

Community Engagement is at the heart of local government. It helps communities to be active participants in shaping their own future and play a part in positive change.

Councils have a vital role to play in opening opportunities for community members to be involved in the strategic planning process.

*Source: Office of Local Government,
Integrated Planning & Reporting Guidelines.*

CARRATHOOL SHIRE COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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0154/21.03.17	Revision	In line with review of next CSP and IPR suite of documents
0465/21.03.2023	Revision	Combining of Community Engagement Strategy & Community Participation Plan.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PURPOSE	1
OBJECTIVE	1
WHY HAVE A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?	2
APPLICATION	3
KEY STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION	5
IDENTIFICATION OF VULNERABLE/HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS	5
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORK	5
ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	10
FEEDBACK & CONTACT DETAILS	10

INTRODUCTION

‘Community Engagement’ in a local government context describes the ways in which Council will inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower the community. Our community includes ratepayers, residents, service providers, business owners, employees and visitors. From simple information sharing and the promotion of activities and events, to encouraging debate on local issues and planning for the future – it is the way in which we continually build on and strengthen the ties between Council and the community in order to achieve positive outcomes for Carrathool Shire.

PURPOSE

In accordance with s402A of the *Local Government Act 1993*, each Council must establish and implement a strategy (known as the Community Engagement Strategy) for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs for the purpose of delivering its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

This Community Engagement Strategy will be used by Council staff when determining specific engagement activities, planning for these activities and evaluating their effectiveness. The strategy is also applicable to our Councillors, who as elected representatives of the community, play an important role in communicating community aspirations and maintaining the information flow on a range of diverse and complex issues.

This strategy does not prescribe any specific model for engagement. This is because our community engagement activities vary in urgency and priority, resource allocation and objectives. It also acknowledges that Council must adhere to certain legislative requirements and Acts of Parliament which stipulate how and when engagement should occur. This includes requirements under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*. At all times these requirements must be fulfilled first and foremost. The emphasis of this strategy is not about detailing our legislative obligations but on encouraging a culture of good engagement across the organisation.

OBJECTIVE

Council is committed to improving the quality of life of Carrathool Shire residents and is keen to engage the community in the development of policies, programs and services to assist it in achieving this commitment.

This strategy promotes community engagement by Council to ensure that it not only meets the statutory requirements but that it is open and accountable to the community and other stakeholders.

It is intended that this strategy will provide the community with a clear understanding of:

- Council’s commitment to community engagement
- When community engagement will occur
- What level of engagement will occur
- How the community engagement process will be managed

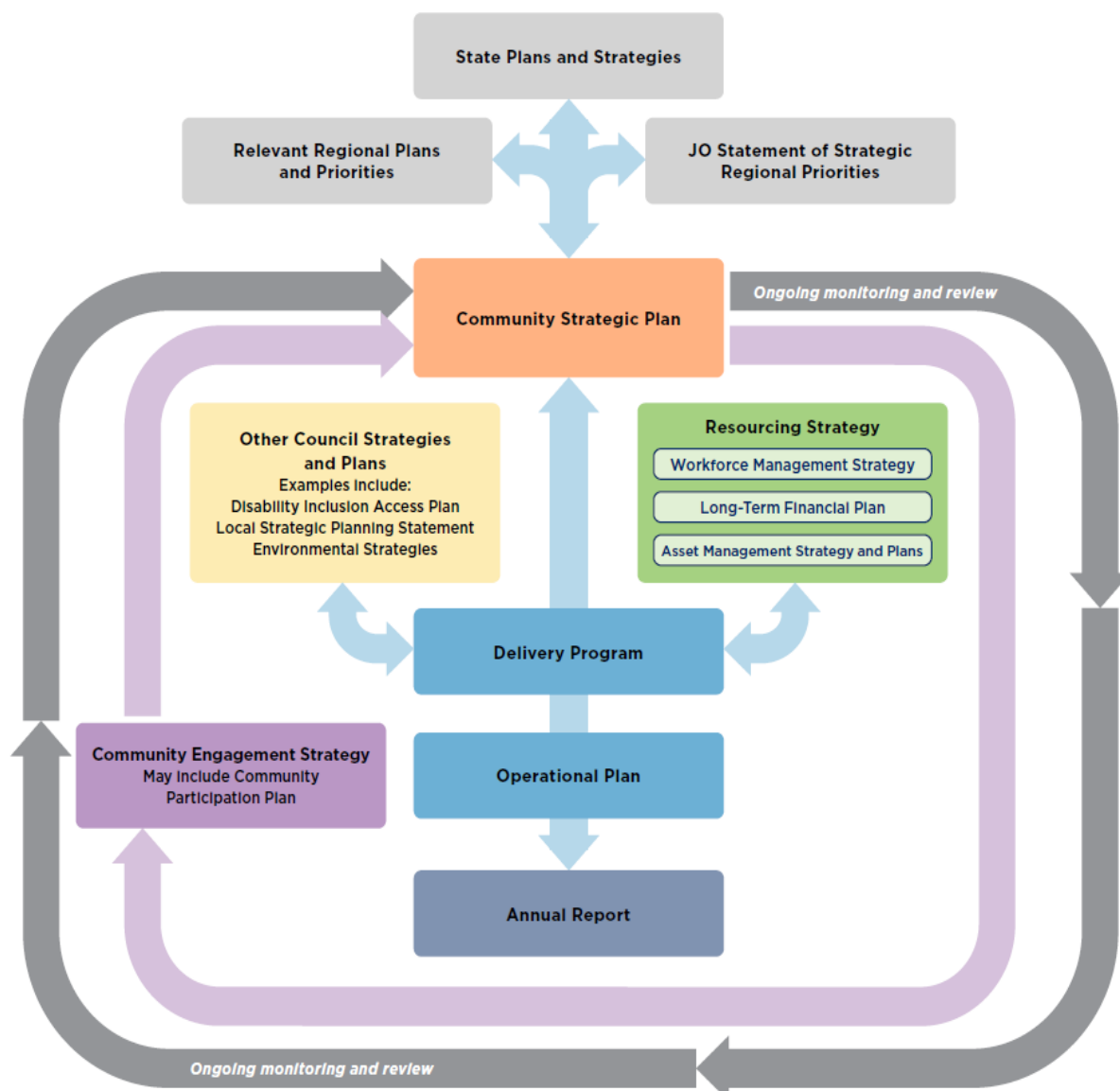
	Effective Date:	21.03.23
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The effectiveness of our Community Engagement Strategy will ultimately be measured by the degree to which it leads to better decisions, better use of resources and service provision, and ultimately to better outcomes for the people of Carrathool Shire.

WHY HAVE A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY?

Community engagement is a key component of the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework for councils. The strategy must be prepared, adopted and implemented based on social justice principles (**EQUITY, ACCESS, PARTICIPATION, RIGHTS**) for engagement with the local community to support Council in developing its plans and determining key activities.

Council is also required to prepare a Community Participation Plan under the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* for planning-related engagement. (effective March 2018). Combining the Community Participation Plan with the Community Engagement Strategy is considered best practice, giving the community greater clarity about how and when they will be able to have a say together with providing consistency of approach and delivery.



In its engagement processes Council is committed to:

- building partnerships with the community and valuing input in decision-making processes
- undertaking a diverse range of engagement approaches and applying methods suited to differing situations and stakeholders
- implementing a high quality, disciplined and consistent approach to community engagement
- utilising best practice online technologies
- conducting engagement based on mutual respect, diversity and recognition of the need to work together to improve the environment and lifestyle of residents now and into the future
- listening to and respecting the views of others
- providing feedback to the community about Council's decisions
- meeting the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*
- providing information to the community that is in plain language and easily accessible
- seeking views which are representative of the community



APPLICATION

Council will apply community engagement methodologies as appropriate to the specific activity, service or project and within resource and budget constraints.

Council will engage with the community when:

- developing Council plans and policies which impact the local government area
- decisions on crucial operational, infrastructure or services, service standards or resource management matters are required
- it seeks a broader understanding of the community's views and opinions on issues where decisions are likely to have major impacts on a distinct community or the local government area as a whole
- a decision would benefit from external expert advice
- the community presents a sound case for community engagement
- there is a legislative requirement to do so
- consultation is required on development applications, planning proposals, development contribution plans, local strategic planning statements and development control plans

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	Version No.:	4

Council may choose not to engage with the community when:

- Council is confident that sufficient current and accurate data or information is available to make an informed decision
- matters are administrative or routine management
- external timeframes imposed on council do not permit the inclusion of an engagement process
- decisions are imposed by external agencies
- there is an emergency situation

When engagement is sought on a document or application it is notified in the 'Public Exhibition' section of Council's website, at Council's offices and/or promoted through Council's social media platforms and may be published in a local newspaper. A notice will be published in a local newspaper where required by legislation.

Each document legislated to require consultation will be made available for comment for a minimum of 28 days, unless legislated to be available for a shorter or longer period of time.

Development applications and applications to modify (other than for complying development certificates, designated development, state significant development or Council related development applications) will be made available for a minimum of 14 days.

The minimum public exhibition period for a council-related development application is 28 days. A council-related development application means a development application for which a council is the consent authority, that is:

- a) made by, or on behalf of, the council or
- b) for development on land –
 - i. of which the council is an owner, a lessee or a licensee, or
 - ii. otherwise vested in, or under the control of, the council (includes public land within the meaning of the *Local Government Act 1993*)

Notification of development applications or modification requests may not be required for proposals that:

- are consistent with the principal land uses permitted by the zoning
- comply with the requirements of Carrathool Shire local environmental plans
- comply with the requirements of, or meet the objectives of, any applicable development control plan or planning policy
- are unlikely to have a significant impact on adjoining or opposite properties

Planning proposals/LEP amendments will be notified for the minimum period specified in the gateway determination for the proposal. If the gateway determination does not specify a period due to the minor nature of the proposal, no notice will be given.

Note: The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) will be excluded from the calculation of a period of consultation.

	Effective Date:	21.03.23
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If written submissions are requested, they must be forwarded to Council during the period of notice concerning the matter. Before determining the matter notified, Council must consider all submission made to it.

Council will advise the community of all development applications determined in a local newspaper and/or on the Council website, including the decision and date. The assessment report will also be made available if required which includes the reasons for the decision and how community views were taken into account.

KEY STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

For the purpose of community engagement, stakeholders are generally defined as:

- children, young people and adults who live in Carrathool Shire including resident ratepayers and non-rate paying residents
- non-resident ratepayers
- community based and volunteer agencies
- special interest groups/communities
- local businesses
- council staff
- individuals who work in Carrathool Shire
- individuals who visit Carrathool Shire
- government agencies having an interest in Carrathool Shire

For the purpose of development applications, the following stakeholders will be notified directly by mail or email:

- land owners adjoining the site (the subject of the application) who share a common side or rear property boundary, and
- land owners directly opposite the site (the subject of the application)

The stakeholder notification may be extended having regard to the particular application and its locality.

IDENTIFICATION OF VULNERABLE/HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS

In the Census of 2021 there were 214 people or 7.4% of the population in Carrathool Shire reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability, health conditions or old age. Council will also ensure its website and notices meet best practice accessibility requirements for this cohort of our population. In 2021, 374 or 13% of the population were primary or secondary school aged. Council will ensure it reaches out to this part of the community on relevant issues through using targeted engagement e.g. schools, library, social media.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORK

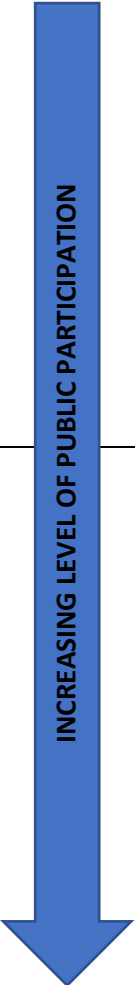
There are five recognised levels of an engagement strategy, as outlined in the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum. These five strategies are **INFORM**, **CONSULT**, **INVOLVE**, **COLLABORATE** and **EMPOWER**. IAP2 is an internationally recognised non-profit organisation that promotes and improves public participation.

	Effective Date:	21.03.23
Uncontrolled document when printed. Please refer to website or intranet for controlled document	Version No.:	4

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum is a recognised tool designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role. It shows that differing levels of participation and different methodologies are legitimate depending on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. It also sets out the promise being made to the public at each participation level.

A broad framework for community engagement in Carrathool Shire has been developed based on IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and is detailed in the tables below:

	Effective Date:	21.03.23
Uncontrolled document when printed. Please refer to website or intranet for controlled document	Version No.:	4

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
1. INFORM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAQs Customer Service Enquiries Rate/Water Notices Council Corner 	<p><i>To provide stakeholders with appropriate information on Council, its decision-making, services, events, projects and any associated issues.</i></p> <p>This is the primary form of community engagement and builds knowledge and skills in the community.</p> <p>For a number of people, depending on the nature of the issue, this may be the only form of community engagement they want.</p>	<p>We will keep you informed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media releases Community newsletters Online: website/email/ social media Distribution of in-house documents & publications Notification letters Public consultation Letter box drops Internal communication and/or consultation Official opening and/or launch
2. CONSULT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Applications Council Policies Planning Proposals 	<p><i>Actively seek stakeholder's views and input into policy, plans and decisions.</i></p> <p>Council retains overall decision making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will listen to you, consider your ideas and concerns and keep you informed.</p> <p>Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions, including how community views have been taken into account.</p> <p>Working/Consultative and User Groups will be formed to participate in project specific engagement opportunities as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media releases Community newsletters Paid advertising Online: website/email/ social media Distribution of in-house documents & publications Notification letters Community meetings Surveys & questionnaires Public consultation Letter box drops Internal communication and/or consultation Official opening and/or launch Pre-application consultation re major development applications Council/Planning forums

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
3. INVOLVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Delivery Program</i> • <i>Operational Plan</i> • <i>Planning Strategies</i> 	<p><i>To work directly with stakeholders to ensure that ideas, concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</i></p> <p>Involving a two-way exchange of information that encourages discussion and provides an opportunity to influence the outcome.</p> <p>While ‘involve’ assumes a greater level of participation by stakeholders as they work through issues and alternatives to assist in the decision-making process, Council retains overall decision-making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will work with you to ensure that your ideas, concerns and aspirations are considered and provide feedback.</p> <p>Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions, including how community views have been taken into account.</p> <p>Working/Consultative and User Groups will be formed to participate in project specific engagement opportunities as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media releases • Community newsletters • Paid advertising • Online: website/email/ social media • Distribution of in-house documents & publications • Notification letters • Community meetings • Surveys & questionnaires • Committees • Public consultation • Letter box drops • Internal communication and/or consultation • Official opening and/or launch
4. COLLABORATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community Strategic Plan (CSP)</i> • <i>Community Committees</i> 	<p><i>To work in partnership with stakeholders, incorporating their input and advice, jointly formulating solutions and/or options, and sharing agenda setting and deliberation of issues.</i></p> <p>Occurs when ownership of an issue is shared between Council and community stakeholders.</p> <p>May be some level of delegated decision making to community stakeholders, but Council maintains overall decision making responsibility.</p>	<p>We will work together in seeking the best outcomes for Carrathool Shire.</p> <p>Working/Consultative and User Groups will be formed to participate in project specific engagement opportunities as required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media releases • Community newsletters • Paid advertising • Online: website/email/ social media • Distribution of in-house documents & publications • Notification letters • Community meetings • Surveys & questionnaires • Focus groups • Forums & Workshops • Committees • Public exhibition • Letter box drops • Internal communication and/or consultation • Official opening and/or launch

STRATEGY	APPLICATION (Examples)	GOAL	COMMITMENT	METHODOLOGIES
5. EMPOWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Very specific community projects where Council have the ability to delegate decision making authority.</i> 	<p><i>To place final decision making in the hands of stakeholders.</i></p> <p>Empowered communities share responsibility for making decisions and accountability for the outcomes of those decisions.</p> <p>Legislative and policy frameworks may give power to communities to make decisions. The community may have the power to make a limited range of decisions (e.g. on a specified issue or for a limited time).</p>	We will ensure the collective position of the community is an integral part of the decision making process.	By ensuring that the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence are apparent in all community engagement.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Mayor and Councillors** will promote and encourage opportunities for community engagement. As elected representatives, the Mayor and Councillors also have a role in considering feedback from the community when making decisions of Council.

The **General Manager** is responsible for reviewing the Community Engagement Strategy and promoting its implementation.

Other **Staff Members** will work with, and support, the General Manager in the implementation of both the Community Engagement Strategy and the Community Strategic Plan and promote opportunities for engagement with the community.

FEEDBACK & CONTACT DETAILS

Carrathool Shire is committed to promoting opportunities for community engagement which will lead to better outcomes for the community. If you have any feedback or comments about this strategy please contact us on the details listed below:

Goolgowi Office

9-11 Cobram Street Goolgowi NSW 2652

PO Box 12 Goolgowi NSW 2652

Phone: 02 6965 1900

Hillston District Office

139-145 High Street Hillston NSW 2675

Phone: 02 6961 7600

Email: council@carrathool.nsw.gov.au

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/carrathoolshirecouncil>

	Effective Date:	21.03.2023
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