

Community Engagement Policy

POLICY PURPOSE

Council has prepared this Policy in response to the principles of the Local Government Act 2009. The Policy supports ongoing and interactive relationships between Council and its community enabling people to be informed about local and regional issues, contribute ideas and help identify solutions.

This policy aims to:-

- Outline Council's understanding of the term 'community engagement'.
- Affirm Council's ongoing commitment to meaningful community engagement
- Inform Council's '*Guide to Engagement*' which outlines organisational practices to ensure community engagement is properly planned and implemented

DEFINITION

Council defines community engagement as:

An ongoing, open dialogue with our community to identify issues and opportunities, exchange views, and assist with planning and informed decision making.

Council understands that community engagement embraces the core approaches of information, consultation and participation.

POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to Council's operations where appropriate. It applies to Councillors and staff, and to contractors and consultants engaged by Council as relevant.

The policy explains the principles and context underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of councillors, staff and consultants in engaging with the community, and links to mechanisms which Council will use to engage the community.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

With reference to Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2009, Council supports the principle of 'meaningful community engagement'.

Council views the following principles as important for the success of its community engagement activities:-

inclusiveness: an inclusive process takes into account that communities are diverse and that engagement methods are selected and utilised based on their practicality and relevance.

cost effectiveness: Council will utilise engagement methods and activities to enhance present and future planning and decision making, while making sure that Council gets value for the cost of any engagement process.

mutual respect: Council will require respectful behaviour from all participants acknowledging differing points of view and contributions.

recognition: Council recognises that information and processes may already be available that could contribute to new community engagement activities.

Following engagement, it is Council's responsibility to make decisions on behalf of the community it represents.

GUIDE TO ENGAGEMENT

Different community engagement techniques and communication mechanisms can be used depending upon the issue or project, its particular circumstance, and the audience to be targeted.

Council's '*Guide to Engagement*' points to many methods and/or techniques that can be utilised for community engagement.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Gympie Regional Council '*Corporate Plan 2012-2017*'
Gympie Regional Council '*Guide to Engagement*'
Local Government Act 2009

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Council will review this policy in line with its regular review of policies and procedures.

Adopted by Council resolution F23/06/10 (and amended by F21/07/10 & M09/03/13)