



GUIDELINES

Adopted: 14 July 2015
Minute No: 192

FILE NO: PSC2014-01768
TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
POLICY OWNER: COMMUNICATIONS SECTION MANAGER

PURPOSE:

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the mechanisms that Council has in place to engage our community.

Delivery of a consistent, organisation-wide approach to community engagement meets the following items in the Port Stephens Community Strategic Plan 2013-2023 and Delivery Program 2013-17:

18.1 The Port Stephens community is informed and involved in decisions that affect them;

18.1.1 Engage our community in conversations and provide timely and accurate information; and

19.1.1 Strengthen Council's brand and reputation.

Council's community engagement (CE) program aims to provide

- A clear framework for the timely dissemination of accurate information to the community through a variety of channels including digital technologies;
- Consistent processes to involve the community at different levels of engagement;
- Processes to strengthen reporting on community engagement outcomes; and
- Processes to strengthen providing feedback to community.

BACKGROUND:

The Communications Section is made up of five units – Community Development and Engagement, Customer Relations, Digital and Website, Public Relations & Marketing, and Tourism & Events.

The Community Development and Engagement unit supports Council in its community engagement activities and works closely with other units of Council to achieve this.

AIM:

These guidelines provides information on Council's CE program used by staff to communicate, consult and involve the Port Stephens community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM:

The aim of the community engagement program is to encourage community understanding, involvement and informed opinion about future plans for the community by:

- encouraging active community participation in the development of decisions for planning, development assessments and policy making; and
- establishing consistent methods of timely and accurate dissemination and gathering of information about issues of significant public interest.

The Community Engagement program consists of:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Guidelines
A guide to assist the community understand Council's engagement program
- Community Engagement Management Directive
A guide to processes for staff
- Community Engagement Framework
The Spectrum
Level 1: Inform, Level 2: Involve or Level 3 Participate
Seven steps of implementation
 1. Decide whether community engagement is required
 2. Define the objectives and level of community engagement
 3. Identify who will be engaged
 4. Choose the right engagement activities
 5. Plan, implement and track the engagement activities
 6. Communicate outcome of consultation to stakeholders
 7. Evaluate the process
- Staff Handbook

Templates to assist Council staff undertake Community Engagement activities in consultation with Community Engagement team.

- Training modules
2 hour briefing session offered on a regular (monthly) basis to staff
Component in staff induction
- Survey/Evaluation Kit
Using social media, website, paper and face to face tools
- Two Resident Panel meetings annually or as required - issue based forums in March and August
- Three Face-to-Face (community drop in sessions) meetings with community each year - (September to November) and as required
- Regular communications using the traditional and online media – Media Releases, Information Alerts and fact sheets
- Staff community engagement reference register
- Business card for outdoor staff

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM:

To determine the required level of engagement and activities to be applied, staff should review the project against the engagement spectrum.

The spectrum has three levels of engagement:

Level 1: Inform – a one way relationship providing information to the community in an accurate and timely manner.

Level 2: Consult – a two way relationship where the community provides feedback on specific issues.

Level 3: Participate – a collaboration where the community actively influences policy options but Council retains the responsibility for final decisions.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

1. NSW Local Government Act 1993
2. Community Strategic Plan 2013-2023
3. Port Stephens Council Code of Conduct
4. Port Stephens Council Community Engagement Policy

REVIEW DATE

Two years from the date of implementation.