

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting

Team Name:	Communication and Engagement Advisory Group		
Date:	16 April 2025	Time:	5:00pm-7:00pm
Venue:	Port Stephens Council Admin Building and Zoom		
Chairperson:	Councillor Wells	Minutes:	Elizabeth Akerman
Purpose of Meeting:	To provide advice and guidance on communications and engagement projects		

Attendance

Mayor Anderson Port Stephens Council	Councillor Wells Port Stephens Council	Councillor Francis Port Stephens Council	Councillor Armstrong Port Stephens Council
Councillor Watson Port Stephens Council	Angela Peace Community representative	Lauren Whitelaw Community representative	Kelly Hammond Community representative
Casey Freeman Community representative	Cassandra Schmitzer Community representative	Greg Brown Community representative	William (Bill) Doran Community representative
Emily Livens Port Stephens Council	Elizabeth Akerman Port Stephens Council	Louise Bevilacqua Port Stephens Council	Mat Egan Port Stephens Council

Apologies

Councillor Niland Port Stephens Council (formal apology received)	Ben van der Wijngaart Community representative (formal apology received)	Paul Baxter Community representative (no response)	William (Bill) Doran Community representative (no response)
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Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
1.0	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES				
1.1	Acknowledgement of country and welcome	5:02	Chairperson	RECORD: Completed by Cr Wells	N/A
1.2	Warm up – your life highlight since the last meeting	5:05 – 5:15	Chairperson	RECORD: All participated in the exercise	N/A
2.0	FEEDBACK – COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLANNING				
2.1	CEAG – Attendance and new members. Review meeting dates 2025	5:15 – 5:25 (Ref: zoom recording 0:00)	Emily Livens	<p><i>Session was recorded from this point and will be shared with the group.</i></p> <p>RECORD: Support for Expression of Interest prior to our next meeting rather than draw from our original recruitment from 2023.</p> <p>Ideally, we would like the EOI completed before our next meeting in June 2025.</p> <p>Cr Armstrong and Cr Watson to sit on the assessment panel for the new members.</p> <p>We would be looking to try and get some younger people to apply to the CEAG. All members are encouraged to forward to their networks.</p>	Underway May 2025
2.2	Submissions – Draft Communication and Engagement Strategy	~ 5:20 – 6:20 (Ref zoom recording start 5:28)	Elizabeth Akerman; Mat Egan	<p>RECORD: Council gave an overview of the submissions received (5) from the recent public exhibition of the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>Three of the five submissions included reference to the overall planning process especially for planning proposals and rezonings and with particular reference to the Community Participation Plan and as this is a planning</p>	Working on it (PSC) May 2025

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>function we invited internal expert in planning matters, Mat Egan, Coordinator .</p> <p>Open and interesting group discussion focused on planning proposal and rezoning process regarding opportunities for people to have comment and input.</p> <p>Council's use existing strategies as a way of showing that early engagement has been undertaken. However, in the case of planning proposals which are not covered by existing strategies there seems to be a significant perception with lack of consultation.</p> <p>The suggested improvements from the CEAG included to provide more pressure on developers to show consultation undertaken on pre-lodgement (Stage 1) and better communication when items are being discussed at Council (Stage 2).</p> <p>A sample of the draft strategy as an Easy Read document was also provided to the group.</p> <p>ACTION: Incorporate submission feedback and CEAG suggestions where possible into changes of the draft Strategy with particular focus on improving the draft Community Participation Plan.</p>	
2.3	Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan – draft	6:20pm – 6:45pm (Ref zoom recording start 1:03:40)	Elizabeth Akerman	<p>RECORD: Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan project and associated communication and engagement approach was brought to the CEAG for discussion.</p>	Working on it (PSC) May 2025

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>General discussion of group centred around the scope of the communications and engagement plan, general themes, stakeholders.</p> <p>Feedback from the group included ensuring that the stakeholders included businesses and services which need to access the centre including delivery people, community transport, aged care facilities, carers.</p> <p>ACTION: It was suggested that the project would benefit from a targeted engagement to cohorts such as young people and parents, local school communities.</p> <p>ACTION: It was suggested that a shop front would be useful to help promote the project to actual facility users.</p> <p>ACTION: Undertake gap analysis to check-in on whose voices we haven't heard at the conclusion of the engagement.</p>)
2.4	<p>General Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General feedback regarding communications and engagement • 2025 Community Satisfaction Survey update • Smart Parking Portal update • Development Control Plan update 	6:45pm – 7:00pm (Ref zoom recording start 1:25:11)	Elizabeth Akerman	<p>General feedback:</p> <p>RECORD: Report, request and apply feedback. No feedback from Council in relation to their complaints.</p> <p>ACTION: Please use the Report, Request and Apply as this is much easier for staff to re contact users and follow up.</p> <p>RECORD: Feral cats follow up phone call (Cassandra)</p> <p>ACTION: Emily/Liz to follow up</p> <p>2025 Community Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>RECORD: The 2025 Community Satisfaction Survey is open at the moment. It is an important</p>	Immediate (PSC)

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>survey for Council and we really need feedback from our community.</p> <p>Smart Parking Portal update</p> <p>RECORD: All existing residential park free permits will be renewed as we introduce a new permit portal. Advices to existing permit holders will be sent out to permit holders via a targeted, batched email.</p> <p>ACTION: Ensure Smart Parking new portal communications are very clear including information about how funds are spent. Potentially also look at pavement stickers.</p> <p>Development Control Plan (DCP)</p> <p>RECORD: The new Development Control Plan will be going to Council to be placed on public exhibition. It covers things like property set backs, parking requirements, landscaping requirements – it doesn't cover where housing is built, the type of housing or heights.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED AT: 7pm

NEXT MEETINGS

Date: 2 July 2025
Please note: Day
changed from 18
June 2025

Time: 5pm to 7pm

Venue: Port Stephens Council Admin Building and Zoom

Communications & Engagement Advisory Group

16 April 2025

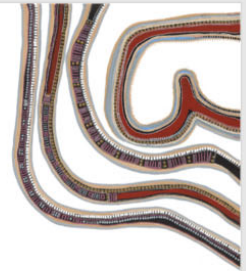


1

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Worimi as the original Custodians and inhabitants of Port Stephens.

May we walk the road to tomorrow with mutual respect and admiration as we care for the beautiful land and waterways together.



2

It's always good to get to know each other more!

What's a life highlight since the last meeting?



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Attendance and new members

Review meeting dates 2025

- 16 April 2025
- 18 June 2025
- 17 September 2025
- 3 December 2025



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Draft Communication and Engagement Strategy

- Submissions received
- Easy Read update



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Submissions received = 5

Submission 1

- Primary concern is that the overall strategy is too vague and too general.
- Various relatively minor formatting and language suggestions.

Submission 2

- The listen option didn't work on the public exhibition page for the draft Communication and Engagement strategy.

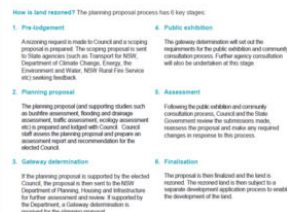
Submission 3, 4 and 5

- Primary concern for all three submissions is with the Community Participation Plan (CPP) which is addendum to the draft strategy.
- The specific concern is with the process of Planning Proposals or rezonings and that there is no community input until Stage 5 of the process.
- Two of these submissions also call for an expanded CPP similar to Byron Shire Council's.

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Planning proposals and the rezoning process

- To further clarify process shown right - when we receive a planning proposal and undertake a preliminary assessment – if the proposal is consistent with our strategies we go to gateway directly if not consistent we put it to Council



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Potential changes to the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy

- Better connect between public exhibition and the haveyoursay site and improve where possible formatting and clarity (submission 1)
- Clearer process in Community Participation Plan (CPP) between DA's and Planning Proposals and rezonings
- We make it clearer that the objectives in the Strategy also apply to the CPP.
- We include in the CPP, key governance information such as how to make a submission and also how to apply for public access

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Planning Proposal process and associated communication and engagement

Planning proposal process – key stages	Communication and Engagement level
Scoping proposal: Receiving request received and scoping proposal prepared and sent to agencies.	N/A
Planning proposal lodged: If the planning proposal is consistent with existing strategies the proposal is lodged directly with the State Government (Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure) rather than Council. If not, the planning proposal is lodged with elected Council who decide whether to progress planning proposal.	Inform: Notification Letter to adjoining neighbours Consult: Public access (only if lodged with elected Council)
Gateway determination: The State Government make a determination for the planning proposal.	N/A
Public exhibition: The gateway determination sets out the public exhibition and community consultation process. Further agency consultation is also undertaken.	Consult: Notification letter to adjoining residents inviting submissions; website update
Assessment: Following public exhibition Council and State Government review submissions made and reassess the proposal and make any changes in response.	N/A
Finalisation: The proposal is finalized and land is rezoned. The development application process applies.	Inform: Notification letter of outcome of process.

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Development Application process and associated communication and engagement

Development application process – key stages	Communication and Engagement level
Pre lodgement: Determines the type of approval required – Exempt Development, Complying Development and Development Consent. Obtain Duty Planner advice.	N/A
Lodgement: Some DA's may require approval from a NSW Government agency before assessment can be made.	Inform: Notification Letter to adjoining neighbours if applicable for the development. Consult: DA Tracker submission process if applicable
Assessment: The DA is assessed including submissions received. Sometimes DA's are refused and applicants are advised to modify DA and lodged again.	Inform: Notification letter of outcome of DA with conditions of consent if applicable.
Complying to conditions before works begin: Before work can begin any conditions of consent are to be followed.	N/A

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- Easy read version will be available once Communication and Engagement strategy is finalised and endorsed
- Example draft page shown right



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Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan

Objectives

- Ensure community input into the development of the draft place plan for Salamander Bay Town Centre
- Educate the community on the planning process including key milestones and opportunities for input
- Seek feedback on the draft town centre place plan during public exhibition



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Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan

Stakeholders
Shopping Centre businesses and owners
Tomaree Library and community centre tenants and user groups
Community groups
Local residents



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Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan

Planned phases of engagement

- Phase 1 – early engagement to help inform draft Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan
- Phase 2 – Public Exhibition of the draft plan
- Phase 3 – Revised plan reported to Council with changes and adopted

Engagement level

Engagement level	Phase 1 Early engagement	Phase 2 Public Exhibition	Phase 3 Adoption
Level 1 – Inform Provide stakeholders with information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	✓	✓	✓
Level 2 – Consult Obtain stakeholder feedback on the project to aid decision making.	✓	✓	
Level 3 – Involve Work with stakeholders throughout the project, ensuring issues and concerns are understood and incorporated in decision making.	✓		
Level 4 – Collaborate Partner with stakeholders throughout the project to develop alternatives and identify the preferred solution.			

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Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan

- Have your say page open for entire period of place plan
- Interactive map
- 2 hr workshop with interested people
- Drop in (part of Community catch-up) with sticky notes and large map of area



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General business

General feedback regarding communications and engagement

2025 Community Satisfaction Survey update

Smart Parking Portal update

Development Control Plan update



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ATTACHMENT 2 – Ongoing Action List

Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
Meeting: 16 April 2025			
2.2 Communication and Engagement Strategy – review submissions ACTION: Incorporate submission feedback and CEAG suggestions into changes of the draft Strategy with particular focus on improving the draft Community Participation Plan.	PSC staff	Underway	
2.3 Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan ACTION: It was suggested that the project would benefit from a targeted engagement to cohorts such as young people and parents, local school communities. ACTION: It was suggested that a shop front would be useful to help promote the project to actual facility users. ACTION: Undertake gap analysis to check-in on whose voices we haven't heard at the conclusion of the engagement.	PSC staff PSC staff PSC staff	Underway Complete Underway	5-9 May 2025
2.4 General Business ACTION: Please use the Report, Request and Apply as this is much easier for staff to re contact users and follow up. ACTION: Emily/Liz to follow up Council's feral cats response ACTION: Ensure Smart Parking new portal communications are very clear including information about how funds are spent. Potentially also look at pavement stickers	All group PSC staff PSC staff	Ongoing Underway Underway	Ongoing
Online Meeting: 18 December 2024			
2.1 Communication and Engagement Strategy Review – proposed amendments ACTION: Incorporate CEAG feedback into draft document.	PSC Staff	Complete	12 Jan 2025
Meeting: 7 August 2024			
2.2 Use of easy-read docs ACTION: Provide CEAG feedback to relevant internal teams.	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024
2.3 Evaluation of Lodge and Request system ACTION: Group encouraged to use new Report, request and apply feature on website and report feedback.	All group	Ongoing	Ongoing

Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
ACTION: CEAG feedback (including 1/ smaller descriptions to help mobile users and 2/ photos are difficult to add to the 'report') to be provided to relevant internal teams.	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024
2.4 Growing our subscribers plan ACTION: Incorporate group suggestions where possible into plan	PSC	Complete	14 Aug 2024
3.1 Next meeting, thank you and close ACTION: Next meeting date to be confirmed following Council elections	PSC	Complete	February 2025
Meeting: 3 April 2024			
2.1 General feedback since the last meeting ACTION: Agenda and discussion to clearly reflect areas of influence for CEAG members on the various projects	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
ACTION: ToR is explicit in defining role of group and should be resent	PSC	Complete	21 Aug 2024
ACTION: Operational communication matters are to be sent to haveyoursay@portstephens.nsw.gov.au email addressed to be actioned as appropriate	All group	Ongoing	Ongoing
ACTION: Use more direct wording in emails and individualise emails per subject for better participation	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
2.2 Housing Strategy Review Public Exhibition ACTION: Investigate whether zoom presentation can be sent to forum participants who cannot attend	PSC	Link is available on direct request. Action no longer relevant as strategy is adopted.	20 Aug 2024
2.3 Shoal Bay Place Plan Lessons Learnt ACTION: PSC to check privacy and antispaam laws with regard to bulk mail outs.	PSC	Complete – unable to use email addresses without explicit consent	16 Sep 2024
ACTION: Use more direct and emotional language in communications for better engagement.	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
ACTION: Provide CEAG feedback to Strategic Planning team re: Anna Bay Place Plan next steps.	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024
Meeting: 18 October 2023			
2.1 Feedback from previous meeting ACTION: Review the process (Smart Parking submission lost)	PSC	Complete	Oct 2023

Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
Meeting: 20 September 2023			
2.2 Local Housing Strategy Review Presentation ACTION: Council staff to update the stakeholder listing and circulate to CEAG member (excluding private details) for value add.	PSC	Complete	From 20 Sep 2023
ACTION: Update key messaging in the plan to include that consideration will be given to infrastructure upgrades is housing increases	PSC	Complete	From 20 Sep 2023
ACTION: Undertake an EOI to attract general community representation for the Housing forum	PSC	Complete	From 20 Sep 2023
2.3 Night at the Beach event ACTION: Report feedback to PSC Events team	PSC	Complete	18 Oct 2023
2.4 Meeting format discussion ACTION: Next meeting to be scheduled for 5-7pm (longer time)	PSC	Complete	20 Sep 2023