER

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A message from the General Manager

Community participation is about involving the community in the decisions that affect their lives, in ways that are open, meaningful, timely and relevant.

Singleton Council is committed to involving the community in the decision-making process as it exercises its relevant planning functions under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and associated regulations.

Council is also committed to communicating planning decisions, processes and policies in ways that are inclusive, effective, transparent, relevant and appropriate to our community. This includes embracing people's growing preference for online information and engagement.

In 2015, Singleton Council was deemed to be "Fit for the Future" by the NSW Office of Local Government.

To this end, Council must continue to be realistic and sustainable in its use of resources, while also satisfying legislative requirements and addressing the needs of the community.

This plan provides clarity about Council's consultation processes by clearly establishing commitments and defining expectations. It encourages an active exchange of information and viewpoints between the community and Council, throughout the planning process, to help deliver great places across the Singleton LGA to live, work and play.

Part 1   Community Participation Plans

1.1   What is a Community Participation Plan (CPP)?

Community Participation Plans (CCPs) establish how and when planning authorities (including Councils) will engage with the community, in a meaningful way, when performing their planning functions under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

This plan has been prepared in accordance with Section 2.23 of Division 2.6 of Part 2 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and details how and when Singleton Council will undertake community participation when exercising its relevant planning functions under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Schedule 1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 establishes minimum public exhibition timeframes to guide preparation of CPPs. It also provides scope for variations from minimum requirements.

1.2   Why is community participation important?

The community has a right to be informed about the planning matters that affect it. Proper engagement and participation in the planning process helps build community confidence in Council and the broader planning system.

The planning system can be quite complex and while it is not always possible for engagement to lead to complete agreement between all stakeholders, involvement of the community in the planning process can bring about awareness of important issues, provide opportunities for responding to such issues and allow for information sharing and problem-solving.

Involvement of the public at the strategic planning/plan formulation stage is particularly important in Councils endeavour to build community confidence in its planning processes, as well as establishing stability and certainty in the processes for the development and investment industries.

1.3   What planning functions are subject to the requirements of this CPP?

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 details that the following planning functions must be included in a Council's CPP:

- Planning Instrument functions under Part 3 of the Act, which includes:
    - Preparation and amendment of Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPSs);
    - Preparation and amendment of Local Environmental Plans (LEPs);
    - Preparation and amendment of Development Control Plans (DCPs).
- Development assessment and consent functions under Part 4 of the Act, which includes:
    - Assessment and determination of development applications;
    - Assessment and determination of applications for complying development.
- Environmental impact assessment functions under Division 5.1 of the Act;
- Contribution plan functions under Part 7 of the Act; and
- Any other functions under the Act as prescribed by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000.

Part 2   How the community can participate in local planning decisions

2.1.   Strategic Planning

Council will ensure that the minimum legislative requirements are met. Wherever appropriate and permitted, Council will seek to go beyond the minimum requirements and timeframes for engagement required under legislation if it is considered necessary to ensure that all concerned have a fair and reasonable opportunity to contribute.

At Council's discretion, additional advertisements may be placed in newspapers and /or through such other mechanisms as may be appropriate, to ensure that the public is reasonably aware of an item on exhibition. Council will aim to extend timeframes for engagement over the Christmas/New Year holiday period and other public holidays.

Identification of significant social, economic or environmental impacts associated with a proposal may result in the need to expand the notification area associated with exhibition of Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), Development Control Plans (DCPs), Contributions Plans (CPs) or proposals to amend such plans.

Details of LEP and DCP amendments being processed by Council will be made publicly available via the Council's online application tracking portal: www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Track.

2.1.1 Local Strategic Planning Statements

Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPSs) are a 20 year plan that are prepared by Council under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, which set the scene for how a local government will grow and develop over time.

Council recognises the significance of the LSPS and the importance of engaging with the community in the development of the LSPS.

In the preparation of, and during exhibition of the LSPS, Council will utilise a range of measures including, but not limited to, those outlined in the table below to seek input from the community. Council will also develop a Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan (SECP) for the LSPS, consistent with Council's Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit (Refer to **Appendix 1**).

Exhibition Timeframes

Name	Timeframe	Notification	Media	Other
Local Strategic Planning Statement	45 days	No	Yes – Council Website, relevant local newspaper and any other media identified in the LSPS SECP	Yes – Community Workshop and any other mechanism identified in the LSPS SECP

2.1.2 Local Environmental Plans

Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) are a form of legislation composed of written standards and technical maps and are amended through the NSW Government's "Gateway" planning proposal process.

The Gateway Determination (GD) issued by (or on behalf of) the Minister for Planning typically establishes the minimum exhibition period for planning proposals seeking LEP amendments. During exhibition of a planning proposal, Council will utilise a range of measures, including but not limited to, those outlined in the table below to seek input from the community.

Exhibition Timeframes

Name	Timeframe	Notification	Media	Other
Planning Proposal to amend Local Environmental Plan	28 days, unless otherwise specified by the Gateway Determination	Yes –For site specific planning proposals owners of adjoining and adjacent allotments or buildings will be notified in writing	Yes – Council website, relevant local newspaper	A community workshop may be held at Council's discretion. A public hearing will occur when an amendment proposes to re-classify land from Community to Operational.

2.1.3 Development Control Plans

Development Control Plans (DCPs) are plans that provide local design and operational standards against which Development Applications (DAs) are assessed. They are made under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and have legal status but are not legislation.

During exhibition of a draft DCP, Council will utilise a range of measures including but not limited to those outlined in the table below to seek input from the community.

Exhibition Timeframes

Name	Timeframe	Notification	Media	Other
Development Control Plans	28 days	Yes –For site specific amendments to an in-force DCP, owners of adjoining and adjacent allotments or buildings will be notified in writing	Yes – Council website, relevant local newspaper	A Community workshop may be held at Council's discretion.

2.1.4 Contributions Plans

Local Contributions Plans (CPs) are a category of plans that may be prepared by Council under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, for the purpose of levying financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public infrastructure and facilities, required to accommodate the

new development. Strict requirements apply to the levying and expenditure of funds collected under CPs.

During exhibition of a draft CP, Council will utilise a range of measures, including but not limited to, those outlined in the table below to seek input from the community.

Exhibition Timeframes

Name	Timeframe	Notification	Media	Other
Contribution Plans	28 days	Yes –For site specific amendments to an in-force CP, owners of adjoining and adjacent allotments or buildings will be notified in writing	Yes – Council website, relevant local newspaper	A Community workshop may be held at Council's discretion.

2.2. Other plans and strategies

Other plans and strategies that relate to land use planning, not specifically referred to under this CPP, are to be exhibited for a **minimum of 28 days**.

At Council's discretion, depending on the significance of such plans and strategies, Council may prepare a Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan (SECP) for particular projects, consistent with Council's Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit (Refer to **Appendix 1**).

2.3. Development Applications

The Development Application (DA) process is an approval pathway for development proposals that are identified as being permissible with development consent under a relevant EPI.

Table 1 outlines Council's minimum notification requirements for development applications. In certain circumstances, legislation (such as the Environmental Planning and Regulation 2000) may require greater consultation requirements in the circumstances of a case. Where there is an inconsistency between the notification requirements of this CPP and legislative requirements, the legislative requirements will prevail.

Table 1: Minimum consultation requirements	
DAs not requiring notification	
Proposal	**Notes**
Low-scale development that is ancillary to residential accommodation	Low-scale development includes such things as carports, detached garages, internal alterations, outbuilding, pergola, shed and swimming pool development and the like
Single-storey dwelling house development	
Dwelling house or rural worker's dwelling development in rural zones	
Alterations or additions to a commercial or industrial building provided that the site is not in proximity to a residential use	
Development for the purpose of internal building alterations, where no external building changes are proposed and the proposal does not include a change of building use	
Proposal for a change in the use of a building or area within a building, in an industrial or business zone except where the development involves sex service premises, restricted premises or crematoria	
Strata subdivision	
Council may at its discretion decide to notify any development that may impact on the amenity of adjoining land owners.	
DAs subject to a 14 day minimum submission period	
All other development shall be notified for a period of 14 days, including development on land which contains a heritage item. At Council's discretion, additional notification and/or advertisements may be placed in newspapers and /or through such other mechanisms as may be appropriate, to ensure that the public is reasonably aware of the proposal. Council will aim to extend timeframes for engagement over the Christmas/New Year holiday period and other public holidays. Council may at its discretion decide not to notify development.	
DAs requiring advertisement	

Proposal	Notes
- Air transport facility - Airport/airstrip/helipad - Canal estate development - Crematoria - Entertainment facilities - Extractive industries - Hazardous industry - Hazardous storage establishment - Home occupation (sex services) - Mortuary - Place of public worship - Recreation facility (major) - Restricted premises - Sex services premises - Subdivision greater than 10 lots - Neighbourhood shop - Neighbourhood supermarket	At Council's discretion, additional advertisements may be placed in newspapers and/or through such other mechanisms as may be appropriate, to ensure that the public is reasonably aware of the proposal.

DA Notices of determination shall include a summary of the reasons for the decision having regard to the statutory requirements applying to the decision and also detail how community views have been taken into account in making the decision.

2.4   Applications for Complying Development

The Complying Development process is a fast-tracked approval pathway for development proposals that meet certain pre-determined criteria established by an EPI. If a proposal for complying development complies with all the development standards set by the EPI, the development must be approved by way of a Complying Development Certificate (CDC).

For the purposes of notification, any mandatory standard minimum requirements for notification that apply under the Environmental Planning and Regulation 2000, Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and any relevant EPI apply to applications for Complying Development.

2.5   Modification Applications

The need or otherwise, to notify an application to modify a development consent or modify a complying development application, will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000; or where the regulation is silent, at the discretion of Council in consideration of the nature of the modification(s) proposed.

Part 3   The role of notifications, advertisements and exhibitions in the planning system

3.1. Notification correspondence

Notification correspondence via letters, email or the like, can be a useful technique for encouraging community participation, particularly for residents who are adjoining or adjacent to a proposal, persons or bodies that are identified by Council as likely to be significantly affected by a proposal; or persons or bodies that are identified as likely to be major stakeholders with regard to a proposal.

Notification correspondence should include the following (as relevant in the circumstances of the case):

- The address of property subject to the proposal;
- The name(s) of the applicant(s) or proponent(s);
- A description of the proposal;
- Details of where documentation or information relating to the proposal can be accessed or inspected;
- Details of the authority or body responsible for making or determining the proposal;
- Timeframes that documentation or information will be made publicly available for inspection;
- Timeframes during which submissions must be made;
- Details of how submissions may be lodged;
- Any other guidance that may be relevant to the proposal (including reference to where further guidance can be obtained); and
- Other such information as is required to be included in the notification under legislation.

Where the land to be notified is a parcel created under the Community Land Development Act 1989, Strata Schemes Development Act 2015 or similar Act, the Governing Association is taken to be the owner for the purposes of notification.

3.2. Advertisements

Advertisements are a useful method for inviting community participation in relation to a matter. Newspaper advertisements are one of the most common forms of advertisement used for seeking input on a planning-related proposal or event. Use of other forms of advertisement are progressively increasing in popularity, including Facebook, Twitter, the exhibition page(s) on Council's website and alerts on Council's website.

3.3. Exhibitions

A key technique for encouraging community participation is formal exhibition. Exhibition is the process of making a document, proposal or work available for public inspection and comment during a specified consultation period.

Following the period of exhibition, the Council will review submissions received during exhibition and take them into consideration prior to any finalisation of the document, proposal or work.

At a minimum, a notice of exhibition will be placed on the Council's website and in a local newspaper prior to commencement of the exhibition period. The exhibition notice shall include details of the following:

- The address of property subject to the proposal;
- The name(s) of the applicant(s) or proponent(s);
- A description of the proposal;
- Details of where documentation or information relating to the proposal can be accessed or inspected;

- Details of the authority or body responsible for making or determining the proposal;
- Timeframes that documentation or information will be made publicly available for inspection;
- Timeframes during which submissions must be made;
- Details of how submissions may be lodged;
- Any other guidance that may be relevant to the proposal (including reference to where further guidance can be obtained); and
- Other such information as required to be included in the notification under legislation.

3.4   Notification and Exhibition Material

In identifying the information to be made available for public inspection during the submission period for a relevant plan or application, Council shall seek to ensure that the level of information is sufficient for the community to understand the scope and potential impacts of the respective proposal.

The materials made available during the submission period for a relevant plan or application can vary depending on the characteristics of the individual proposal. Information which should be made available for public inspection during the submission period for plans and applications include:

- Notification plans
- Specialist reports
- Any other such information as is required to be made available under the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000.

Part 4   Submissions to plans and applications

4.1.   Minimum information required in submissions

To ensure that submissions on plans or applications are assigned to the appropriate Council file and that the matters raised by submissions are given due consideration, it is important that submissions contain the following minimum information:

- The name and address of the person(s) making the submission;
- The Council file reference as identified on the exhibition notice;
- A statement on whether the person(s) lodging the submission supports or objects to the draft plan or application; and
- The reasons for the objection or support.

Submissions must relate to the plan or application that is being notified or exhibited and must not contain comments that could be considered or construed as being slanderous. Submissions must reach Singleton Council no later than close of business on the last day of the respective notification or exhibition period.

4.2.   Delegation versus Council meeting

The decision whether or not to report a matter to a Council meeting for consideration is made in consideration of:

- Whether the matter(s) raised in submission(s) have planning merit;
- Whether or not conditions of consent can be practically implemented to address matters raised in submissions; and
- The number of submissions received.

Where a matter is to be reported to a Council meeting, persons who have made a submission during the submission period will be notified of when the matter is to be reported to the Council meeting. Council has procedures in place for how to seek public access in relation to a matter during a Council meeting.

4.3.   Consideration of late submissions

Submissions that have been received within the submission period for a plan or application shall be taken into consideration in the review of the respective plan or application. At its discretion, Council may consider late submissions in circumstances where such consideration will not generate additional delays in the finalisation of the respective plan or application.

Persons seeking to lodge a submission are advised to contact Council within the submission period to discuss opportunities or otherwise to lodge a late submission.

4.4. Consideration of community views in notices of determination

Notices of Determination shall include a summary of the reasons for the determination and an explanation as to how community views have been collectively taken into consideration in making of the determination.

Glossary

Adjacent land means an allotment that has a boundary which is horizontally opposite from the lot boundary of the land subject of interest and the subject boundaries are only separated by a pathway, laneway or public road.

Adjoining land means an allotment which shares a common boundary with the allotment(s) subject of interest and/or an allotment which is only separated from the subject allotment(s), by an allotment (or allotments) held in the same ownership as that which is the subject of interest.

Accredited Certifier means the holder of a certificate of accreditation as an accredited certifier under the Building Professionals Act 2005. Also referred to as a 'Certifying Authority'.

Advertisement means a formal notice or announcement in a public medium publicising an event or entity.

Complying Development is routine development that an EPI provides can be approved by meeting specified predetermined development standards.

Complying Development Certificate (CDC) is the approval issued under the Complying Development approval pathway.

Construction Certificate is a certificate to the effect that work completed in accordance with specified plans and specifications will comply with the requirements of the Act and Regulations.

Contributions Plan (CP) is specific type of plan made under Part 7 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. They have legal status, but are not legislation. CPs identify where there will be increases in the demand for public infrastructure and facilities as a result of development and provides a mechanism for the levying of monetary contributions and/or dedication of land towards the provision of such infrastructure and facilities.

Council means Singleton Council for the purposes of this CPP.

Development Application means an application for consent under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to carry out development. It is usually lodged with a local council and consists completed forms, detailed plan drawings, studies and other documents as relevant.

Development Control Plan (DCP) is specific type of plan made under Part 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. They have legal status, but are

not legislation. DCPs provide local design and operational standards against which Development Applications (DAs) are assessed.

Environmental Planning Instrument (EPI) is a specific form of legislation made under Part 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. EPIs typically set out what land uses are permissible and not permissible in different circumstances and outline the criteria for determining such permissibility.

Local Environmental Plan (LEP) is a type of EPI. The layout and content of LEPs are required to be consistent with the requirements of the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006.

LEPs are the principal legal instrument for controlling development at the council level. They comprise written standards and technical maps, establish permissibility of uses and specify standards that regulate development.

Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPSs) provide the 20-year vision for land use in a Local Government Area (LGA) or other such Council area as appropriate. It provides the basis for strategic planning in the area, having regard to economic, social and environmental matters.

Modification of complying development means a change to the requirements of a CDC issued under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Modification of consent means a change to the requirements of a notice of determination of development consent for a DA issued under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Notification means issuing notice to a person or body in writing of an event or entity.

Public access is a forum for members of the public to speak directly to the Mayor and Councillors in relation to a matter.

Appendix 1 – Singleton Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit

SINGLETON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES AND TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

Our definition of citizen engagement has been adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Engagement is involving the community in the decision making process.

Community engagement means communication between Council and community members. Virtually all Council staff members undertake community engagement and for many, it is a major part of their Council role.

Community engagement happens whenever a Council employee communicates with one or more members of the community. It includes everyday interactions such as staff speaking with community members in the street or reserve, over the phone, by email, over the counter, in letters and at stalls during community events.

Community engagement also includes information on Council"s website and in the local newspaper. When we communicate with community members as part of our job, we represent Council. The way we engage with the community reflects on Council. Community engagement is also about encouraging and supporting local people to participate and be involved in Council decision making processes regarding the development and operation of Council policies, plans, facilities and services.

Types and levels of community engagement vary according to the requirement, purpose or aim of the work being undertaken. This Tool Kit provides information on the different levels of community engagement and guidance on the issues and actions to be considered for each of these different levels.

Singleton Council recognises that community engagement and the participation process is a vital part of local democracy, and through our Communications and Engagement Plan 2017-2021 we aim to ensure meaningful, informed and genuine community participate is active in Council's decision-making process.

We also aim to utilise contemporary tools of engagement, meet community expectations, provide a consistent approach to engagement, strengthen relationships and be proactive and open to new ways to engage with the community.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Community Engagement Strategy will assist Council to:

- Understand local community needs and desires
- Better meet those needs
- Tap into local knowledge and expertise
- Have a more informed community
- Encourage and enable the community to participate in decision making
- Develop partnerships with local communities and organisations
- Meet the requirements of legislation, policies and procedures

Council staff assist Councillors in their decision making by providing:

- Professional advice based on staff qualifications, training and experience
- Information gained from community engagement processes to provide Councillors with additional information to assist them in their decision making

Council staff also implement the policy positions developed and adopted by Council and Councillors. Community engagement also requires Council staff to work in partnership with the community to implement solutions or deliver services together.

We are also legislatively required to engage with our communities. For instance:

- A key aim of the NSW Local Government *Act (1993)* is to 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."
- The recently gazetted NSW Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines (2009) specifies that Councils undertake community engagement as a core part of their work
- There are also other consultative requirements in the Environmental Planning and Assessment *Act (1979)* and Principles of Multiculturalism *Act (2000)*, which specify how Council should engage with its communities

Good community engagement will lead to:

- Better project and service delivery outcomes
- Improve the quality of policy being developed
- Build more resilient relationship with the community
- Enhancing reputation and check council is meeting local needs
- Increased understanding of community issues
- Better shared partnerships and networks
- Deal with complex issues and emerging issues
- Opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard
- Communities are able to identify priorities for themselves and own the solutions

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	
INFORM	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/ or solutions.
CONSULT	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
INVOLVE	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
COLLABORATE	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
EMPOWER	To place final decision making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP2 - foundations for public participation

HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU NEED TO UNDERTAKE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people. By linking community to engagement, the scope and focus shift from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

1 Will there be a change in the level of existing environment, space, accessibility, convenience or the actual provision of a service to the community? And / or is there an opportunity for stakeholders to influence your project or its outcome?

2 **YES** | This guide is for you!
Follow the steps below to help you with your community engagement process

3 **NO** | There is no need to develop and implement a community engagement and communication plan. It may still be necessary to inform relevant community members or groups, particularly if there is a perceived level of change from a community perspective

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

What is the broader context of the project or issue at hand? When determining whether or not Community Engagement is necessary, consider the following:

- Is there a history associated with the project or issue that may impact on the current situation?

- Does the project or issue have the potential to become highly politicised?

- Is there an opportunity to build or maintain a positive relationship through engaging proactively and openly with a section of the community?

- Is there a chance that there will be considerable public outrage if the community is displeased with, or feels no ownership over, the outcome?

- Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?

1 DEFINE | DECISION TO BE MADE

What is the decision to be made?

- Can you describe the decision to be made in one sentence?

- Do you need to take into account any relevant legislation?

- Can you clearly describe the objectives and purpose of the community engagement?

Can you describe the decision to be made in one sentence (for many projects there may be several decisions to be made at different stages of the project)

- Be clear about the decision to be made;

- Meet with other Council Officers to clarify the decision that needs to be made;

- Draft a 'decision statement'

In a sentence or two, describe the project/ issue/ task

_____

_____

_____

Identify the proposed changes to the level of service to the community from the project / issue / task:

_____

_____

_____

In one sentence, identify the DECISION that needs to be made?

_____

_____

_____

DO YOU NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ANY RELEVANT LEGISLATION?

A Community Engagement process will only be useful if decision makers are aware of, and endorse, its use. Community Engagement processes can raise community expectations; this can have a negative impact when processes are undertaken and then ignored by decision makers.

This does not mean decision makers will necessarily commit to adopting the community perspective or recommendation. Rather, working with decision makers prior to undertaking the Community Engagement process can ensure that you develop an appropriate level and type of Community Engagement process for each project or issue. This will also enable you to clearly communicate the purpose of the engagement, and how the resulting community input or feedback will be used in the decision making process. In addition, it is necessary to ensure that any process is in line with Council's relevant legislative requirements.

GAINING SUPPORT FROM DECISION MAKERS

Indicate who you will need to gain approval: from:

○ I need support from my direct supervisor

○ I need LT to sign off on the process

○ I need to inform Council/undertake a Council briefing

○ I'm not sure who needs to approve this (see your supervisor for advice)

Some community engagement processes will need to accommodate statutory obligations of Council

• Identify any legislative requirements in relation to making the decision and ensure that the community engagement is designed to recognise this, and it will be communicated to stakeholders

• Are there any specific steps to meet the legislative requirements that are different to any additional steps to engage?

• Demonstrate taking into account broader legislative requirements such as human rights in making decisions

CAN YOU CLEARLY DESCRIBE THE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Identify the practical purpose of the engagement process (Decision / next step)

_____

_____

_____

Identify the experience you would like the participants to take away from the process

_____

_____

_____

After you have clarified the decision, consider the type of decision that needs to be made.

Are there elements that are non-negotiable?

• Are you asking community members to explore ideas (open community engagement), or respond to set criteria or options (closed Community Engagement?)

• It is important to clarify these parameters at the start, and make these clear to all participants at the commencement of the Community Engagement process

Levels of risk and complexity

Consider the level of overall risk, is there likelihood for political sensitivity, community outrage or other harm? Tick the appropriate level of risk.

○ High   ○ Medium   ○ Low

Consider the level of complexity, is the project/ issue easy to understandor complex in nature? Tick the appropriate level of complexity.

○ High   ○ Medium   ○ Low

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Will the Community Engagement be 'open' or 'closed'?

○ Open - An open Community Engagement process allows community members to assist with setting the parameters of the issues relating to the project

○ Closed - A closed Community Engagement process asked community members to respond to identified solutions, usually with an 'agree' or 'disagree' option.

○ Other - Elements of both open and closed engagement

🔍 NOTE

It is important to ensure that community members understand whether or not your engagement process is 'open' or 'closed' and for you to design your process accordingly.

For example, do not ask an open question about an issue if you only want a yes or no answer to a set of predetermined solutions.

IMPACTS

From your perspective, list the possible positive and negative impacts:

Positive impacts/outcomes:

_____

_____

_____

Negative impacts/outcomes:

_____

_____

_____

Who needs to be engaged? Who is or will be affected by, interested in, or who can influence or inform the decision?

• Consider how to recruit participants

• Develop a list of potential participants and their level of interest; don't forget internal participants

• Consider ways to identify 'hard to reach' participants to maximise their contribution

• Identify any anticipated barriers, such as physical, communication, economic, language, cultural and social

Do you understand how the participants are affected and the nature and intensity of their interest, their capacity and willingness to participate and what are any barriers to that participation?

• What are you seeking from participants?

• Can you identify their needs and how can they add value

• Do they have specific interests, local knowledge

• Will individual/group interests potentially impact the community engagement process?

• Can you demonstrate that you have identified how to most effectively engage with participants, including if barriers to participation need to be removed and if reasonable adjustment is required

Using the previous information, identify the preferred methods of engagement.

PARTICIPANTS

Who are the specific participants? (This list may help you to think through participants)

Permanent residents, non-permanent residents

_____

_____

Users, non users, other

_____

_____

Tourists, volunteers, staff, community groups, Business groups, external agencies, Government departments

_____

_____

Culturally and linguistically diverse, indigenous australians, people with disabilities, aged Young families, early years, students, youth, other

_____

_____

HOW YOU ARE GOING TO ENGAGE? WHAT LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IS REQUIRED (INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE OR EMPOWER)

A number of different levels may be suitable depending on your objective(s)

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies and defines various levels of Community Engagement. The following IAP2 spectrum depicts these different levels and the promise to the participants you will engage with.

Select suitable techniques for Community Engagement

Choosing a technique or a combination of techniques for community engagement is a critical step in the engagement planning process. It is important that you know what you are asking from the participants when you decide to use a specific engagement technique.

You should only choose techniques that are suited to the purpose of your particular engagement.

Selection of the technique will vary according to the:

- Project context – project goals and objectives and anticipated outcomes.

- Community context – within which your project sits – your community profile and the social and political context.

- Project parameters – size, budget, timelines and resources allocated.

- Project teams skills and availability.

- You may need to employ varying types of engagement for the same participants during the lifespan of your project. A range of techniques may be utilised and consequently the promise made at differing stages in the project process will need to be accommodated.

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Based on the potential negative impacts and overall risk, and the complexity of the issue, choose an appropriate level of participation. This will assist with the design of your process.

INFORM	• Provide balanced and objective information • Promise to keep community informed • Eg - Fact sheets, websites, open days
CONSULT	• Seek feedback on alternatives and/or decisions • Promise to keep community informed, listen to issues & provide feedback as to how input affected the decision • Eg - Public comment, focus groups, surveys
INVOLVE	• Work directly with the community during the process to ensure needs are considered • Promise to ensure aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives and provide feedback as to how input affected the decision • Eg - Work deliberate polling
COLLABORATE	• Partner with the community during each aspect of decision making • Promise to look to the community for advice and incorporate this advice into the alternatives • Advisory committee
EMPOWER	• Final decision making power sits with community • Promise to implement what the community decides • Eg - Ballots, delegated decisions

CHECKLIST

- Does the technique match your overall program objectives, purpose of engagement and anticipated outcomes?

- Are you being inclusive of all participants? If not, what do you need to consider in order to be more inclusive?

- Can you adapt the techniques to better suit your work and community context?

- Have you developed an evaluation method for this technique in your plan? Will it capture the techniques success and effectiveness in engaging the community as well as capturing new ideas and learnings for Council?

CHOOSING A PROCESS / TECHNIQUE

Method(s) chosen:

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

Project name:

Contact person:

Date:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision	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	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision	We will implement what you decide

STAKEHOLDERS

TOOLS

WHAT RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED TO UNDERTAKE THE ENGAGEMENT AND HOW LONG WILL THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TAKE?

- Estimating the time required to ensure effective and meaningful participation

DEFINE HOW PARTICIPANTS INPUT WILL BE USER

- Data collected during community engagement must be recorded and analysed, a summarised report will be prepared and provide a useful way to inform decision makers.

- Can you accurately understand and reflect the views and opinions provided by participants.

HAVE/HOW WILL THE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEEN/ BE MADE CLEAR TO THE PARTICIPANTS?

- How will you ensured that participants understand the council's priorities and the level of influence on the decision to be made.

- Will participant's contribution influence the project equally?

PLANNING FOR PARTICIPATION

It is important to have the right advice and support along the way - have you thought about who needs to be involved in the planning and running of your community engagement process?

You've completed your participants list; now you also need to consider who specifically can participate in the process.

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED IN PLANNING?

Consider whose advice or input is required to plan your community engagement.

- ◉ I'll do it myself
- ◉ Independent consultant
- ◉ Council officer to assist
- ◉ I'm not sure who needs to be involved

WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED IN UNDERTAKING THE PROCESS?

Consider who will facilitate your engagement process.

- ◉ I'll do it myself
- ◉ Independent consultant
- ◉ Council officer to assist
- ◉ I'm not sure who needs to be involved

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Is the process open to all, or are random targeted or representative invites necessary?

- ◉ Open to everyone
- ◉ Targeted groups / stakeholders

PLAN, PREPARE AND ENSURE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES ALIGN WITH COUNCIL POLICIES

Develop an action plan for implementation

Use your selection techniques to detail a step-by-step plan. Use this who, what, when, where, how framework to list all the things that need to be covered. Ensure that the participants understand their role and the engagement is recorded and reported back to the community. Are there any risks that need to be managed?Need to constantly monitor, provide feedback and evaluate the process

WHO	(Needs to be there, know about it, help out etc.)	
WHAT	(Contribution people can make)	
WHEN	(Will it take place, will the results be known)	
WHERE	(Should we meet, should we advertise etc.)	
HOW	(Will I communicate, to ensure I obtain relevant input? etc.)	

Engagement plan

Use your selection techniques to detail a step-by-step plan. Use this who, what, when, where, how framework to list all the thing that need to be covered.

ENGAGEMENT TYPE	TECHNIQUE/ ACTIVITY	PARTICIPANTS	RESOURCES REQUIRED	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	START AND FINISH DATES	FEEDBACK METHOD

If your community engagement Plan incorporates any type of public gathering, you will need to consider how the session will run. The facilitation of your public gathering is vital to the success of your overall community engagement process. Planning to ensure your event is inclusive, participatory, consistent with your community engagement aims, and relevant to the topic are all necessary elements of a well facilitated public event. Sometimes it will be appropriate for you to run the session yourself, other times you may need someone else to do it. At times it is best to have a facilitator who is independent of Council. This will allow you to separate the content and process, and to maintain the integrity of the process in a controversial or high pressure situation.

ENSURE THAT PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTAND THEIR ROLE AND THE ENGAGEMENT IS RECORDED AND REPORTED BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

- Demonstrate a clear and equitable process for engaging with stakeholders, including understanding and responding to any concerns.

- Incorporate effective mechanisms for communicating the results of the public participation activities to stakeholders, including how these were used in the decision-making process and the final decision made.

- Document how you will capture the participants' input to inform the decision being made so that the resulting records are a complete and accurate reflection of the participation.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS THAT NEED TO BE MANAGED?

- Identify the risks to the objectives of the public participation exercise—particularly those that rate highly.

- Demonstrate that participants have understood, mitigated and/or managed these risks, including situations where time or resource constraints have meant a compromised approach to public participation.

NEED TO CONSTANTLY MONITOR, PROVIDE FEEDBACK AND EVALUATE THE PROCESS

- Clearly describe how progress will be measured in terms of time lines, resource use and achieving the public participation objectives.

- Put in place a clear approach for evaluating success, including outcome measures to assess the achievement of objectives and a post-participation process for evaluating and reporting on the success of the exercise.

- Have you applied a clear and appropriate evaluation framework to assess the success of the community engagement exercise against the objectives set at the outset?

- Have you consulted the participants involved to understand their perception of any weaknesses and strengths of the community engagement and potential areas for improvement?

- Have the results of the evaluation been documented?

ESTABLISH EVALUATION MEASURES

It is important to evaluate your community engagement process for a number of reasons:

- To determine the success of the process;

- To determine the success of the outcome;

- To learn from the process and reflect on any changes that you could make for next time;

- For organisational learning about 'what works' in community engagement for different situations

- To demonstrate links between processes and outcomes.

EVALUATION

Use these questions as a guide to assist with developing an evaluation.

1 WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN FOR THIS PROCESS TO BE A SUCCESS?
(consider the perspectives of both Council and community stakeholders)

2 HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF THIS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?
(i.e.. visible signs of success)

3 WHAT DATA WILL YOU NEED TO INDICATE THIS?
(what will you need to demonstrate the result?)

4 HOW WILL YOU COLLECT THIS DATA? (participant feedback, surveys, informal discussions etc.)

5 HOW WILL YOU DOCUMENT THE LEARNINGS
(both positive and negative) from this process, for future learning for yourself and others at Council?

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION	
KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	
WHO IS INTERESTED IN THE ANSWERS?	
SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
METHODS OF MEASUREMENT	
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	
WHEN	

DON'T CONFUSE PRESENTING DATA WITH PRESENTING YOUR EVALUATION

This is NOT an evaluation	This is evaluation
36 people attended the workshop	The workshops did not attract as many participants as planned. Only 36 people attended compared to the original target of 60. The participant demographics was also not representative of the intended audience. A likely reason for this is that the workshop clashed with a number of other community events that drew potential participants away.
86% of the participants have stated they are taking shorter showers	The project was successful in driving more sustainable behaviours. This is supported by 86% of respondents stating that they had reduced their showering time from their participation in the project. A key factor in changing behaviour was the shower timer that was provided to participants to prompt them to get out.

Source: The Community Sustainability Engagement Evaluation Toolbox
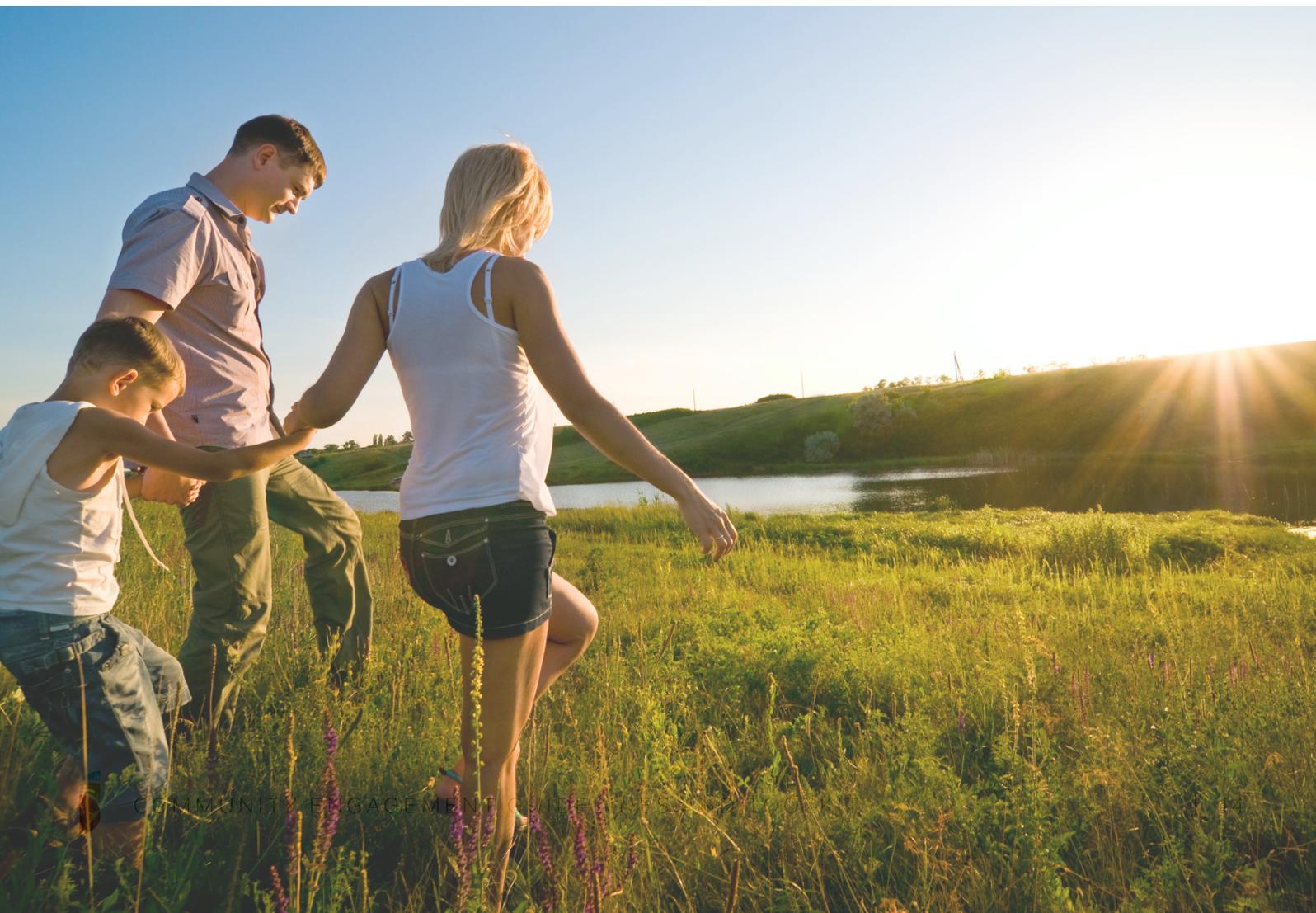
⑤ IMPLEMENT | ENGAGE

YOU HAVE DEVELOPED AN ACTION PLAN THAT HAS THE OBJECTIVE(S), IDENTIFIED STAKEHOLDERS AND THE BEST WAY TO ENGAGE THEM AS WELL AS THE TECHNIQUE, NOW OUT ALL YOUR WORK INTO ACTION.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS	WHO IS INTERESTED IN THE ANSWERS?	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	METHODS OF MEASURE-MENT	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	WHEN (EXPECTED TIMING OF EVALUATION)
How successful was the engage-ment?	Did we stay on track? How did it help the project?					
What could we do better?	Who took us by surprise?					
What did we learn?	If we had a similar project, what would we do differently?					

ACTION!

After all the planning and preparation, you're now ready for the 'doing'! A few last minute things to think about:

If your Community Engagement includes a gathering:

- Confirm the venue/catering/equipment is all booked, and that any assistance with setup etc. is organised

- Think about the setup of the space you are using – try to make it; comfortable, welcoming, inclusive and interesting

- Start and finish on time

- Greet people as they arrive and ensure everyone has a name tag

"The people who come/contribute are the right people!" – this principle is one to embrace for all your community engagement. Focus on the people who are contributing their time; give them your full attention and value their input.

You've got objectives, you know your stakeholders and you've thought about how they can participate, you've chosen a technique, developed an action plan and thought about how you'll evaluate once it's all done – the next step is to put all this work into action! Good luck!

_____

(6) LEARN | WHAT HAS THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOLD YOU?

MONITOR PROGRESS, BUDGET AND TIMELINES TO MEET OBJECTIVES

- Document and monitor expenditure, progress against time lines and progress towards achieving the intended objectives of the public participation exercise

MONITOR AND RESPOND TO RISKS

- Document how you have monitored and responded appropriately to the risks identified during the planning of the public participation exercise

(7) INFLUENCE | WHAT CHANGE HAS OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF THE ENGAGEMENT?

HOW HAS THE ENGAGEMENT INFORMED THE DECISION THAT NEEDED TO BE MADE?

Prepare a feedback report for stakeholders

It is important for participants to know before the process commences how their input/feedback will be used.

Equally as important is informing participants about how they themselves will receive feedback about their involvement in the process, and the resulting outcome or decision.

Collect participant contact details and provide feedback in a timely manner (within 2-3 weeks of end of engagement process).

To maintain the integrity of the process and to ensure transparency, where possible give participants access to a copy of the notes that represent the feedback/input they gave to the process.

Maintain contact if the project or issue is ongoing, and provide updates to participants as appropriate.

CLOSE THE LOOP (WHAT WE ASKED, WHAT WE WERE TOLD AND WHAT WE DID)

Feedback to participants / stakeholders

Communicate the outcomes of the process to participants.

- ○ Letter

- ○ Email

- ○ Website / social media

- ○ Traditional media (eg media release/Argus ad)

IS ONGOING COMMUNICATION REQUIRED?

- • Where projects occur after the engagement process, progress updates are to be provided
- • How will you continue to communication with participants (and the wider community) about the progress of the project?
- • Will the implementation of the project sit with another area of council? Yes? No?
- • Identify the units/ teams you may need to be in contact with to obtain updated information

REPORT TO COUNCIL ON THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Prepare a report for decision makers

Inform Council or decision makers of the way the process was undertaken as well as the outcome. If you are required to complete a Council Report or Brief following your project ensure that your Community Engagement Plan and Evaluation Plan are included.

Report to decision makers (to be completed after the engagement process)

Use your evaluative data to compile a report that reflects on the process as well as the outcome you obtain. Reflect on the objectives and aims that you set out at the beginning of the community engagement process to assess your process. It can be useful to think about and document what you would do differently next time.

MATRIX OF TECHNIQUES

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE FOR INFORM LEVEL

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Printed Materials Fact sheets Newsletter Media advertising Brochures Issue papers Letters Media releases	• Keep it short and simple • Make it visually interesting and engaging but not too busy or slick • Proof-read all documents • Ask randomly selected staff members to trial material and provide feedback before distribution to the public • Use language that is inclusive and jargon free • Always include opportunities for comment and include reply paid forms or envelopes to encourage two-way communication • Explain public role and how comments have affected project decisions • Offer interpretation services	• 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	• Distribution planning inadequate • Materials do not reach the mark • Materials not read • Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts • Information misinterpreted
Displays Council Offices Libraries Community centres, Shopping centre Schools Childcare centres	• Establish regular sites if possible to build on community culture • Develop a distribution list • Make sure personnel at locations know what materials are about & where they are located & 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	• 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	• 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
Website Information directly into the household	• Needs to be visible and easy to navigate • Keep information updated	• Capable of reaching a large audience at low cost • Popular information resource	• People without access disadvantaged • Technical difficulties • Hard to navigate

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE FOR CONSULT LEVEL

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Briefings Council staff Councillors Technicians Consultants Key stakeholders Community groups (including marginal-ised groups)	• 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	• Control of information/ presentation • Opportunities to clarify misinformation • Reach a wider variety of people • Build community capacity • Evaluate & readjust approach	• 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
Mailed surveys/ Questionnaires/ Response Sheets Blanket distribution Random distribution Selected distribution	• 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	• 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	• 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
Technical Assis-tance Attendance at: Briefings Meetings Workshops	• Technical resource persons must be perceived as credible by communities • Ensure technical resource persons have access to information about the communities attitudes	• Build credibility & address public concerns about equity • Facts in dispute can be debated and consensus reached	• Resource availability may be limited • Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns
Community Drop in Communities engage at their own pace in a comfortable environ-ment Drop in to individually to view plans, ask questions, give opin-ions, have an informal chat and a coffee, tea etc.	• 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	• 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	• Resource availability may be limited • Technicians may not be prepared for working too closely with communities and may lack empathy with community concerns
Feedback register Resident pool for feedback	• Check the register content is relative to your purpose	• Gather input from a broad range of people	• Register maintenance can be resource intensive

For printed materials, display and website, refer to table 1

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE FOR INVOLVE LEVEL

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Focus Groups Use to test message with randomly selected people or to gain input to assist planning for engagement	• Clear tasks • Relevant representation • Skilled facilitation	• Provides opportunity to test material • Verify prior assumptions • Raise unexpected additional benefits	• Participants may feel restricted by the approach • May be perceived as exclusive • May be costly
Interviews Face to Face Telephone	• Be clear and open about the intent • Consider questions carefully to gather relevant information • Ensure effective information recording methods • Be inclusive • Be equitable	• 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 time frame for interviews	• Can be very time consuming • Participants can take their issues out on the interviewer • Participants are tired of being interviewed on a range of issues and will not engage willingly
Workshops 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	• 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 feed-back outcomes of workshop to participants	• 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	• 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
Field Trips Tour of project site or comparable site for stakeholders, elected members, community groups, media	• 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	• Opportunity to develop rapport with stakeholders • Increase knowledge of issues and process for all involved • Unexpected additional benefits	• 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

For printed materials, display and website, briefings, information contact, technical assistance and community drop-ins, refer to table 1 and 2

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE FOR COLLABORATE LEVEL

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Council Advisory Committees with specific focus	• Chairperson needs to be engaging, clear and inclusive • There needs to be formal mechanism for Advisory Groups to feed directly into Council's decision making process, otherwise it may be tokenistic • The Terms of Reference and focus of Advisory Group need to be clearly defined • Tasks/actions need to be outlined and carried out	• Potential for larger number of representatives on specific issues and increases 'representativeness' • Developing skills of larger number of people • Detailed input can be gained	• Can be costly - providing necessary assistance to these groups so they can overcome any barriers to participation (e.g. may include need for interpreters, childcare, assistance for disabled, staff time for administration and support) • Participants may misunderstand their role as advisors, not decision makers.
Community representatives on Council committees	• Input is ongoing - this aids planning and other developmental processes • Representatives, if they are not Councillors, are seen by community and Council as 'independent' Establishing Council Committees such as 'Other Special Committees' are referred to in Section 88 of the Local Government *Act (1989)* • Requires timely administration and individual liaison in particular the provision of minutes and reports to assist decision making	• Demonstrates Council's commitment to citizen participation in decision making • If combined with support, can develop skills of representative so they can develop skills of people in their own community • Opportunities to develop multi-sector partnerships e.g. public, private, Non Government and community partnerships and bring together different resources, skills and energies to respond to priority issues in the community	• There is a limit to number of community representatives who can be on a committee, so they are not able to represent everyone • Costly to develop skills of representatives • Can be costly to provide necessary administration and assistance to overcome barriers to participation such as interpreters, bilingual workers, assistance for sensory disabled, childcare etc.

TECHNIQUE	ALWAYS THINK IT THROUGH	WHAT CAN GO RIGHT	WHAT CAN GO WRONG
Mediation/ Negotiation/ Dialogue Designed to create shared meanings through effective listening and reflective questioning	• Establish firm guidelines • Ensure the role of the mediator/negotiator and participants are clear • Seek commitment to the process	• Helps participants towards an understanding of others viewpoint • Forward thinking approach sets new directions • Win/Win outcomes • Promotes accountability on both sides	• 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
Citizen Juries 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	• 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	• 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	• Group selection can be mistrusted • Participants may not show up on the day • Sessions can loose focus • Cost can be extensive
Design Charrettes Sessions where participants become involved in the design of a projects features	• Plan how the design sessions will take place • Provide clear information and guidelines for participants • Provide clear parameters • Provide technical support • Provide opportunities to foster creative ideas	• 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	• 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
Deliberative Polling Selecting people from communities to measure informed opinions. Essential elements required to ensure a democratic deliberative process are, influence, inclusion and deliberation.	• 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	• 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	• Mistrust of the organisers and unfamiliar process can hamper participation • People do not have the time required to commit to the process • Time frames are unrealistic • Agenda too ambitious or not specific enough

ROLE OF COUNCILLORS

One of the most important roles of a Councillor is to participate in making policy and decisions on behalf of their community

Community expectations about decision-making processes have changed over time. The days of citizens electing representatives and leaving them to make decisions on their behalf during their term of office without being engaged in the process are long gone

Increasingly, citizens expect to have some control over matters that affect their living environment, and to see governments actively telling them about what plans they have, and listening and responding to concerns about matters which impact on the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their local community

Facilitating informed decision-making
Some issues to consider regarding Councillor roles in the community engagement process follow

- It is prudent that Councillors not take an active "hands on" role in the community engagement process, but rather maintain a neutral position and be clearly seen as listening to what their community has to say

- However, in circumstances where a Councillor has stated a position, it may be appropriate for a statement to be openly made that this is the case. This leaves it in the hands of the community to have input into swaying the strength of, or conviction to maintaining that stated position. In these cases, the argument for Councillors not having a hands on role during the community engagement process is strengthened, to avoid community perception of a biased process

It is important to maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process. Whilst it is difficult to make hard and fast rules about how to achieve this, some useful tips follow.

- During the community engagement planning phase, consider nominating suitably experienced staff, engaging specialist consultants, or inviting prominent citizens or community leaders to chair sessions or to facilitate workshops with key stakeholder groups to identify the main issues and gauge their engagement expectations

- On occasion it may be acceptable for Councillors to have more prominent roles in community engagement processes. Care needs to be taken however, that Councillors maintain the integrity of an objective and unbiased community engagement process as previously discussed

- It may be appropriate for the Mayor to "chair" a process by playing a "master of ceremonies" role, but take care that this does not extend to a hands-on, facilitator role

- The presence of Councillors during the information gathering phases, for example at community forums, demonstrates an interest in hearing what the community has to say, but they must clearly be seen as listening. Where they have particular information or facts to contribute, care should be taken by Councillors to provide information in an objective and non-defensive way

Councillors ultimately need to consider the outcome of any community engagement process within the context of strategic planning directions for the whole Council area, resource and budgetary constraints, and broader regional or State policies where relevant

Having made a final decision, community confidence will be enhanced by providing feedback to those who participated about how their input was taken into account in the decision making process. Councillors have an important role in this regard, for example, the Mayor may convey messages verbally, in writing or through the media, which adds strength to the message that "we have listened and taken your views into account in our decision making"