

# MEETING MINUTES



## Meeting

<b>Team Name:</b>	Communication and Engagement Advisory Group		
<b>Date:</b>	2 July 2025	<b>Time:</b>	5:00pm-7:00pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Port Stephens Council Admin Building and Zoom		
<b>Chairperson:</b>	Councillor Wells	<b>Minutes:</b>	Louise Bevilacqua
<b>Purpose of Meeting:</b>	To provide advice and guidance on communications and engagement projects		

## Attendance

Councillor Wells Port Stephens Council	Councillor Armstrong Port Stephens Council	Councillor Watson Port Stephens Council	Councillor Francis Port Stephens Council
Ben van der Wijngaart Community representative	Cassandra Schmitzer Community representative	Greg Brown Community representative	Janet Starr Community representative
Casey Freeman Community representative	Fiona Brown Community representative	Michelle Vernon Community representative	Emily Livens Port Stephens Council
Kate Drinan Port Stephens Council	Lillian Shaddock Port Stephens Council	Louise Bevilacqua Port Stephens Council	

## Apologies

Mayor Anderson Port Stephens Council (formal apology received)	Councillor Niland Port Stephens Council	Paul Baxter Community representative (formal apology received)	William (Bill) Doran Community representative
Angela Peace Community representative (formal apology received)	Kelly Hammond Community representative	William (Bill) Doran Community representative	Lauren Whitelaw Community representative (no response)

Casey Freeman  
Community representative

Elizabeth Akerman  
Port Stephens Council (formal  
apology received)

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
<b>1.0</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>				
1.1	Acknowledgement of country and welcome		Chairperson	<b>RECORD:</b> Completed by Cr Wells	N/A
1.2	CEAG – EOI Welcome new members		Emily Livens	<b>RECORD:</b> Introduction to new members; Fiona Brown, Janet Starr, Michelle Vernon	N/A
1.3	Warm up – your life highlight since the last meeting		Chairperson	<b>RECORD:</b> All participants completed	
<b>2.0</b>					
2.1	Terms of Reference review		Emily Livens	<p><b><i>Session was unable to be recorded due to technical difficulties</i></b></p> <p><b>RECORD:</b> Required to complete a review within three months of election.</p> <p>Current 7.2 Port Stephens Council: five (5) representatives – three (3) Councillors (one from each ward), two (2) Council Officers. The Mayor is an optional attendee.</p> <p>Proposed change - Port Stephens Council: <b>minimum</b> five (5) representatives – <b>minimum</b> three (3) Councillors (one from each ward), two (2) Council Officers. The Mayor is an optional attendee.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> All agree with the proposed change, changes to TOR to be officially made.</p> <p>It was also noted that some members had not attended a meeting in the last 12 months and had been contacted for explanations. As of the current date, we have only received correspondence from Paul Baxter, who is unable to attend Wednesday's meetings.</p> <p>7.7.A CEAG member who is absent for more than two consecutive meetings without leave or</p>	Underway Planning to take revised TOR to Council meeting 26 August 2025.

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>reasonable excuse, may be requested to explain their absence. If the absenteeism of a member is ongoing, the CEAG may request the Council to declare the position vacant.</p> <p>There was a consensus to open up these positions to new members using the recent EOI applications.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Review EOI and contact potential new members</p>	In progress July 2025
2.2	Trees and Vandalism Public Education Campaign		Kate Drinan, Emily Livens	<p><b>RECORD:</b> Council gave an overview of the tree vandalism earlier this year in Nelson Bay and Shoal Bay and asked the committee for ideas on how to effectively share and educate about the positive impacts of vegetation and what communication and engagement methods would be suitable.</p> <p>Several ideas were raised and discussed by the committee but the committee recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not undertake a broader communications campaign</li> <li>• Focus education and behaviour change on the next generation through schools doing sessions in local areas about the value and benefit of trees, cost of vandalism and how to report</li> <li>• Follow program such as Adopt a tree program – Little Johnny who adopted the tree – Tree Champions</li> <li>• QR code at tree with profile of tree champion on website and messaging</li> </ul>	

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>about value of tree, why this tree, and why it's important, eg, shade, stabilisation of the ground.</p> <p>Note of caution of any education program to be aware that some community members may have had experiences with trees, e.g. through trees damaging homes, cars etc Suggestion of a potential monetary award however it was informed Council has no budget for this.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Council to take ideas to the Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) for further discussion</p>	In progress
2.3	Medowie Town Centre Masterplan		Emily Livens	<p><b>RECORD:</b> Council informed that we are now in the process of progressing master planning for this Town Centre. The master plan would allow for subdivision of the land for various functions, including commercial, recreational, and residential.</p> <p>The average age in Medowie is 37 years and a younger demographic compared to the rest of Port Stephens, and includes many young families.</p> <p>Council presented the proposed engagement approach and sought feedback for further inclusions from the group.</p> <p>Ideas suggested;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the engagement to be more than the existing place plan members, given</li> </ul>	

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>the timing since the Medowie Place Plan engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A big banner around fencing with a QR code to how to get involved</li> <li>• Online options for engagement</li> <li>• School sessions.</li> <li>• Vacant shop front or marque in carpark.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Review the Communications and Engagement Plan considering these inclusions</p>	In progress
2.4	Community Satisfaction Survey – Community Engagement Score		Emily Livens	<p><b>RECORD:</b> The Mayor requested we discuss the results due to Community Engagement scoring third last in the satisfaction ranking of services for Council.</p> <p>General Discussion: It was questioned if it is the way it is worded in the survey. It was noted all other services above were majority tangible services, where Engagement is subjective.</p> <p>The consensus was that the results, all things considered, were not that bad and an improvement had been seen in engagement over the past 3 years.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Councillors to continue to receive a separate social media kit with images or content to put on their individual pages instead of sharing PS Council posts for major projects.</p>	In progress
2.5	Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan – summary of early engagement		Louise Bevilacqua	<p><b>RECORD:</b> An overview of the engagement was provided. The shop front suggestion from the last meeting was a success with 390 engagements through this method. Online</p>	

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible Officer	Action	Status/Date to be Completed
				<p>engagement; Have Your Say mapping tool – 150 comments, Join the Conversation – 66 responses, written submissions (emails/letters) – 3, Workshop 16 participants, Tomaree Community connect day 30 visited.</p> <p>Engagement report to go to Council meeting along with draft place plan. There will be a further opportunity for engagement during the Public Exhibition period.</p>	
3.1	<p>General Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and Engagement Strategy Review Update</li> <li>Pathways Plan update</li> </ul>		Emily Livens/ Louise Bevilacqua	<p><b>General feedback:</b></p> <p><b>Community and Engagement Strategy Review Update</b></p> <p><b>RECORD:</b> CEAG feedback taken onboard. New information in the CPP has been drafted, infographic to be included.</p> <p>Strategy currently in design for August Council meeting.</p> <p><b>Pathways Plan Update</b></p> <p><b>RECORD:</b> The purpose of the engagement is to inform the community and seek feedback about the review of the existing Pathways plan and the proposed methodology for the new plan.</p> <p>EOI for community workshops. Three in-person workshops with one in each ward.</p>	

**MEETING CLOSED AT: 7pm**

**NEXT MEETINGS**

**Date: 17 September 2025**

**Time: 5pm to 7pm**

**Venue: Port Stephens Council Admin Building and Zoom**

# ATTACHMENT 1 – 2 July 2025 MEETING POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

## Communications & Engagement Advisory Group

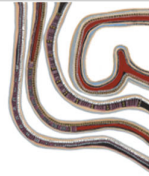
2 July 2025

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## 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.



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## Welcome new members

Fiona Brown  
Janet Starr  
Michelle Vernon



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

What's a life highlight since the last meeting?



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## Terms of Reference review

- Section 6 Term
  - Item 6.2 Council to review the TOR within three months following each Council election
- Section 7 Membership
  - Item 7.2 representatives
  - Item 7.7 attendance



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## Trees and Vandalism Public Education campaign

### Context:

- The EAG has asked for greater communication / education to improve the community's understanding of the benefits and value of trees and the adverse impacts of vandalism.



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## Trees and Vandalism Public Education campaign

- Ideas?
- What's great about trees and what's the problem with vandalism?
- What communication channels?
- How do we get people to champion trees?
- Do you have some examples of what other Councils or private organisations are doing?



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## Medowie Town Centre Master Plan

**Context:**  
Council will soon be inviting tenders for a consultant to prepare a masterplan for Council owned town centre property (across the road from Woolworths).

**Proposed timing:**  
Adopted Master Plan 2026



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## Medowie Town Centre Master Plan

**Stakeholders:**  
Previous Medowie Place Plan participants  
Shopping area businesses and owners  
Community centre user groups  
Community groups  
Local residents  
Library users



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## Medowie Town Centre Master Plan

### Proposed:

- Phase 1 – targeted early engagement with previous Medowie place plan participants to help inform the draft master plan (workshop format)
- Phase 2 – Public Exhibition of the draft plan (include drop-ins)
- Phase 3 – Revised plan reported to Council with changes and adopted

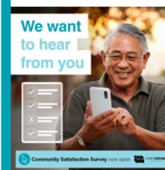
### Engagement level

Engagement level	Phase 1 Early engagement	Phase 2 Public Exhibition	Phase 3 Revised plan
Level 1 - Address	✓	✓	✓
Level 2 - Identify	✓	✓	✓
Level 3 - Consult	✓	✓	✓
Level 4 - Collaborate	✓	✓	✓

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## Community Satisfaction Survey – Community Engagement Score

Community Engagement Score	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
2025 – 2,215 respondents	41%	27%	32%	2.8	
2024 – 201 respondents	42%	17%	41%	2.9	
2023 – 380 respondents	48%	21%	31%	2.7	



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## Satisfaction – Core Services



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## Engagement Feedback

- Need to engage community with developments
- It has changed how improved a lot over the last 5 years. Through community engagement and transparency council has shed both its presence and image
- Apply your values "Being honest and keeping them by being consistent, standing by what we say" PSC community engagement is a long-term exercise with no end date or when
- Perhaps time to lead, rather a community engagement, meeting could be held with local councillors
- More engagement with local councillors and focus on providing local services across all areas of Port Stephens
- Consulting with local community before making changes or additions to maintain their success and maintain ongoing maintenance
- It would be to see more engagement on developments such as wind farms and housing development
- Actually engaging with the community not just having a perfunctory "consultation" by setting up a table and place for the community to come to you. You should start from and ask residents and businesses what they think

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## Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan Summary

**Context:**  
Recent Phase 1 communication and engagement undertaken



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## Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan Summary

- Communication:**
- Social media engagement – 5860 reach with 1820 clicks (paid) and 1640 reach with 139 clicks (organic)
  - Related NBN news and Examiner stories
  - Included letterbox drops to neighbours and direct emails



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## Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan update

### Engagement:

- Fantastic suggestion from the CEAG regarding the shop front – 390 people through the door
- Online engagement – 150 mapping tool comments, 66 longer comments, 3 submissions
- Workshop – 16 participants



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## Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan update

### Key Themes

- Community Wellbeing
- Economy
- Environment
- Housing
- Movement and Infrastructure



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## Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan update

### Most Mentioned Ideas from Social Map

- Day Surgery or urgent health clinic
- Youth activities or Centre
- Mixed-use buildings with housing above shops
- Protect Mambo Wetlands
- Improve bike and walking paths
- Link road around shopping centre



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## General business

Communication and Engagement Strategy Review update  
Pathways Plan update



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**Thank you!**



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Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
<b>Meeting: 2 July 2025</b>			
<b>Meeting: 16 April 2025</b>			
2.2 Communication and Engagement Strategy – review submissions <b>ACTION:</b> Incorporate submission feedback and CEAG suggestions into changes of the draft Strategy with particular focus on improving the draft Community Participation Plan.	PSC staff	Complete	June 2025
2.3 Salamander Bay Town Centre Place Plan <b>ACTION:</b> It was suggested that the project would benefit from a targeted engagement to cohorts such as young people and parents, local school communities. <b>ACTION:</b> It was suggested that a shop front would be useful to help promote the project to actual facility users. <b>ACTION:</b> Undertake gap analysis to check-in on whose voices we haven't heard at the conclusion of the engagement.	PSC staff	Complete	May 2025
	PSC staff	Complete	5-9 May 2025
	PSC staff	Underway	
2.4 General Business <b>ACTION:</b> Please use the Report, Request and Apply as this is much easier for staff to re contact users and follow up. <b>ACTION:</b> Emily/Liz to follow up Council's feral cats response <b>ACTION:</b> Ensure Smart Parking new portal communications are very clear including information about how funds are spent. Potentially also look at pavement stickers	All group	Ongoing	Ongoing
	PSC staff	Complete	June 2025
	PSC staff	Rollout Complete	July 2025
<b>Online Meeting: 18 December 2024</b>			
2.1 Communication and Engagement Strategy Review – proposed amendments <b>ACTION:</b> Incorporate CEAG feedback into draft document.	PSC Staff	Complete	12 Jan 2025
<b>Meeting: 7 August 2024</b>			
2.2 Use of easy-read docs <b>ACTION:</b> Provide CEAG feedback to relevant internal teams.	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024
2.3 Evaluation of Lodge and Request system <b>ACTION:</b> Group encouraged to use new Report, request and apply feature on website and report feedback. <b>ACTION:</b> CEAG feedback (including 1/ smaller descriptions to help mobile users	All group	Ongoing	Ongoing
	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024

Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
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 <b>ACTION:</b> Incorporate group suggestions where possible into plan	PSC	Complete	14 Aug 2024
3.1 Next meeting, thank you and close <b>ACTION:</b> Next meeting date to be confirmed following Council elections	PSC	Complete	February 2025
<b>Meeting: 3 April 2024</b>			
2.1 General feedback since the last meeting <b>ACTION:</b> Agenda and discussion to clearly reflect areas of influence for CEAG members on the various projects	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
<b>ACTION:</b> ToR is explicit in defining role of group and should be resent	PSC	Complete	21 Aug 2024
<b>ACTION:</b> Operational communication matters are to be sent to <a href="mailto:haveyoursay@portstephens.nsw.gov.au">haveyoursay@portstephens.nsw.gov.au</a> email addressed to be actioned as appropriate	All group	Ongoing	Ongoing
<b>ACTION:</b> Use more direct wording in emails and individualise emails per subject for better participation	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
2.2 Housing Strategy Review Public Exhibition <b>ACTION:</b> 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 <b>ACTION:</b> PSC to check privacy and antispan laws with regard to bulk mail outs.	PSC	Complete – unable to use email addresses without explicit consent	16 Sep 2024
<b>ACTION:</b> Use more direct and emotional language in communications for better engagement.	PSC	Ongoing	Ongoing
<b>ACTION:</b> Provide CEAG feedback to Strategic Planning team re: Anna Bay Place Plan next steps.	PSC	Complete	20 Aug 2024
<b>Meeting: 18 October 2023</b>			
2.1 Feedback from previous meeting <b>ACTION:</b> Review the process (Smart Parking submission lost)	PSC	Complete	Oct 2023
<b>Meeting: 20 September 2023</b>			

Item/Action	Who	Comment	Date Completed
2.2 Local Housing Strategy Review Presentation <b>ACTION:</b> Council staff to update the stakeholder listing and circulate to CEAG member (excluding private details) for value add.	PSC	Complete	From 20 Sep 2023
<b>ACTION:</b> Update key messaging in the plan to include that consideration will be given to infrastructure upgrades as housing increases	PSC	Complete	From 20 Sep 2023
<b>ACTION:</b> 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 <b>ACTION:</b> Report feedback to PSC Events team	PSC	Complete	18 Oct 2023
2.4 Meeting format discussion <b>ACTION:</b> Next meeting to be scheduled for 5-7pm (longer time)	PSC	Complete	20 Sep 2023