

16/07/2019

Community engagement to look at planning processes

Gympie Regional Council will roll out a stakeholder engagement program to better understand and improve the planning process.

This project follows on from the past 12 months of community feedback regarding the delivery of the upcoming Economic Development and Investment strategy, and acknowledges last month's business breakfast at the Gympie Civic Centre, where significant concerns were raised regarding the council planning process for the Gympie region.

Council acknowledges the feedback and concerns, and has engaged a third party consultant to perform a comprehensive engagement process with a view to understand ways that council can improve the planning process for the business and industry sectors and the community overall.

An internal process with staff has commenced, reviewing our internal processes to better support the user experience.

The project will look at the issues raised and include a range of one-on-one and focus group style sessions with stakeholders such as major developers, professionals involved in the planning process (e.g. engineering and planning consultants and legal representatives), objectors to past developments and proponents to both successful and unsuccessful applications.

The engagement also needs to include applicants who have had no experience in the complex world of planning applications. It has been recognised that for the change to be effective, it has to be built upon objective feedback based on facts and experience.

Mayor Curran reinforced the importance of the project.

"It is important to council to ensure the region's planning systems are not only user friendly but also able to perform the important role of guiding the growth and development of the region while ensuring a fair and equitable environment when competing interests are presented." He said.

"The objective is to have an enabling culture which supports sustainable economic development and protects the lifestyle and amenity of the region. This initiative is a good example of council undertaking true engagement with a cross-section of stakeholders in order to get a better outcome for the community".

Council, like any large organisation, needs to continue to strive to do better on all fronts." Commented Mayor Curran.

Outcomes are expected to include improvements to council's processes and the way it deals with applicants, improved upfront information provided to applicants and the community on how the planning system operates, an increase in the quality of planning applications by consultants and a better understanding by all stakeholders of each other's role.

Once consultation with stakeholders is complete actions will be developed

These findings will also be available to stakeholders and residents later in the year.

Community engagement will commence next month.

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