



PORT STEPHENS

C O U N C I L

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
14 FEBRUARY 2023

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SUBJECT

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COUNCIL REPORTS

1. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN3

- Nb. **Bold** Items listed above have not been previously received or viewed by Councillors.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 1

FILE NO: 23/7279

EDRMS NO: PSC2021-04195

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

REPORT OF: JANELLE GARDNER - COMMUNICATIONS SECTION MANAGER
GROUP: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) Extends the advertising of Development Applications lodged to the Port Stephens News of the Area as part of the Development Application Awareness Campaign for the term of the campaigns trial period.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this supplementary report is to provide additional information regarding the Development Application Awareness Campaign.

Due to time constraints, this information was unable to be provided as part of the full business paper and, therefore, has been included as a supplementary report.

ISSUES

At its meeting on 13 December 2022 (Minute No. 330) (**ATTACHMENT 1**) Council resolved to communicate with the Port Stephens News of the Area, to secure quotes for an extension of advertisement of DA's into News of the Area, to be reported back to Council's next meeting for decision on whether to extend DA advertisement into News of the Area (NOTA).

NOTA is a locally owned and operated community news publication. 10,000 copies of the paper are printed each week and distributed via brochure stands in key locations including shopping centres. The publication is also available online. The online publication attracts 41,285 unique users per month via the website and social media.

To ensure equitable comparison with the information provided in previous Council meetings, Council has sourced quotes for quarter page advertising space for the proposed trial period ending 30 June 2023.

The advertising rate for a quarter page is \$675 per advertisement, however, following the meeting with NOTA, a reduced rate of \$533.50 per quarter page advertisement has been negotiated.

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In addition to the print advertising, NOTA has also offered to help increase awareness across the broader community with the inclusion of:

- 1 x editorial news story each week
- A “pointer” to the Council Development Application advertising on the front page of NOTA
- Website advertising on the home page of NOTA website
- Additional promotion to raise awareness of the Development Application advertising where possible.

Based on a weekly quarter page advertisement with NOTA, the additional cost for the trial period would be \$9,603. This is based on a quarter page advertisement only. This price may increase based on the number of Development Applications lodged each week. All costs for the advertising of Development Applications in NOTA will be sourced from revenue within the Development Services Group.

Consultation with key stakeholders has been undertaken with NOTA, the Development and Compliance Team and the Communications and Engagement team.

By expanding the print advertising to include NOTA, Council will be able to reach a more diverse group of residents and provide greater opportunity for residents to contribute to broader decision making.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Minutes of Council Meeting (Minute No. 330) - 13 December 2022.

ITEM 1 - ATTACHMENT 1 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING (MINUTE NO. 330) - 13 DECEMBER 2022.

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ITEM NO. 9

**FILE NO: 22/304444
EDRMS NO: PSC2021-04195**

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

REPORT OF: JANELLE GARDNER - COMMUNICATIONS SECTION MANAGER
GROUP: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) Endorse the Development Application (DA) awareness campaign communication plan (**ATTACHMENT 1**) and commence the trial period.
- 2) Approves to create a criteria for advertising development applications lodged with Council weekly in the Port Stephens Examiner and locate the operational budget allocation to support this.

**ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING - 13 DECEMBER 2022
MOTION**

330	<p>Councillor Giacomo Arnott Councillor Peter Francis</p> <p>It was resolved that Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Endorse the Development Application (DA) awareness campaign communication Plan and commence the trial period.2) Approve the weekly advertising of all DAs lodged with Council in the Port Stephens Examiner.3) Fund the additional costs for the trial period through increased revenues across the Development Services Group.4) Communicate with the Port Stephens News of the Area, to secure quotes for an extension of advertisement of DA's into News of the Area, to be reported back to Council's next meeting for decision on whether to extend DA advertisement into News of the Area.
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Those for the Motion: Crs Leah Anderson, Giacomo Arnott, Peter Francis, Peter Kafer, Steve Tucker and Jason Wells

Those against the Motion: Mayor Ryan Palmer.

The motion was carried.

MINUTES ORDINARY COUNCIL - 13 DECEMBER 2022

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to provide information on Newspaper Notices. This report follows a Notice of Motion raised by Council at its 22 February 2022 meeting **(ATTACHMENT 1)**

Port Stephens Council is home to 74,506 people with a median age of 45 years. As part of Councils commitment to engaging and informing the local community, Council publishes Public Notices in print and/or online depending on the type of notice and the legislative requirements surrounding the communication of this notice.

In April 2020, changes to legislation in NSW no longer required Council to publish all Public Notices in print. This change was to help Councils across NSW reduce costs and redirect funds to areas of greater need. At this time, Council reduced its print advertising saving approximately \$63,000 in the first year.

The Port Stephens Examiner is part of the Australian Community Media Group and published every Thursday. The paper has an average readership of 31,320. The other local print publication, the Port Stephens News of the Area has a circulation of 10,000.

The Port Stephens Examiner continues to increase its online presence and as at 11 November 2022, has a digital readership of 25,319 per month. News of the area has approximately 8,000 followers on Facebook.

Although Port Stephens has a higher population of older residents, we also know that 79.6% of the Port Stephens population have internet access available from their dwelling (Remplan 2022). Based on this data and an analysis of the costs

surrounding print distribution and readership the following operational changes were implemented in April 2020:

- Reduce the size of print advertising
- Remove the weekly advertising of Development Applications
- Email or mail distribution of Public Notices to community members who can only access information in specific formats
- Distribute hard copies of all public notices to all Council libraries for public display each week

Since this time, Council has continued to advertise a range of public notices and general information to the community.

Council has received ongoing community feedback regarding the cancellation of newspaper advertising for DAs. It has been identified that there is a perception within the community that removing the newspaper advertising was an attempt to hide/withhold information. This feedback has been sourced directly from the community via the recent Place and Vision Workshops during the Community

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Strategic Plan review and during the public exhibition of the Communication and Engagement Strategy. Councillors have also advised staff that there is regular feedback regarding the cancellation of the advertising of DAs in the local newspaper.

As part of the newly developed Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022, Council will continue to test and trial methods to increase opportunities for residents and business to contribute to broader decision making.

A new DA Awareness Campaign has been developed which aims to increase the community's understanding of the development application process, DAs lodged with Council and how the community can register to be informed of and access information on DAs from both Council and the State Government.

It must be noted that this campaign does not form part of the formal notification period for a Development Application as outlined in the Councils Community Participation Plan. It's a complementary program aimed at increasing transparency and opportunity for the community to contribute to broader decision making.

The DA Awareness Campaign will deliver a number of actions including:

- A DA Email subscription service where every week, a list of all DAs lodged in the previous week will be email directly to subscribers
- A communication campaign to inform the community of the new Email subscription service and existing services including weekly mailed DA newsletter
- Weekly communication advising of development applications lodged by Council the previous week in the following mediums:
 - Print advertising in the Port Stephens Examiner
 - Social media posts (organic and paid) linking to the website and DA tracker
 - Direct email through E-subscription
- Communication aimed at educating the community about the DA process, how to make a DA submission and the functionality of the NSW Planning Portal

A detailed Communication Plan has been developed and included as **(ATTACHMENT 1)**.

It is proposed to trial this campaign from the 9 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 with an evaluation report provided to Council for consideration before committing to the ongoing implementation of the campaign.

The trial will evaluate community benefit and value for money with success measures to include:

- Minimal negative community feedback on awareness campaign
- High reach across communications methods
- 1,500 subscribers to DA E-subscription service during trial period (2% of the population)

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COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Direction	Delivery Program 2022-2026
Communication and Engagement	Provide information in a range of accessible formats.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Council has been successful in securing funding through the NSW Government Local Assessment Grant Program which is designed to reduce the median assessment timeframe for housing DAs and subdivision DAs. Part of this funding includes the development of the new E-subscription service.

More recently, Council has reviewed opportunities to increase advertising in local print publications, with costs for print advertising remaining high. Based on current advertising rates to reinstate a weekly print advertising in the Port Stephens Examiner for the trial period for all development applications lodged with Council is \$40,028. This cost covers the weekly half page advertisement during the trial period.

Possible savings could be made with print advertising if a criteria was developed enabling development applications lodged over a certain threshold only to be advertised. For example this criteria may include development applications for works over \$500,000 only. This would reduce the number of development applications to be listed in the advertisement and allow a smaller, quarter page advertisement resulting in a saving of approximately \$14,125.

Source of Funds	Yes/No	Funding (\$)	Comment
Existing budget	Yes	\$15,500	Funding for a ¼ page weekly newspaper advertisement would be sourced from existing operational budgets. Please note other projects will need to be reduced to accommodate this spend.
Reserve Funds	No		
Developer Contributions (S7.11)	No		
External Grants	Yes	\$10,000	
Other	No		

ITEM 1 - ATTACHMENT 1 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING (MINUTE NO. 330) - 13 DECEMBER 2022.

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Should Council resolve to increase funding to incorporate a weekly ½ page newspaper advertisement for \$29,625, an alternative funding source will need to be identified.

LEGAL, POLICY AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal or policy impediments to adopting the recommendations. Risks are identified in the table below.

Risk	Risk Ranking	Proposed Treatments	Within Existing Resources?
There is a risk that Community and staff perception on reversing previous decision to remove newspaper advertisement notification of development applications.	Medium	Clear messaging relating to recently adopted Communications and Engagement Strategy Clear messaging in campaign about community feedback received. - Clear messaging in campaign about the new approach complementing the formal notification process, not replacing it.	Yes
There is a risk that Community and staff perception of increased budget for awareness campaign in current financial environment.	Medium	Clear messaging in campaign about community feedback received. Clear messaging in campaign about the trial being externally funded.	No
There is a risk that new E-subscription service isn't accessible for community members not comfortable with or without technology or internet.	Low	Inclusion of the weekly advertisement in campaign methods informing community of development application lodged the previous week.	No
There is a risk that the Community is not satisfied that weekly newspaper advertisement doesn't form part of the notification process.	Low	Clear messaging in campaign about the new approach complementing the formal notification process, not replacing it.	Yes

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There is a risk that the Community education campaign is complex and technical.

Low

Simple messaging with use of video and images where possible.

Yes

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Includes Social, Economic and Environmental Implications

Adopting the recommendations in this report will increase opportunities for Port Stephens residents and business to contribute to broader decision making.

Economic implications have been outlined in the Financial Implications table above.

CONSULTATION

Consultation with key stakeholders has been undertaken by the Communications section as outlined below.

Please note indirect consultation also occurred via the recent Communications and Engagement Strategy engagement program.

Internal

Development and Compliance Team
Communications and Engagement Team

External

Port Stephens Examiner
News of the Area

OPTIONS

- 1) Accept the recommendations.
- 2) Amend the recommendations.
- 3) Reject the recommendations.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) DA Awareness Campaign Communication Plan Final.

COUNCILLORS ROOM

Nil.

TABLED DOCUMENTS

Nil.

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**ITEM 9 - ATTACHMENT 1 DA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION
PLAN FINAL.**

Communications Plan
DA awareness campaign



Improving community awareness of development
applications lodged with Council.



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ITEM 9 - ATTACHMENT 1 DA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION PLAN FINAL.

Introduction

In April 2020, changes to legislation in NSW no longer required Council to publish all Public Notices in print. This change was implemented to help Councils across NSW reduce costs, and redirect funds to higher priority services. At this time, Council reduced its print advertising, saving approximately \$63,000 in the first year. Council currently publishes Public Notices in print and/or online depending on the type of notice and the legislative requirements surrounding the communication of such notices as outlined in Councils Community Participation Plan.

Over the past two years, both Councillors and staff have received community feedback requesting that print advertising of development applications (DAs) be reinstated. Feedback has also referred to community members being unaware of DAs lodged with Council and open for submission.

As part of the newly developed Communications and Engagement Strategy 2022, Council continues to test and trial methods to increase opportunities for Port Stephens residents and business to contribute to broader decision making.

The DA awareness campaign is a new communications program aimed to increase the community's understanding of the development application process, DAs lodged with Council and how the community can register to be informed of and access information on DAs from both Council and the State Government.

The DA awareness program will initiate as a trial from 9 January 2023 to 30 June 2023. On completion of the trial the program will be evaluated and reported back to Council to determine whether the program remains a permanent part of Council's services.

Objectives



Create awareness and increase subscribers to the new DA E-Subscription service



Raise awareness of development applications lodged at Council through various channels.



Educate the community on the development application process and the NSW Planning Portal

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ITEM 9 - ATTACHMENT 1
PLAN FINAL.

DA AWARENESS CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION

Scope

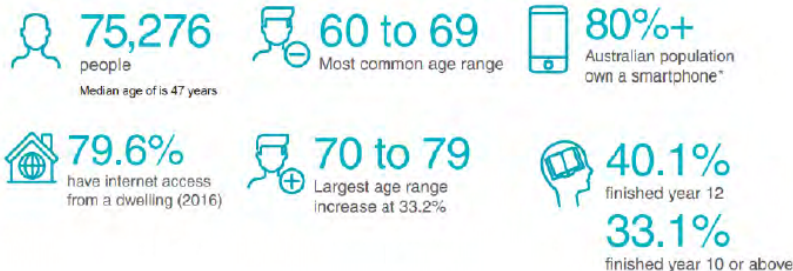
The DA awareness campaign includes:

- Development of a new E-subscription service
- Communication campaign for a new E-subscription service
- Weekly communication campaign through various channels
- Community education on DA process and NSW Planning Portal

This campaign raises awareness of development applications lodged by Council the previous week. This campaign does not form part of the formal notification periods as outlined in the Councils Community Participation Plan.

Audience profile

The DA awareness campaign have been developed considering a wide audience.



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Communication methods

Communication methods consider the two elements of the DA awareness campaign:

1. Awareness raising of the new E-Subscription service
2. Awareness raising of development applications lodged at Council
3. Community education on DA process and NSW Planning Portal

Communication methods	
DA E-subscription service	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media release• Social media (organic)• Paid social media• Newspaper advertisements – existing notices• Your Port Rates notices• Council website page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On hold messaging• Administration building TV notification• Poster at Council venues• Your Port E-Newsletter• Biz Link E-Newsletter
DA weekly awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly social media (organise and paid)• Weekly newspaper advertisements (½ to full page)• Weekly E-subscription service	
Community education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video series of DA process and NSW Planning Portal• Social media (organic)• Your Port E-newsletter	



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Key messaging

General

- Our newly developed Communications and Engagement Strategy aims to increase opportunities for Port Stephens residents and business to have input into our decision making.
- Our community have informed us they would like information about development applications reinstated in the newspaper for residents without internet access.
- To complement our current development application notification requirements under NSW legislation and our Community Participation Plan, we are trialing a new approach to make sure our community is aware of what development applications have been lodged with us.
- Our new approach will be trialed from 9 January to 30 June 2022 to make sure it is meeting both Council and community needs before we make this a permanent approach for the future.
- The DA awareness campaign is a new communications program aimed to increase the community's understanding of the development application process, DAs lodged with Council and how the community can register to be informed of and access information on DAs from both Council and the State Government.

- The DA awareness campaign trial is externally funded through the NSW Governments Faster Local Assessment Grant Program.

DA E-Subscription service

- We have a new service in place to help keep you informed of development applications lodged with Council.
- Sign up to our E-subscription service to receive a weekly email informing you of the development applications lodged with Council the previous week.
- The E-Subscription service will list the development application lodged the previous week and give you direct links to application information and where you can provide feedback.
- Register for the new E-subscription service by visiting portstephes.nsw.gov.au or calling our us on 4988 0255

DA weekly awareness

- We want to make sure you are aware of the development applications lodged last week.
- For more information visit Councils DA Tracker at datracker.portstephes.nsw.gov.au or contact 49880255.

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Key risks

Risk	Mitigation strategy
Community and staff perception on reversing previous decision to remove newspaper advertisement notification of development applications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear messaging relating to recently adopted Communications and Engagement Strategy• Clear messaging in campaign about community feedback received.• Clear messaging in campaign about the new approach complementing the formal notification process, not replacing it.
Community and staff perception of increased budget for awareness campaign in current financial environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear messaging in campaign about community feedback received.• Clear messaging in campaign about the trial being externally funded.
New E-subscription service isn't accessible for community members not comfortable with or without technology or internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion of the weekly ¼ or full page advertisement in campaign methods informing community of development application lodged the previous week
Community not satisfied that weekly newspaper advertisement doesn't form part of the notification process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear messaging in campaign about the new approach complementing the formal notification process, not replacing it.
Community expectation the campaign becomes a permanent service delivered by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear messaging the campaign is a trial• Evaluation report outlining the campaigns success.
Community education campaign is complex and technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple messaging with use of video and images where possible

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Key milestones

Milestone	Date
DA awareness campaign trial commences	9 January 2023
E subscription service launched	9 January 2023
DA awareness campaign trial concludes	30 June 2023
Evaluation report completed	14 July 2023
Report to Council	22 August 2023

Budget

Budget item	Budget
DA E-subscription service	
• DA E-subscription service development and subscription	\$7,880*
• Paid social media advertising	\$1,000*
DA weekly awareness	
• Option 1 - Weekly newspaper advertisement – all DAs lodged (½ page)	\$29,825
• Option 2 – Weekly newspaper advertisement – DAs above certain criteria) (1/4 page)	\$15,500
• Paid social media posts (25 weeks)	\$1,220*
TOTAL (option 1 inclusive)	\$39,725
TOTAL (option 2 inclusive and recommended)	\$25,600
External funding*	\$10,000
Internal funding	\$15,600

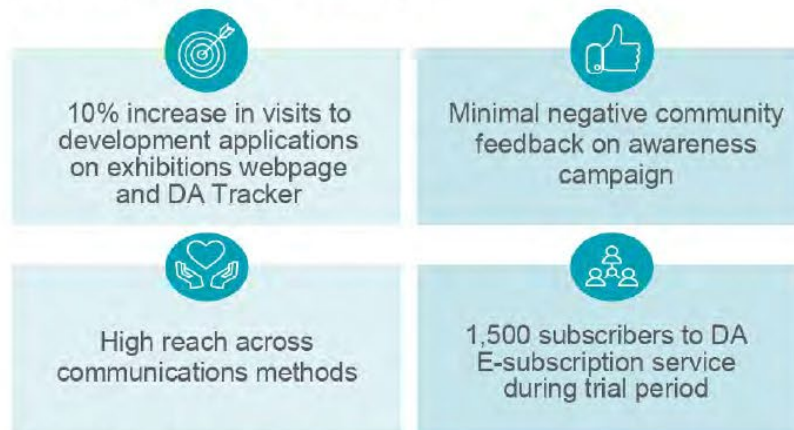


Community Engagement and Communications Plan 9

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Success criteria



Action plan

Activity	Date
DA awareness campaign commenced	9 January 2023
DA E-Subscription	
Updated Council web page live	9 January 2023
Media release distributed	9 January 2023
Organic social media post	9 January 2023
Paid social media	9 January 2023, 3 April 2023
Posters distributed	9 January 2023
Administration building TV screen slide uploaded	9 January 2023
On hold messaging live	9 January 2023
Newspaper advertisement (existing notices)	12 January 2023
E-Newsletters articles distributed	14 January 2023
Your Port article	January and April notices
DA weekly awareness	
Weekly newspaper advertisement	Weekly 12 January 2023 – 29 June 2023
Weekly social media post	Weekly 12 January 2023 – 29 June 2023
Weekly E-Subscription email distributed (automated)	Weekly 12 January 2023 – 29 June 2023
Community education	
Education series developed	3 February 2023
Education series promoted through various channels	6 February 2023 – 29 June 2023
Evaluation report completed	14 July 2023
Business paper report to Council	22 August 2023

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