

FILE NO: PSC2014-01768

TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY OWNER: COMMUNICATIONS SECTION MANAGER

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 Port Stephens Council is committed to involving our community in activities that actively shape and influence the future of the area.
- 1.2 Council benefits from positive consultation with its community and other stakeholders. The process facilitates better access to and understanding of information, increased participation, raised awareness and strengthened community.

2. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 This policy continues Council's commitment to community engagement. It has been developed following a review of the previously endorsed policy (14 July 2015, Minute No. 192).
- 2.2 It is based on the principles that:
 - good decisions are based on information and views from many sources; and
 - the people of Port Stephens have the right to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in planning and decision-making.

3. SCOPE:

- 3.1 To encourage community understanding, involvement and informed opinion about future plans for the community by:
 - encouraging active community participation and engagement in the development of decisions for planning, substantial development assessments, policy making and infrastructure growth and other operational and strategic matters as defined by Council; and
 - establishing consistent methods of timely and accurate dissemination and gathering of information about issues of significant public interest.

4. DEFINITIONS:

- 4.1 An outline of the key definitions of terms included in the policy.

Community Engagement Community engagement involves our community in activities that actively shape and influence the future of the area.

5. POLICY STATEMENT:

- 5.1 Council provides leadership and commitment to information, consultation and active participation of the community in planning and decision-making.
- 5.2 Consultation activities provide opportunities for individual community members and/or community interest groups to contribute and be heard.
- 5.3 The role of the community in participating in engagement, Councillors in factoring engagement outcomes into their decision making and Council staff in embedding engagement into their work are clear to all and consultation objectives are well defined.
- 5.4 Consultation is undertaken as early in the process as possible to allow for effective community engagement and a range of options and solutions to emerge.
- 5.5 Information provided by Council during consultation is objective, accurate, accessible and clearly articulated.
- 5.6 Council records the use it makes of information received through feedback, public consultation and active participation.
- 5.7 Council undertakes regular evaluation of its performance in providing information, consultation and in engaging with the community.
- 5.8 Council report the outcomes of the consultation process to the community.
- 5.9 Council will use agreed protocols and procedures to guide staff and Councillors in community engagement.

6. POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 6.1 Community Development and Engagement Coordinator for implementing, complying with, monitoring, evaluating, reviewing and providing advice on the policy.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- 7.1 Local Government Act 1993
- 7.2 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- 7.3 Port Stephens Code of Conduct
- 7.4 Port Stephens Community Strategic Plan

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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Process owner	Communications Section Manager		
Author	Community Development and Engagement Coordinator		
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Adoption date	22 September 2007		

VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
1	22 September 2007	Communications Section Manager		392
2	14 July 2015	Communications Section Manager	Significant rewrite of Policy following creation of CD&E unit.	192
3	13 February 2018	Communications Section Manager	Wording changes as outlined in Council Report 13 February 2018.	011
4	26 June 2018	Communications Section Manager	Transfer Policy into the new policy template. Minor wording changes as a result of submission during public exhibition period.	179