



PORT STEPHENS

C O U N C I L

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
26 AUGUST 2025

INDEX

SUBJECT

PAGE NO

COUNCIL REPORTS

5. REVISED COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY3

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 5

FILE NO: 25/224553
EDRMS NO: PSC2014-01768

REVISED COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

REPORT OF: AMBER HERRMANN - ACTING COMMUNICATION &
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE SECTION MANAGER
DIRECTORATE: COMMUNITY FUTURES

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) Receive and note the submissions received during the public exhibition of the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030.
- 2) Adopt the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 as amended including (**ATTACHMENT 1**) of the supplementary report.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with amendments made to the Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 that were identified after the Business Paper was finalised.

This week Council received additional feedback from the Community Engagement Advisory Group members and Councillors. As a result, a number of changes have been proposed.

The changes specifically address the following:

| Community Participation Section | Page | Changes |
|---------------------------------|--------|--|
| Addendum Request | Pg. 28 | Included more detail on the notification of the affected community and when a Social Impact Assessment could be triggered, requiring earlier community participation. |
| 1. Scoping Proposal | Pg. 29 | Additional wording on early engagement, including when a Social Impact Assessment would be triggered and the level of community participation undertaken by Council, "Early input from key authorities and government agencies." |
| 2. Planning Proposal | Pg. 29 | Inclusion of additional information about notification to the affected community. |

ORDINARY COUNCIL - 26 AUGUST 2025 - SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--|
| 3. Planning Proposal | Pg. 28 | Correction of error identified in the subheading. Subheading changed from Planning Proposal to Gateway Determination. |
| 5. Public Exhibition | Pg. 30 | Inclusion of additional information about notification to affected community. |
| Environmental Planning Act principles | Pg. 26 | Included a summary introduction to the CPP about the principles of the Environment and Planning Assessment Act and how the CPP aligns. |

The Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 including the revised pages is provided (**ATTACHMENT 1**). This version is intended to replace the version attached to the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 business paper.

A comprehensive summary of the changes can be found at (**ATTACHMENT 2**).

ISSUES

Should the amendment provided as (**ATTACHMENT 1**) of this supplementary report not be adopted, there is a risk that the Communication and Engagement Strategy does not reflect the community engagement that occurs when an addendum request is lodged for exhibition.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030.
- 2) Communications and Engagement Strategy Supplementary Fact Sheet.

Draft Port Stephens Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025 to 2030



Our vision is to actively communicate and engage in a way that tells our stories, listens to our community, informs our future and improves the wellbeing of those that live, work and visit in Port Stephens.



PORT STEPHENS
COUNCIL

GUUDJI YIIGU

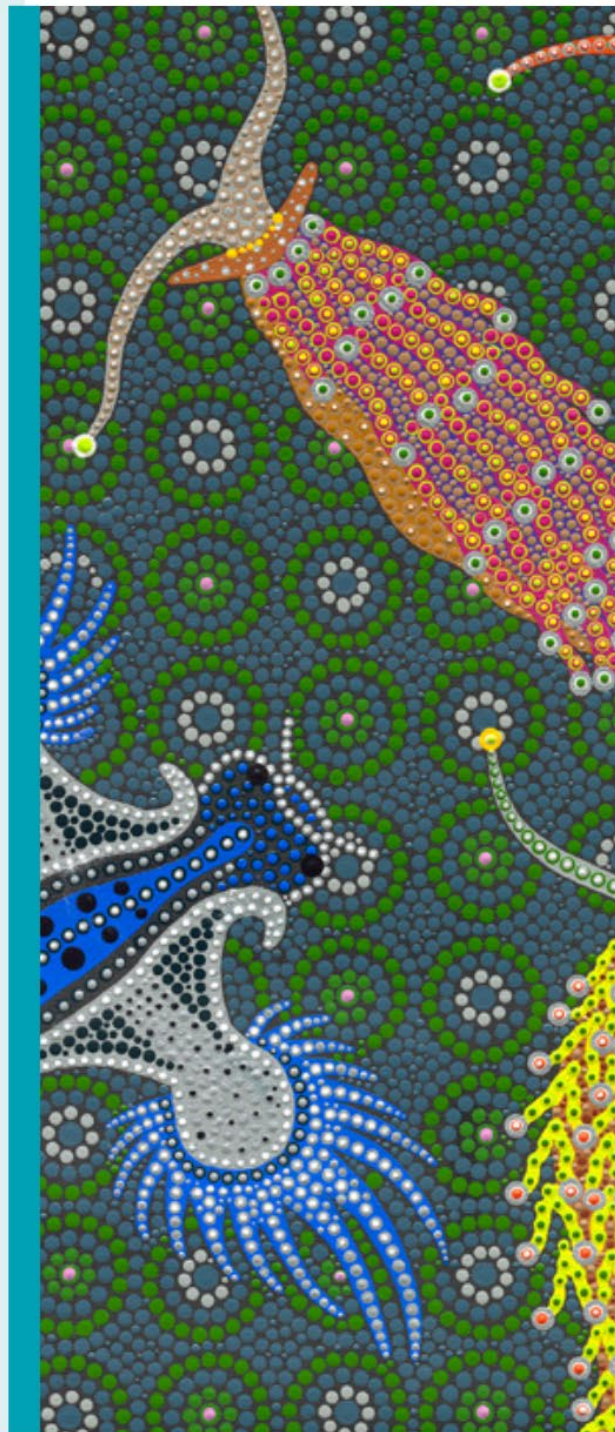
(GOO-JEE IK-KOO)

We welcome you to Port Stephens – part of the Worimi Aboriginal Nation. Port Stephens Council acknowledges the Worimi people as traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waterways on which we all live, learn, work and play.

We value and respect the Worimi people and the legacy 60,000 years of Aboriginal Nation traditions and culture brings with it. As part of Council's culture of acceptance, diversification and harmony we walk alongside the Worimi people on a journey of listening and learning.

Together we will strive to make this a better place for all peoples. As guardians of these lands, we ask that you tread lightly to help preserve the biodiversity and respect those who came before as well as those who will follow.

Artwork by Regan Lilley.



A message from the Mayor

Communication is key.

Clear and honest communication is the cornerstone of our commitment to our community. We strive to be an open and transparent organisation where communications and engagement is at the centre of what we do.

Our Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025 to 2030 is our commitment to keeping you informed and involved. Since its original adoption in 2022, this strategy has provided the framework for active engagement and conversations to encourage all voices of our diverse community to have their say.

The recent review of this strategy, following the 2024 election has allowed us to reflect on how far we've come in a short time, and identify areas for further improvement to build a community that is more engaged and informed.

Our Communication and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG), established in 2023, has been instrumental in providing valuable insights and guidance. The value of the CEAG can't be overstated. By involving the community in the early stages of our planning, we'll deliver better outcomes across our community.

The 2025 to 2030 strategy continues to build on this success and create more opportunities for our community to be involved in decisions that impact their everyday. My fellow Councillors and I encourage you to connect with your Council, explore what's happening in your community and share your input into decisions to shape the future of this incredible place we call home.



Leah Anderson

Leah Anderson

Mayor of Port Stephens

Strategy context



Over the past few years, a fundamental shift has occurred in the approach to public sector communication and engagement. Our residents have increased expectation around access to information and a greater desire to engage in planning for their place.

We know that effective communication and engagement are directly linked to the liveability and wellbeing of our community. By listening to our community and providing genuine opportunities for engagement, we'll create a greater sense of community ownership and ultimately, improve the delivery of Council services that are aligned to community needs.

To achieve this, we'll deliver a genuinely integrated and inclusive approach to our engagement and communication. By bringing together our communication and engagement approach, we've already created a shift in thinking. Through this strategy, we'll continue to evolve this approach and build a culture that celebrates our stories and informs the future of Port Stephens.

Communications is how we connect with our stakeholders. It is sharing the right message at the right time to inform our community.

NSW Government, All-Of-Government Communications Framework

Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape the decisions or actions of the members of the community, stakeholders or organisation in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome.

NSW Government, All-Of-Government Communications Framework

The Port Stephens Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025 to 2030 has been developed to provide a framework for the delivery of open and effective communication that actively shapes and influences the future of Port Stephens.

The strategy responds to the legislative requirements of:

- NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework including the Community Strategic Plan
- Local Government Act (1993) and
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)

The strategy also responds to the key priorities of the elected Councillors.

Community Participation Plan

Attached to this strategy is our Community Participation Plan (CPP) which is an easy to use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority. It ensures we meet our statutory requirements for notification and exhibition.

Who we
are



Our community

More than 78,000 people call Port Stephens home and this is expected to grow by over 20,000 by 2040.



78,906[^]

people

Median age is 47 years
NSW median age is 39 years



6.5%

of our population

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders



93%^{*}

have internet access
from a dwelling (2022)



86.6%

Australian population
own a smartphone^{*}



38.7%

finished year 12

33.0%

finished year 10 or above



family

2 person families most
common at 54.5%



75 to 79

Largest age range
increase at 40.9%



60 to 69

Most common age range



7.2%

of people have a
severe disability

That require assistance
with core activities



26,307

not in workforce

16,790

work full time

11,384

work part time

Source: ABS 2021

[^] Estimated Residential Population 2023

^{*} Australia Communications and Media Authority 2022

What we've heard

“

Longer periods to digest
and respond to documents
including Council agendas.

Community member

“

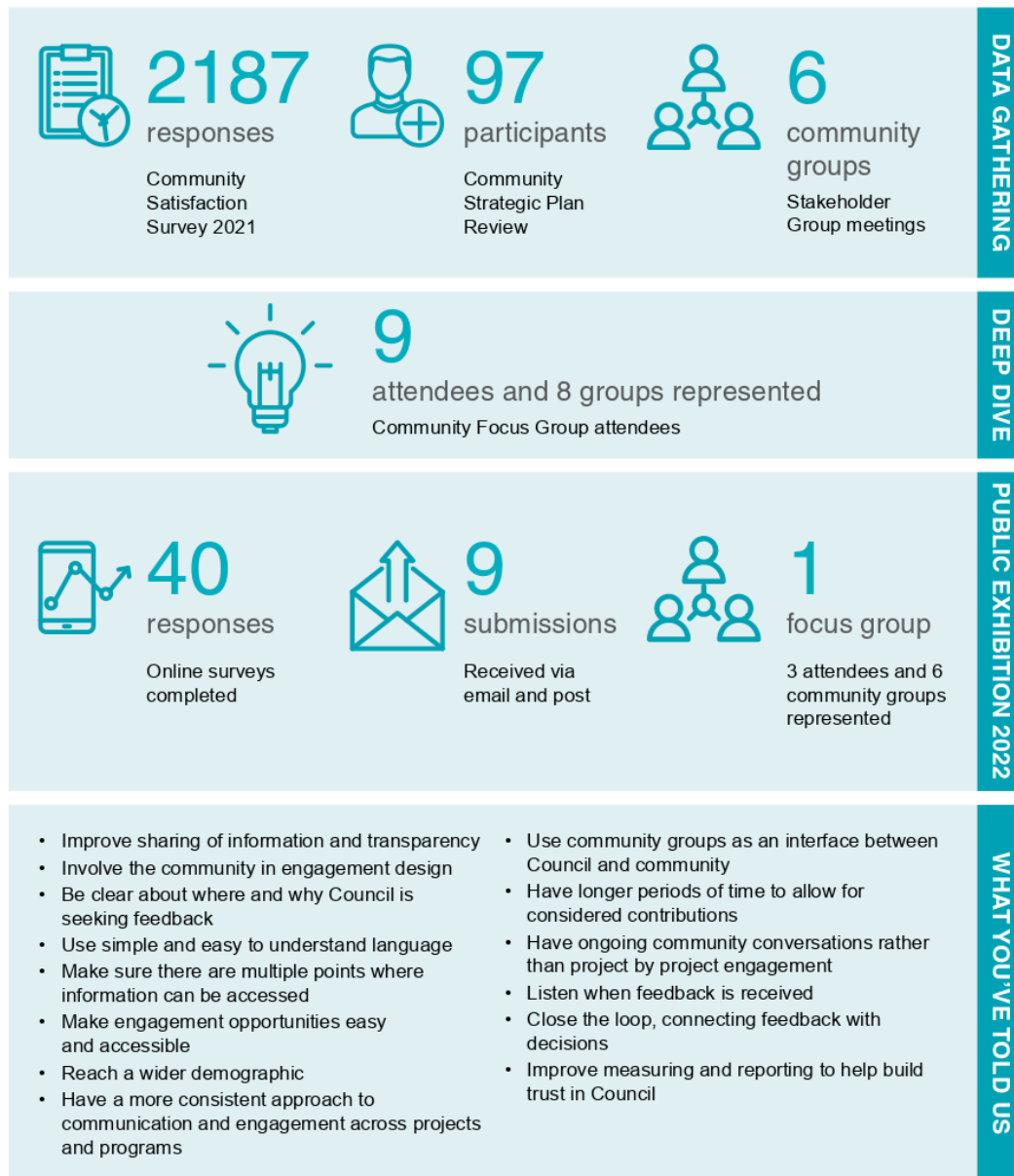
Opportunities to Have Your
Say are numerous but there is
little opportunity to find out the
result of the engagement or
what other people think.

Community member



Our engagement

Between 2021 and October 2022, we've undertaken a phased approach to listening to the community about how we deliver communication and engagement.




Reviewing the 2022 to 2024 strategy


Under the Integrated Planning and Report Guidelines we're required to review our Communication and Engagement Strategy, following the Local Government election to make sure it aligns with the 4 year term of Council.

A key action of the 2022 to 2024 strategy was to establish the Communication and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG). Formed in August 2023 the CEAG has been instrumental in providing feedback on the way we communicate and engage with our community in 2023 and 2024. This feedback has been invaluable in informing the current review.


Key feedback from the group during this time has been:




Advocate for social justice principles by reaching a diverse demographic.



Promote more targeted communication with affected residents.




Use community social media more effectively.




Use plain English in all our communications.

To build on the feedback form the CEAG the revised draft Communication and Engagement Strategy was placed on public exhibition.




2210
responses
Community Satisfaction Survey 2025

DATA GATHERING



5
submissions
Received via email and post



1
CEAG meeting
16 attendees

PUBLIC EXHIBITION 2022

- Improve wording, choice of language and keep to plain English
- Ensure all reporting objectives include a time element for better accountability
- Include both technology and traditional community methods to reach older demographics

- Improve and make clearer engagement opportunities in the process of planning proposals
- Improve equity and access of the document considering a 'listen' option on the website

WHAT YOU'VE TOLD US



Our strategy



As the closest level of government connected to the community, we have a key role in communicating and engaging with our local residents.

With over 55 individual business units across the organisation and almost 600 staff, we deliver a large number of services to our community. We're also the link between our community and other levels of government, advocating our community's priorities.

Over the past few years, we've worked hard to engage with and inform our community. However, we know from feedback that we can do better. We've listened and are committed to working closely with our community to act on this feedback, responding to their needs and priorities.

Our purpose and vision



Our purpose

To create a framework for the delivery of transparent and timely communications and meaningful community engagement that builds trust and community participation in decision making for our place.



Our vision

We actively communicate and engage in a way that shares our stories, listens to our community, informs our future, and improves the wellbeing of those that live, work and visit in Port Stephens.

Social Justice Principles

The NSW Government identified 4 principles that establish supportive environments for everyone. These principles are the driving force to address barriers to communication and engagement experienced in our community.

The social justice principles are the heart of our Strategy's principles and key objectives.



Equity

Communication and engagement should include stakeholders including hard to reach groups who may have barriers to participation.



Access

All people should have fair access to communication and engagement opportunities.



Participation

All people should have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives.



Rights

Communication and engagement opportunities ensure positive participation of linguistic, cultural and religious diverse communities.

Communication and Engagement Principles

1

We deliver **relevant, timely and easy to understand** information

2

We're **honest and transparent**

3

We're **inclusive** and encourage a **diversity of voices** to be heard

4

We **listen, value and respect community** input and feedback






5

We embrace **innovation** and encourage **new ideas**

International Association of Public Participation

The Engagement Institute, formerly known as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed an international framework for community engagement that is considered a best practice approach worldwide.

Levels of communication and engagement

| |  Inform (least impact on decision) |  Consult |  Involve |  Collaborate |  Empower (most impact on decision) |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|
| Our goal (Council's) | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. | To place final decision-making and/or developed budgets in the hands of the public. |
| Our role (Council's) | We'll keep you informed. | We'll keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We'll work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We'll look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We'll implement what you decide. |
| Your role (Community's) | Keep in touch. Follow Council on social media. Subscribe to regular newsletters and updates. | Contribute ideas and feedback. Respond to surveys. Make public submissions. | Actively participate in the workshops and engagement sessions. Share ideas concerns and aspirations. | Work together to develop solutions. Join committees. | Make decisions and work with Council to implement them. |

© IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved. 20181112_v1






Our stakeholders

We all have a role to play in shaping our places and there's roles for both Council and the community in initiating, leading, participating in, and delivering engagement activities. It's vital that we identify and understand our stakeholders that are impacted by, or have an interest in a decision.



Methods of communication and engagement

We use a range of methods to communicate and engage with our community. We typically use a combination of methods to share information to ensure the greatest reach. Below are some of our common methods used across the IAP2 spectrum.

| |  Inform |  Consult |  Involve |  Collaborate |  Empower |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| Communications | | | | | |
| Advertisements / public notices | ✓ | | | | |
| Council events | ✓ | | | | |
| E-newsletters | ✓ | | | | |
| Emails and letters | ✓ | | | | |
| Flyers, brochures, factsheets, posters, signs | ✓ | | | | |
| Local Newspaper article | ✓ | | | | |
| Media releases | ✓ | | | | |
| On hold messages | ✓ | | | | |
| Rates notice and inserts | ✓ | | | | |
| Radio announcements | ✓ | | | | |
| Social media | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Webinars | ✓ | | | | |
| Community Engagement | | | | | |
| Advisory committees | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Council meetings | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Council website | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Focus group and workshops | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Information and interactions with Council staff | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Drop-in / pop-up sessions | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Meetings with Council staff | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Public exhibition / submission | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Surveys / questionnaires / polls | | ✓ | | | |

Strategic priority 1

Community engagement



We will plan and deliver meaningful community engagement that enables community participation and builds trust in Council decision making.



| Key objectives | Communication and Engagement Principles* | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Continue to embed the principles of the International Association Public Participation (IAP2) into the organisational culture | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Collaborate with the Communications and Engagement Advisory Group to provide timely input on how to engage with our community on major projects | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Increase opportunities for the community to engage informally with Councillors and Executive | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Design engagement opportunities that enable time for considered thought and contribution | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Ensure engagement opportunities consider place, diversity and accessibility | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Expand on the use of technology to increase participation and increase the diversity of voice and opinion in engagement activities | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Build on the use of social media as a tool for engagement and feedback | | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Report internally and externally on engagement outcomes, connecting community engagement and decision making at the end of each engagement program | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| Improve stakeholder information management to ensure equitable representation across the community | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Deliver Council's Community Participation Plan (Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | |

*Communication and Engagement Principles definitions on page 14.

Strategic priority 2

Community communication



We will deliver timely, creative and transparent internal and external communication that connect our stories, our people and our place.



| Key objectives | Communication and Engagement Principles* | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Design communication that's easy to understand and accessible to all | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Continue to use our public website (portstephens.nsw.gov.au) as the core communication channel and invest in its growth and improvement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Use social media to target and engage audience profiles to encourage conversations and increase awareness of Council services | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Increase staff awareness and capacity, to enable effective communication, engagement and promotion of Council business | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Build Council's identity and brand through consistent visual communication | ✓ | | | | |
| Use digital marketing to enhance awareness of Council projects and services | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Create targeted, engaging and audience focused communications using data | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Regularly benchmark and review internal and external communications | ✓ | | | | ✓ |
| Support elected members by keeping them informed so they can share information and increase awareness of Council activities and services through community networks | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Measure, evaluate and report on all communication activities at campaign completion | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |

*Communication and Engagement Principles definitions on page 14.

Strategic priority 3

Media and public relations



We will build trust and reputation through proactive, consistent and trustworthy information that responds to issues and community priorities.



| Key objectives | Communication and Engagement Principles* | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Build and maintain strong relationships with media to facilitate informed reporting | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Promote Port Stephens with positive and proactive media | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Work across the organisation to identify newsworthy stories | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Respond promptly to media enquiries to meet news deadlines | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Develop annual Community Advocacy Priorities and implement campaigns to drive awareness of local issues and key priorities | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Build relationships with stakeholders by celebrating key achievements together | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Foster opportunities for elected representatives or Executive to speak at corporate, community and networking events | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Coordinate Council's emergency management communications | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Continue to improve media record and information management | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| Monitor, evaluate and report on all media and public relations activity | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ |

*Communication and Engagement Principles definitions on page 14.

Measures of success

Measures of success

Continuous improvement is an integral part of improving our communication and engagement process. We'll monitor and report on our communication and engagement activities for effectiveness against the principles and key objectives of this Strategy.

Our communication and engagement efforts are reported and evaluated through the following processes:

- Upon completion of the communication campaigns or engagement programs.
- As part of Council's quarterly, 6 monthly and annual reporting.

Some key considerations in our reporting include:

- How effectively were barriers to engagement addressed?
- Did we reach people impacted by the project or people that are representative of our demographic?
- Were the intended outcomes of the engagement process achieved?
- How well did we provide feedback to participants on the results of their contribution?

Our annual targets

- 

Community Satisfaction Survey
 49%+ of our community feel they can provide input into decision making
 53%+ of our community are satisfied with their contact with Council
- 

Port Stephens Liveability Score of 66+
- 

1 million+ website visits
- 

Increase Have Your Say members by 2.5%
- 

Participation demographics accurately represent our community
- 

Increase social media followers by 2.5%
- 

Maintain above an average of 4.2% interaction rate on Facebook
- 

Increase the engagement rate on Instagram by 14%
- 

Increase e-newsletter subscribers by 2.5%
- 

30% of projects have an engagement level of 'involve' or above

Attachment 1

Community Participation Plan

It is a statutory requirement for Councils in NSW to prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) that is an easy-to-use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority.

Under Section 2.23 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&AA) 1979, we are required to:

1

Inform the community about planning matters that affect them.

2

Encourage meaningful opportunities for community participation in planning.

3

Ensure planning information is in plain English, easily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation.

4

Creates opportunities for early community participation as early as possible enabling community views to be genuinely considered.

5

Ensures community participation is inclusive.

6

Provides transparency in planning decisions, showing how community views have been considered.

7

Delivers community participation that is appropriate to the significance and likely impact of the proposed development .

| How are we meeting the EP&A Act requirements | EP&A Act requirements | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Early meaningful engagement with the Port Stephens community in developing state and local government strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Notification of Planning Proposals and Addendums to local government strategies via: • Direct letter to adjoining land owners. • Print advertising, e-Newsletters and the Council's website for the broader community. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Proponent led Social Impact Assessments are required if triggered by the development type. | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Public access to Council meeting agendas, meetings and minutes on Council's website and in person. | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Reports to Council outline each submission and Council's response to each. | | | | | | ✓ | |
| Notification to any persons providing a submission, the outcome and how their feedback was considered. | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | |
| Standards of practice set for public exhibition periods.* | | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Communication and Engagement Strategy Strategic Priority 1 Community engagement key objectives (page 19): • Design engagement opportunities that enable time for considered thought and contribution. • Ensure engagement opportunities consider place, diversity and accessibility. | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Communications and Engagement Strategy Strategic Priority 2 Community communications key objectives (page 21): • Design communications that's easy to understand and accessible to all. • Continue to use our public website as the core community channel. • Create targeted, engaging and audience focused communication using data. | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | |

*If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or public holiday, it might be extended to finish on the first available work day. In accordance with the planning legislation, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of the period of public exhibition.
Plans or applications can't be made or determined until after the minimum period of public exhibition.



Community participation

Community participation is important under the Community Participation Plan.

Opportunities for community input into the Planning Proposal Process and Development Application process align with the level of communications and engagement outlined on page 12 of the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Levels of communication and engagement



In this section, each step of the Planning Proposal and Development Application processes is explained, along with how and at what level the community can get involved.

State and local government strategies

The Planning Proposal and Development Application process is preceded by the development of key state and local government strategies. These strategies guide planning proposal decisions. These can include the Hunter Regional Plan 2041, the Port Stephens Local Housing Strategy, Local Supply Plan, Local Environment Plan and the Development Control Plan



Addendum request

If a site is not identified for housing in an adopted Council strategy endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), DPHI may require a proponent to request Council and DPHI to consider an 'addendum' to the strategy. Addendum requests will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days following lodgment and prior to any assessment by Council.

As part of preparing an Addendum Request, a proponent may carry out early community participation as part of preparing a Social Impact Assessment.





Planning Proposal Process

1. Scoping Proposal

During this step, careful research is done to plan the proposal. This may include basic background studies, looking at the site and its surroundings, defining the objectives of the proposal, and exploring the feasibility of the ideas. Early feedback can be provided to the proponent about additional community participation, depending on the nature of the planning proposal. For example, a Social Impact Assessment or similar process could be triggered, requiring early community participation for planning proposals such as identifying a new employment precinct. Community participation under a Social Impact Assessment would be led by the proponent.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Early input from government and key agencies

Involve



2. Planning Proposal

Preparation and lodgment of the planning proposal by the proponent and initial assessment by Council.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Notification to the affected community including:

- Print advertisement in local newspaper.
- Notification on Council's website.
- Item in Council's e-newsletter where appropriate.

Inform



Notification to the adjoining landowners via letter

Inform



Public access and Council decision

Inform



Consult



3. Gateway determination

The proposal is reviewed for strategic and site-specific merits by the NSW State Government who determine whether the planning proposal should proceed to the next stage

Gateway determination will set the statutory public exhibition period, which is usually 28 days.





4. Post Gateway

The proponent undertakes additional studies, and engagement with key authorities and government agencies if required.

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION | Additional input from key authorities and government agencies |
| | Inform  |

5. Public exhibition

At this stage, input from the community and government agencies is welcomed to review the planning proposal before a final decision is made.

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION | Notification to the affected community including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print advertisement in local newspaper. • Notification on Council's website. • Item in Council's e-newsletter where appropriate. | Notification of planning proposal to adjoining land owners via letter |
| | Inform  | Inform  |
| | Optional public hearing | Written submissions by community or government agencies |
| | Consult  | Consult  |



6. Assessment

Review and evaluate submissions and address any concerns. Council determines whether the Local Environment Plan (LEP) should be changed in accordance with the Planning Proposal.

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION

Public access and Council decision

Inform



Consult



7. Finalisation

If the Planning Proposal is supported, amendments are made to the Local Environment Plan (LEP).

COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION

Notification of outcome to planning proposal participants via letter

Inform





Development Applications

1. Lodgment of Development Application

The application is lodged on the NSW Planning Portal, checked for completeness and allocated to a Council officer to assess.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Notification to the affected community including:

- Print advertisement in local newspaper
- Item in the Development Application E-Newsletter (subscription only)
- DA Tracker on Council's website

Inform



2. Assessment of Development Application

In this step, the level of assessment reflects the level of impact the development may have. A Council officer assesses the application and can include site visits and discussions with key authorities.

Some development applications require notification to adjoining residents or public exhibition and these are outlined in Table 2 and 3.

Some Development Applications do not require notification or public exhibition, these are outlined in Tables 2 and 3.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Notification of development application to adjoining landowners

Inform



Written submissions by community or government agencies

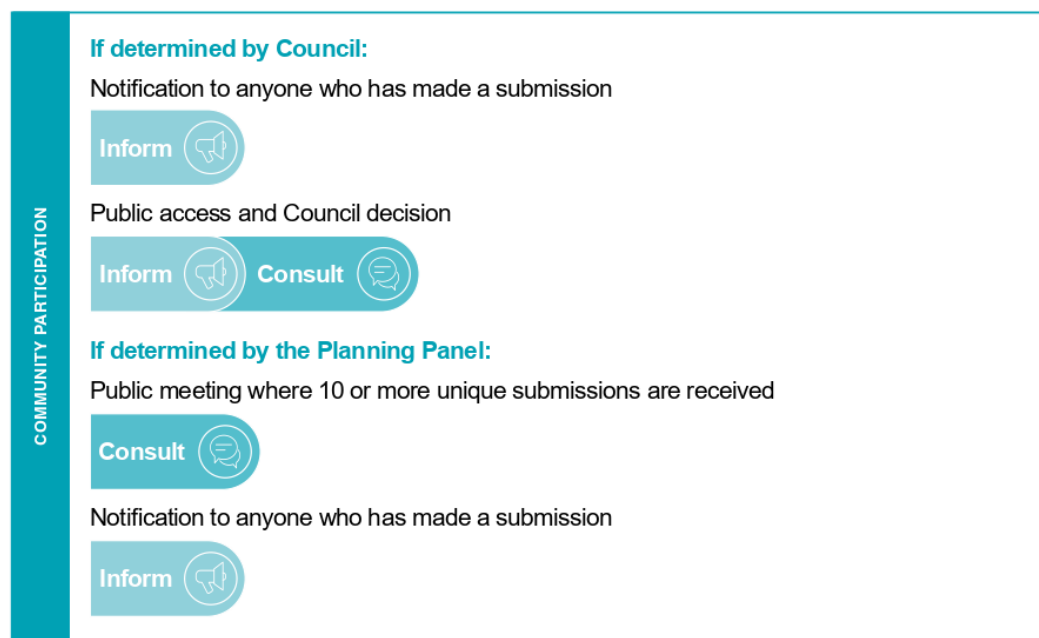
Consult



3. Determination of Development Application

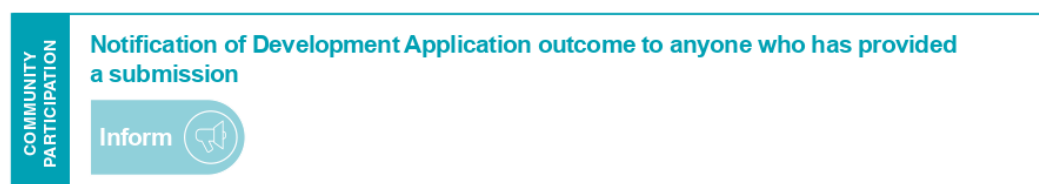
A delegated Council officer, Council, or the Planning Panel can make the decision to approve a Development Application.

Where Council makes the determination of a DA, these applications go through the Council meeting approved process.



After decision

Once a decision is made the development can proceed or not



We distribute a weekly Development Application E-Newsletter that provides information on all Development Applications lodged with Council the week prior. Visit pscouncil.info/DAe-newsletter to sign up.



Have your say

Making a submission

- A submission to Council is a formal way to show whether you are in support or opposition to a proposal or development. It allows our community to provide feedback and influence the decision-making process. Submissions are made during a public exhibition period. A submission must be:
 - Received on or before the last day of the nominated timeframe for the public exhibition
 - Made in writing (through the mail, email or hand delivered to Council)
 - Contain the name and address or email) of the person making the submission
 - Include the application number for reference (for development applications) or the name of the exhibited planning matter
 - Include a statement of objections or support and reasons

Speaking in public access

Public Access provides a way for community members to speak directly to the Mayor and Councillors about local or Council issues. The Mayor and Councillors may ask the speaker questions to gain further clarification on their views to inform their decision making. A public access request must be submitted by 12 midday on Monday prior to the Tuesday Council meeting.

The Public Access Application Form can be found on our website at pscouncil.info/council-meetings

Community participation requirements

Under the EP&A Act, the following minimum community participation requirements apply to local planning functions:

Table 1

| Mandatory timeframes | Minimum community participation requirement |
|---|---|
| Division 1 — Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act | |
| Draft community participation plans | 28 days |
| Draft local strategic planning statements | 28 days |
| Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination | 28 days or as specified by the Gateway Determination |
| Draft development control plans | 28 days |
| Draft contributions plans | 28 days |
| Division 2 — Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act | |
| Development Application for designated development | 28 days |
| Environmental Impact Statement obtained under Division 5.1 (An Environmental Impact Statement prepared for certain development such as state significant development.) | 28 days |
| Re-exhibition of any amended application or matter referred to above | The period (if any) determined by the person or body responsible for publicly exhibiting the application or matter. |

Exhibition timeframes are measured in calendar days and include weekends.

Development applications

Table 2 outlines Council's minimum notification requirements for development applications. If there's an inconsistency between the notification requirements of this CPP and legislative requirements, the legislative requirements will prevail. If a use is not defined within Table 3, it is up to the discretion of council if the application will be notified.

Table 2 – Community Participation Categories (Refer to Table 3 for details)

| Exhibition types | |
|------------------|---|
| Type | Requirements |
| A | Not Notified Development Council may at its discretion decide to notify any of this type of development that may significantly impact on the amenity of adjoining land owners. |
| B | Notified Development A 14 day notification period will apply. Written notification will be sent to all owners of land directly adjoining or opposite the development site. Additional owners and occupiers may be notified at the discretion of Council staff. Council may at its discretion decide not to notify development where impacts on adjoining land owners are considered minor in nature. |
| C | Advertised Development Written notification in accordance with 'type C' requirements and an advertisement published on Council's website. Development Application (DA) information published on DA Tracker. Additional advertisements may be placed in newspapers and/or through such other mechanisms as may be appropriate to ensure that the public is reasonably aware of the proposal. Council may also at its discretion decide not to advertise insignificant development. |

Modification applications

The need or otherwise to notify an application to modify a development consent will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Act and Regulations or at the discretion of Council in consideration of the nature of the modifications proposed. Minor or low impact changes will not be notified

Table 3 – exhibition periods

| Development category | Exhibition types | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | A – Not Notified Development | B – Notified Development | C – Advertised Development |
| Residential Accommodation | | | |
| Dwelling – single storey | ✓ | | |
| Secondary dwelling | ✓ | | |
| Rural workers dwelling | ✓ | | |
| Residential ancillary (for example sheds, pools) | ✓ | | |
| Residential flat building | | | ✓ |
| Residential accommodation – all other types | | ✓ | |
| Rural | | | |
| Agriculture | | ✓ | |
| Farm buildings | ✓ | | |
| Forestry | | | ✓ |
| Animal boarding or training establishment | | ✓ | |
| Extractive industries/open cut mines | | | ✓ |
| Commercial Development | | | |
| Commercial premises (office, retail and business) | | ✓ | |
| Home business/occupation | ✓ | | |
| Entertainment facilities | | | ✓ |
| Function centres | | | ✓ |
| Sex services premises/home occupation (sex services) | | | ✓ |
| Restricted premises | | | ✓ |
| Community and entertainment facilities | | | |
| Places of public worship | | | ✓ |
| Recreation facility (major) | | | ✓ |
| Education establishment | | | ✓ |
| Health services facility | | ✓ | |
| Other uses relating to community infrastructure | | ✓ | |
| Industrial development | | | |
| General industry | | ✓ | |
| Industrial retail outlets | | ✓ | |
| Industrial training facilities | | ✓ | |

| Development category | Exhibition types | | |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | A – Not Notified Development | B – Notified Development | C – Advertised Development |
| Industrial development | | | |
| Light industry | ✓ | | |
| Storage premises | | ✓ | |
| Heavy industrial storage establishment | | | ✓ |
| Warehouse and distribution centres | | ✓ | |
| Freight transport facilities | | ✓ | |
| Heavy industry | | | ✓ |
| Rural industry | | ✓ | |
| Subdivision | | | |
| Strata subdivision | ✓ | | |
| 10 or more Torrens or community title lots | | ✓ | |
| Tourist and visitor accommodation | | | |
| Caravan parks and camping grounds* | | | ✓ |
| Tourist and visitor accommodation - all types | | ✓ | |
| Eco-tourist facility | | ✓ | |
| Miscellaneous | | | |
| Boatshed | | ✓ | |
| Electricity generating works | | ✓ | |
| Environmental facilities/environmental protection works | | ✓ | |
| Moorings/mooring pens | | ✓ | |
| Signage | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Air transport facility | | | ✓ |
| Airstrip | | | ✓ |
| Helipad | | | ✓ |
| Cemetery/crematorium/mortuaries | | | ✓ |
| Correction centre | | | ✓ |
| Marina | | | ✓ |
| Passenger transport facilities | | | ✓ |
| Port facilities | | | ✓ |
| Sewerage system | | ✓ | |
| Waste or resource management facility | | | ✓ |
| Water supply system | | ✓ | |

* The operator is required in writing to notify all potentially affected residents of their intention to lodge a development application or a planning proposal. This notice must be given at least 30 days before the operator lodges the development application or proposal. This change has come from an amendment to the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Amendment Act.



council@portstephens.nsw.gov.au | 02 4988 0255 | portstephens.nsw.gov.au    



Communication and Engagement Strategy

Supplementary report changes

The Council meeting on Tuesday 26 August 2025 includes consideration and adoption of the revised Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025 to 2030. Since the public release of the Council agenda, we've received additional feedback from the Communication and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG) members and Councillors in relation to Attachment 1: Community Participation Plan.

Based on this feedback, a number of changes have been proposed.

Feedback received

It's not clear how the CPP addresses the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act) 1979

Proposed Change

Clearer information is included in the introduction of the community participation requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, and how Council addresses these in the document.
From this on Page 26:

Attachment 1

Community Participation Plan

It's a statutory requirement for councils in NSW to prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) that is an easy-to-use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority.

How is community participation carried out

The CPP specifies requirements for notification and public exhibition. This can include:

- Giving written notice to neighbours, individual landowners or occupiers
- Advertising on Council's website
- Making documents publicly available online

Other methods are used to on a case by case basis, in line with statutory requirements.

If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or public holiday, it might be extended to finish on the first available work day, in accordance with the planning legislation, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

Plans or applications can't be made or determined until after the minimum period of public exhibition.

To this on pages 26 and 27:

Attachment 1

Community Participation Plan

It is a statutory requirement for Councils in NSW to prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) that is an easy-to-use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority.

Under Section 2.23 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act) 1979, we are required to:

- 1 Inform the community about planning matters that affect them.
- 2 Encourage meaningful opportunities for community participation in planning.
- 3 Ensure planning information is in plain English, easily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation.
- 4 Creates opportunities for early community participation as early as possible enabling community views to be genuinely considered.
- 5 Ensures community participation is inclusive.
- 6 Provides transparency in planning decisions, showing how community views have been considered.
- 7 Delivers community participation that is appropriate to the significance and likely impact of the proposed development.

How are we meeting the EP&A Act requirements

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Early meaningful engagement with the Port Stephens community in developing state and local government strategies. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Notification of Planning Proposals and Addendums to local government strategies via: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct letter to adjoining land owners.• Print advertising, e-newsletters and the Council's website for the broader community. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Proposed Social Impact Assessments are required if triggered by the development type. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Public access to Council meeting agendas, meetings and minutes on Council's website and in person. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Reports to Council outline each submission and Council's response to each. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Notification to any persons providing a submission, the outcome and how their feedback was considered. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Standards of practice set for public exhibition periods.* | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Communication and Engagement Strategy Strategic Priority 1 Community engagement key objectives (page 19) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design engagement opportunities that ensure time for considered thought and contribution.• Ensure engagement opportunities consider place, diversity and accessibility. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Communications and Engagement Strategy Strategic Priority 2 Community communications key objectives (page 21) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design communications that's easy to understand and accessible to all.• Continue to use our public website as the core community channel.• Create targeted, engaging and audience focused communication using data. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

*If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or public holiday, it might be extended to finish on the first available work day in accordance with the planning legislation, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of the period of public exhibition.
Plans or applications can't be made or determined until after the minimum period of public exhibition.

Feedback received

Proposed Change

Notification during the Planning Proposal Process should be broader than the adjoining residents and land owners

Broader notification to include the affected community during the Addendum request process, rather than only adjoining landowners.

From this on page 28:

Addendum request

If a site is not identified for housing in an adopted Council strategy endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), DPHI may require a proponent to request Council and DPHI to consider an 'addendum' to the strategy. Addendum requests will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days following lodgment and prior to any assessment by Council.

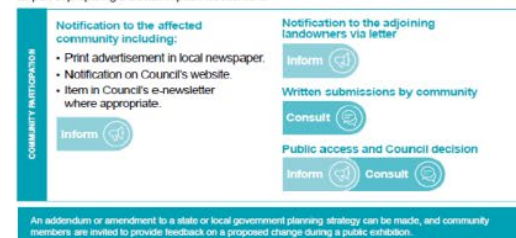


To this:

Addendum request

If a site is not identified for housing in an adopted Council strategy endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), DPHI may require a proponent to request Council and DPHI to consider an 'addendum' to the strategy. Addendum requests will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days following lodgment and prior to any assessment by Council.

As part of preparing an Addendum Request, a proponent may carry out early community participation as part of preparing a Social Impact Assessment.



Broader notification to include the affected community throughout the Planning Proposal Process, rather than only adjoining landowners.

From this, for step 2 on page 29 and step 5 on page 30:

2. Planning Proposal

Preparation and lodgment of the planning proposal by the proponent and initial assessment by Council.



To this for step 2 and step 5:

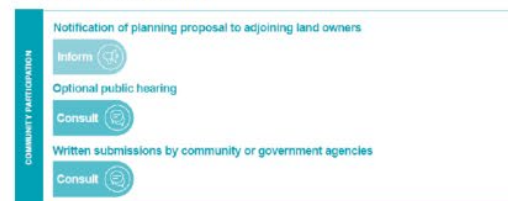
2. Planning Proposal

Preparation and lodgment of the planning proposal by the proponent and initial assessment by Council.



5. Public exhibition

At this stage, input from the community and government agencies is welcomed to review the planning proposal before a final decision is made.



5. Public exhibition

At this stage, input from the community and government agencies is welcomed to review the planning proposal before a final decision is made.



Feedback received

Proposed Change

Early engagement is not being undertaken in the Planning Proposal Process

Early engagement is undertaken in the development of 'State and local government strategies' and will also be undertaken if a Social Impact Assessment is triggered.

From this, for an Addendum request or step 1 of the Planning Proposal Process:

Addendum request

If a site is not identified for housing in an adopted Council strategy endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), DPHI may require a proponent to request Council and DPHI to consider an 'addendum' to the strategy. Addendum requests will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days following lodgment and prior to any assessment by Council.



1. Scoping Proposal

During this step, careful research is done to plan the proposal. This may include basic background studies, looking at the site and its surroundings, identifying the objectives of the proposal, and exploring ideas and how feasible they are. Early feedback can be provided to the proponent about additional community participation needed, which would be led by the proponent.



To this for the Addendum request and step 1 of the Planning Proposal Process:

Addendum request

If a site is not identified for housing in an adopted Council strategy endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), DPHI may require a proponent to request Council and DPHI to consider an 'addendum' to the strategy. Addendum requests will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days following lodgment and prior to any assessment by Council.

As part of preparing an Addendum Request, a proponent may carry out early community participation as part of preparing a Social Impact Assessment.



1. Scoping Proposal

During this step, careful research is done to plan the proposal. This may include basic background studies, looking at the site and its surroundings, defining the objectives of the proposal, and exploring the feasibility of the ideas. Early feedback can be provided to the proponent about additional community participation, depending on the nature of the planning proposal. For example, a Social Impact Assessment or similar process could be triggered, requiring early community participation for planning proposals such as identifying a new employment precinct. Community participation under a Social Impact Assessment would be led by the proponent.



Error identified

Correction of the error identified in the subheading for step 3 of the Planning Proposal Process. Subheading changed from Planning Proposal to Gateway Determination

From this:

3. Planning Proposal

The proposal is reviewed for strategic and site-specific merits by the NSW State Government who determine whether the planning proposal should proceed to the next stage

Gateway determination will set the statutory public exhibition period, which is usually 28 days.

To this:

3. Gateway determination

The proposal is reviewed for strategic and site-specific merits by the NSW State Government who determine whether the planning proposal should proceed to the next stage

Gateway determination will set the statutory public exhibition period, which is usually 28 days.