

16 September 2019  
Stakeholder update 2

## A better understanding

Welcome to our second update for our *Better Pathways to Planning* project.

Following on from the one-on-one interviews that I talked about in our last update, last week, our consultants ran four focus group sessions. Each session focussed on a different group of representatives so that we could understand their unique perspectives. These groups comprised of:

1. frequent and recent development applicants
2. consultants and state government agencies
3. people with business interests
4. council staff.

A total of 46 people participated in the focus group sessions. I have continued to be heartened by the community's participation in this project. We have received a healthy mix of feedback which will provide some good data for the consultant's final report.

Many of the comments have reinforced the complex nature of the planning and development service environment. As I've mentioned before, Council's team assess applications against a variety of Federal, State and Local Laws and often liaises with state government agencies who may also need to assess and approve parts of applications.

And while the environment can be complex, we understand that it is our job to try and make it less complex for our customers and the community. And that is why this project is so important.



Our next step is for our consultants to take all that they have heard and learnt to develop a list of outcomes to date that will be presented to our Councillors for their comment and input. We will provide another update after that time.

*Bernard*

**Bernard Smith**  
CEO, Gympie Regional Council

## Project update

This past week, our consultants ran four focus group sessions to more deeply explore the issues raised by participants during the one-on-one interviews.

Some of the general improvements that were suggested during the one-on-one interviews included:

- More strategic leadership from Council regarding important and priority projects.
- Effective communication of Council's policies and decisions.
- More clearly communicating the development assessment steps and timing.

These and other suggested improvements were presented to focus group participants for their feedback.

The focus group participants supported the following suggestions:

- Making Council's policies and decisions more transparent.
- More effective communication between all parties (internal and external) for more timely responses.
- Introducing a panel of experts to assist applicants.
- Better aligning Council's strategies with the detail of the region's Planning Scheme.
- Creating a regional business and industry precinct.
- Considering how best to progress projects of significance for the region.

Participants of both the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions also suggested other specific initiatives and areas for improvement and these will be included in the consultant's analysis as they prepare their list of recommendations.

The Council's independent consultants are now working to more thoroughly analyse all the data and feedback received to develop a draft list of suggestions. These will be presented to our Councillors for their information before being made available for comment by the community via an online community survey.

*If you have any questions about the Better Pathways to Planning project, you are welcome to contact council on 5481 0983 or by email: [communications@gympie.qld.gov.au](mailto:communications@gympie.qld.gov.au).*