

20 August 2019

## Finding a better pathway for planning services

From next week, Gympie Regional Council will be sitting down and listening to business owners, developers, planning consultants and residents to better understand their experiences navigating Council's planning and development service.

Council hopes that the frank, honest and open conversations with a cross section of community representatives will help shine a light on areas for improvements so that the people's experiences navigating the planning and development application process can be more positive.

To ensure independence, the community engagement component of the *Better Pathways to Planning* project will be delivered by an external consultant who will report its findings back to Council. The report will include recommendations for service improvement.

More than 70 people have been invited to participate in either a one-on-one, in-depth interview or as part of a focus group session. A strong response has been received so far.

Stakeholders were invited from names provided to the consultants by Council and the local chambers of commerce.

Participants will be a mix of one-off and occasional applicants through to regular applicants for whom liaising with Council's Planning and Development Department is a critical part of their business, and will include people who have had varying experiences.

Council's CEO, Bernard Smith, welcomes the initiative as a way of gaining valuable perspective from the customer's point of view.

"We are operating in a complex environment created by the need to comply with a variety of Federal, State and Local Laws, combinations of which may be relevant to any individual development application," said Bernard.

"It's our job to help make the environment less complex and easier to navigate; but we can't do that without first understanding what parts of the path are the trickiest and most frustrating."

The *Better Pathways to Planning* project follows the past 12-18 months of community feedback on the draft Economic Development and Investment Strategy where some concerns were raised.

It is expected that the one-on-one interviews, focus group sessions and community survey will be completed by the end of October 2019. A report on the results of the stakeholder engagement, including recommendations, will be presented to Council and made available to the public by the end of November 2019.

For more information visit [www.gympie.qld.gov.au/better-pathways](http://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/better-pathways).

**ENDS**

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