

ITEM 4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW 2018

The draft Community Engagement Policy 2018 states Wollongong City Council is committed to engaging the community in an effective, timely and transparent manner so community views can provide input into decision making.

This report seeks Council's endorsement for the draft Community Engagement Policy 2018 to be placed on public exhibition.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 The draft Community Engagement Policy 2018 be placed on public exhibition from 8 May to 4 June 2018.
- 2 Following the public exhibition period, a revised Community Engagement Policy 2018 be presented to Council for adoption.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Susan Wardle, Manager Community Cultural and Economic Development (Acting)

Authorised by: Renae Elrington, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Draft Community Engagement Policy 2018
- 2 Community Engagement Policy adopted in 2013

BACKGROUND

The Community Engagement Policy is reviewed in each new Council term. The policy was last reviewed in 2013. The draft Community Engagement Policy 2018 incorporates findings from benchmarking and industry changes, internal engagement, Councillor feedback, key stakeholders, children, young people and the results of the Community Satisfaction Survey 2017.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed Council endorse the public exhibition of the draft Community Engagement Policy 2018. Following the exhibition period, submissions will be reviewed and an updated Community Engagement Policy prepared. A report recommending the adoption of the revised Community Engagement Policy will be prepared for the 25 June 2018 Council meeting.

Key changes are:

- better communication on how decisions are made
- including and explaining the feedback loop
- Policy is written in plain English with graphics to make it more community friendly.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

A Communication and Engagement Strategy has been developed for the public exhibition of the draft Community Engagement Policy. Council staff will provide information to Neighbourhood Forums meetings and reference groups scheduled during the exhibition period. Information on the draft policy will be available at all Council Libraries and will be widely promoted throughout the period. Our online platform, Have Your Say, will be utilised throughout the exhibition period to obtain feedback together with promotion via social media.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

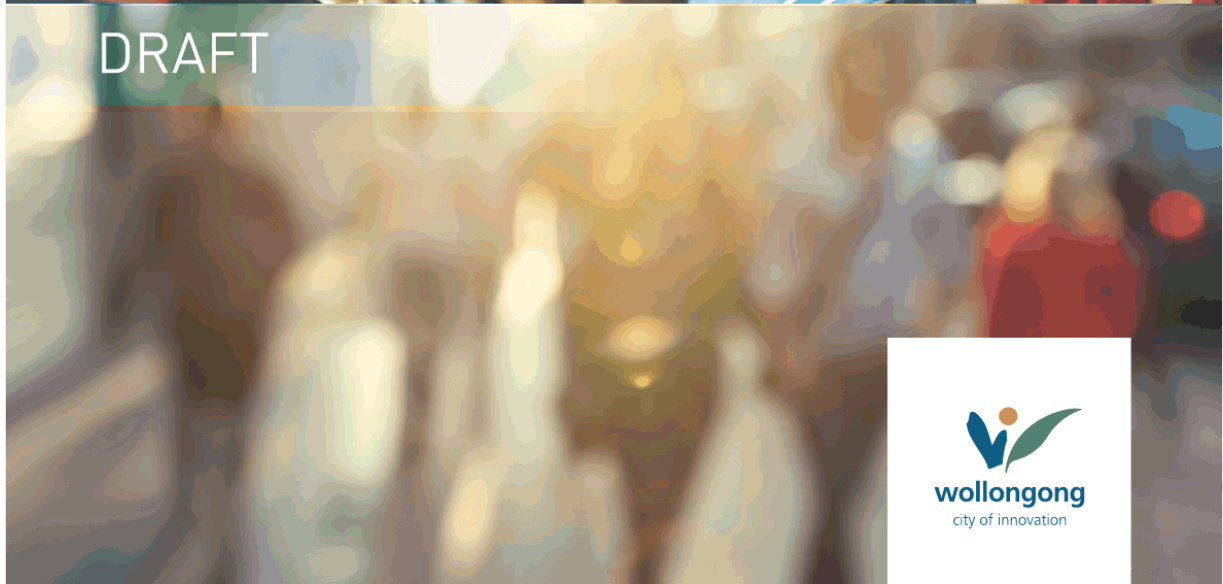
This report contributes to the delivery of Wollongong 2022 goal “we are a connected and engaged community”. It specifically delivers on the following:

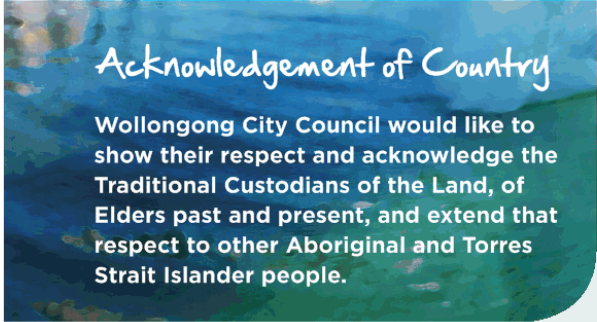
Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2012-2017	Annual Plan 2017-18
Strategy	5 Year Action	Annual Deliverables
4.1.1 Provide residents with equitable access to information and opportunities to inform decision making.	4.1.1.1 Ensure an effective community engagement framework that connects the community to Council decision making	Deliver a diverse range of community engagement opportunities to inform and guide development and delivery of Council business

CONCLUSION

The draft Community Engagement Policy 2018 is Council’s commitment to engage with the community. When endorsed, it will apply to Councillors, staff, contractors and consultants and volunteers. This draft policy have been prepared following a review of benchmarking and industry changes, research, targeted engagement and data analysis.

If endorsed for exhibition, an opportunity will be provided for the community to provide feedback from 8 May to 4 June 2018, prior to a revised policy being prepared for Council to consider for adoption.





Acknowledgement of Country

Wollongong City Council would like to show their respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land, of Elders past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Council commits to engaging with our community. We want to hear your views, involve you in creating shared visions, and find solutions to issues affecting our community.

We are all different and, by hearing from you, we will uncover diverse views. We commit to listening to and considering all views.

Council will engage with the community to:

- Build relationships and trust;
- Seek input into the design of services and policies;
- Keep the community informed about projects and plans;
- Seek joint ownership of solutions.

Council encourages the community to actively engage and work together with us to make decisions for our city.

OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITY

We are committed to involving our community in decision making about things that affect them. This means:

- We will engage with you in an effective, timely and transparent manner;
- We offer a range of ways for you to participate;
- We encourage all community members to have their say;
- We value your ideas, views and local knowledge;
- We include community views in Council decision making processes.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

It is how we reach out and encourage you, our community, to talk with us about the plans, projects and policies we develop on your behalf. It is about asking the community to help Council make decisions.

Community Engagement processes are undertaken to:

- Support decision making;
- Build relationships;
- Strengthen community;
- Build a sense of belonging.

OUR PRINCIPLES OF OPEN AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council is committed to the following principles of community engagement:

1. We aim to be flexible

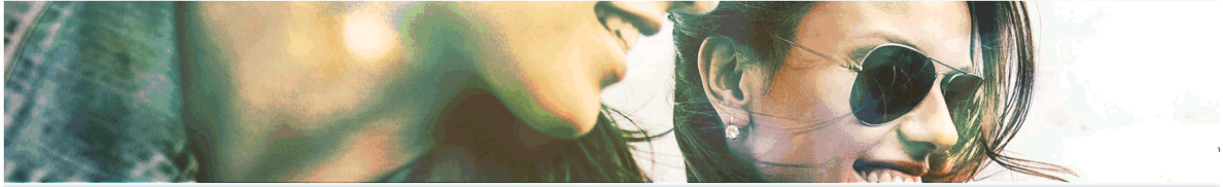
We aim to provide a variety of ways you can be informed and have your say. We encourage feedback from you and all community members who may be affected by, or are interested in, a decision we make on our community's behalf.

2. We will be inclusive

We live in a diverse community and it's important everyone's voices are heard. We will ensure children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with a disability, and any other community members who need support, have access and opportunities to get involved and have their say.

3. We believe community engagement is important for good governance

We are committed to engaging with you, our community, as a core component of good governance and effective decision making. Your feedback will be used to continuously improve the service we provide.



4. We aim to effectively plan each engagement

Through effective planning and engagement techniques we will avoid duplication or over-consultation. You will be encouraged to have your say in a timely manner and consultations will run during school terms. Where we are unable to avoid school holidays, additional consultation time will be factored in.

5. We will give you feedback

We are committed to letting you know that your views, concerns and feedback have been heard and what the final decision is.

OUR PROCESS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Each engagement will be tailored to the needs of directly and indirectly affected community and the project itself.



First we PLAN:

When planning an engagement we consider who, when, and how the process will be conducted. Council and the community benefit from sharing new ideas, skills, knowledge, expertise and experiences. It is also the community's opportunity to assist with democratic processes.

Who do we engage with?

We define community as all people and groups who are interested in the future of Wollongong. This includes government and non-government agencies, community groups, businesses, residents and visitors. Council will target engagements to stakeholders who might be directly and indirectly impacted by a decision and those likely to be interested in a decision.

When we engage

Community engagement happens at the planning stage of a project or initiative, when a change of service, activities or infrastructure is considered, when an issue is raised and requires a decision, or when more information or evidence is required. For a long-term project or program there is likely to be multiple stages of engagement.

How we engage

The level of engagement will depend on the level of interest and impact a plan or project will have on the community. A detailed table of the levels of engagement and some methods of engagement is on page 5.

The ENGAGEMENT:

This is when we talk directly with you, the community, about a project. We call this the engagement or exhibition period. For each engagement process we will explain:

- What the engagement is about;
- Where to find out more information about the topic;
- How you can have your say;
- The timeframe for your comments;
- What happens to your feedback.

We will always acknowledge your feedback.



All submissions are considered during an engagement or exhibition period. Closing dates and times will always be clearly advertised.

We accept community feedback in the form of written letters, emails, surveys and feedback forms. Council also uses workshop techniques to gain community feedback. All submissions can be made available for public inspection and you can request Council remove your personal information from your submission.

Then we ANALYSE:

We read, review and analyse all feedback. From this a report is written and the accompanying summary document we prepare will be included in any Council reports. This is how your feedback becomes a key element in the decision making process.

Then a DECISION is made:

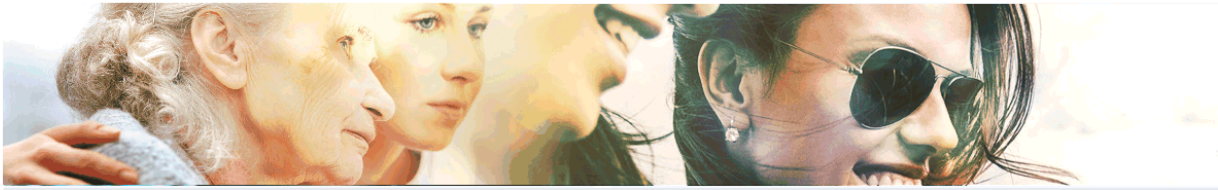
A democracy provides opportunity for your views to be heard and for the elected representatives (your Councillors) to make decisions on your behalf. When we are making a decision we are required to consider the following:

- Council Budget or Financial impact (*so we can spend your money wisely*);
- Legislation (*State and Federal*);
- Council policies and resolutions (*endorsed by your elected representatives*);
- Evidence provided by technical and professional assessment and industry best practice;
- Economic, Environmental, Social and Governance impacts (*Quadruple bottom line*).

When a project you have provided feedback on is being voted on at a Council meeting, you will be notified of the meeting date. Council reports are available prior to a meeting, and minutes following a meeting. You are also welcome to attend Council meetings.

Your views, ideas and local knowledge are an important part of this decision making process. Community engagement does not replace the decision making role of your Councillors.





Then we TELL YOU ABOUT THE DECISION:

'What happened to my idea?', 'Did you listen?', 'Did you care?', and 'Did it make a difference?' These are reasonable questions that participants of an engagement will ask.

The **FEEDBACK LOOP** is one of the most important elements of the engagement process. We outline what happened with the community and stakeholder feedback and explain how it was used. The Feedback Loop demonstrates our genuine commitment to engagement and transparency of community views.

Finally we EVALUATE:

We seek to understand the community's satisfaction with our different engagements so that we can continue to improve the ways in which we engage with them.

ROLE OF COUNCILLORS

Councillors are your elected representatives. They meet with the community in a range of ways including sitting on Committee and Reference Groups, and attending Council meetings, events and engagement activities, to hear your views, concerns and aspirations. As a community member you're able to contact your Councillors directly. Their contact details are listed on Council's website.

Councillors may attend opportunities set up by staff to talk with the community. At these community engagements the Councillors' role is to listen, discuss and record community feedback so it can be considered in decision making. Councillors may also engage with the community without staff involvement.

ROLE OF COUNCIL STAFF

The requirements to engage with the community on matters that affect them are set out in the Local Government Charter (section 8). Council staff are responsible for providing clear and unbiased information to help the community understand a project, the process of having a say, and how the feedback received will be reported.

APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy applies to Council's:

- Councillors
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Consultants

EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

Council's engagement activities will be regularly evaluated and reported to the community through Council's quarterly and annual reports and Delivery Program Progress report. You can find these reports on our website.

This Policy will be reviewed early in each new Council term.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Civil Works Notifications Policy - describes a standardised notification process for civil infrastructure construction and maintenance projects across the local government area. Public Notification and Advertising Procedures - this appendix to the Wollongong Development Control Plan sets out a standardised notification and advertising process for development assessment and determination. It sets out criteria for assessments to be referred to the Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel.

Customer Service Policy - sets out Council's commitment to delivering quality customer service to the community, to effective complaint handling, and providing the organisation with information to inform continuous improvement.

Reference and Advisory Group Charters (various) - set out the purpose, recruitment and meeting practices for a variety of special interest topic reference and advisory groups. These groups consist of community, Councillor and Council staff members.

Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel Charter - the panel is used to add value and improve decision making in relation to development assessment in specific situations. It provides an independent forum for stakeholders (applicants and objectors) to present and discuss issues relating to controversial development proposals.





Public Access Forum Policy - provides community members with an opportunity to address Councillors prior to an ordinary meeting of Council, acknowledging that consultation and contribution to the decision making of Council enhance the quality of Council's decisions.



LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT - THE IAP2 TABLE

The guide below shows the four levels of engagement Council has adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. There are times when we will inform you about a decision we have made. For other projects we may engage with you at the consult or involve level. The collaborative level of engagement is more likely to be used for engagements like long term plans.

The process of community engagement is a dynamic one which means there is likely to be movement back and forth through the different levels of an engagement process especially for more complex projects. However, whichever process is used, Council is responsible for the final decision.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT* adopted from IAP2				
	INFORM 	CONSULT 	INVOLVE 	COLLABORATE 
	A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE	MID LEVEL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT		WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE A DECISION ON A PREFERRED SOLUTION
GOALS	Clear communication from Council to the community to assist their understanding of decisions that have been made.	Council seeks feedback from the community on draft plans, services, projects or policies. The community has an opportunity to have their say before a decision is made.	Council works with the community to understand issues and involves community members in designing possible solutions.	Council will offer opportunities for members of the community to work with us to understand issues and develop a range of solutions. We will work together to make a decision on a preferred solution.
PROMISE	We will use a variety of communication methods to keep the community informed. We will strive to ensure that information about Council services and plans is accessible and readily available. Council will provide community updates and information on decisions. Council acknowledges that sometimes it has to inform the community on decisions the community cannot change.	We will provide opportunities for the community to provide feedback on plans and projects that will be considered in decision making. We are committed to providing clear information about how and when the community can have their say and how feedback will be used.	We will provide opportunities for the community to work directly with Council to ensure we understand aspirations, opportunities, and concerns and that these are incorporated as often as possible into plans. We will provide feedback on how community input influenced decisions.	Council will partner with the community on the development of alternatives and solutions.
TECHNIQUES	Council's website and online media channels Council's newsletters Letters and emails Fact sheets Customer Service Events and functions Kiosks and information sessions	Public Access Forum Ward meetings Community Forums Kiosks Surveys and submissions Online engagement Communication channels Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel	Ward meetings Community forums Kiosks Reference and Advisory groups Focus groups Workshops Online engagement Communication channels	Focus groups Workshops Reference and Advisory groups Online engagement Communication channels
	AWARENESS BUILDING	IDEAS GENERATION	DISCUSS AND COLLATE	OUR COMMUNITY VISION



POLICY REVIEW AND VARIATION

- 1 Council is to have opportunity to review and adopt, at least once during its Term, each Council policy.
- 2 A resolution of Council is required to adopt any variations to this policy, with the exception of minor administrative changes, such as updates to legislative references, which may be endorsed by the Executive Management Committee (EMC). Endorsement of administrative changes made to this policy by EMC does not alter the requirement for it to be reviewed and adopted by each Term of Council.

SUMMARY SHEET

Responsible Division	Community Cultural and Economic Development
Date adopted by Council	(To be inserted by Corporate Governance)
Date of previous adoptions	8 April 2013, Previously titled "Community Consultation" 25 May 2010, 28 November 2005, 28 October 2008
Date of next review	(List date - Not more than 4 years from adoption)
Legislative or other requirement for review DELETE THIS WHOLE ROW IF NOT APPLICABLE	(List review timeframe and Act, policy or review requirement)
Responsible Manager	Engagement Coordinator
Authorised by	Manager Community Cultural and Economic Development



OUR PLACE **our voice** FUTURE

*Recognises the value of your voice in determining our collective future.
It also recognises Councillors and staff as part of the same community.
Together we can create our future Wollongong.*

We are a connected and engaged community



ADOPTED BY COUNCIL: 8 APRIL 2013

BACKGROUND

This Community Engagement Council Policy commits to engaging the community, to seeking opportunities to inform the community, develop community partnerships and seek community input into decision making.

This Policy reflects the community's aspirations in Wollongong 2022: Our Community Strategic Plan to become a connected and engaged community.

Council will engage with the community in:

- building relationships and trust;
- seeking input into the design of services and policies;
- keeping the community informed about projects and plans;
- seeking joint ownership of solutions.

Council encourages the community to actively engage and work together with us to make decisions for our city.

OBJECTIVE

Council aims to engage with the community in line with Council's:

- Community Vision
- Community Goals
- Organisational Values

POLICY STATEMENT

Wollongong City Council is committed to engaging the community in an effective, timely and transparent manner so their views can provide input into decision making. Council will actively encourage the participation of community members who may be affected by, or are interested in a decision. The method of engagement will be appropriate to the project and the needs of the affected community.

Council recognises its obligations under the Local Government Charter (section 8 and throughout the Local Government Act 1993) as they relate to consultation, participation and engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement is about asking the community to help Council make better decisions.

Engagement allows us to benefit from the local knowledge of the community, creating shared visions and commitment to solutions. Each engagement will be designed according to the needs of the project and the needs of the directly or indirectly affected community. For each engagement the community will be offered a variety of ways to be informed and have their say.

Council acknowledges that the level of input the community can have into decisions will vary according to the project. Council's promise to the community is outlined in the attached *Level of Engagement* table.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Council is committed to the following principles of open and effective engagement:

- **Good governance**

Council is committed to engaging the community as a core component of good governance and effective decision making. It will seek to build increased confidence and trust with the community.

Council will seek to improve community satisfaction through engagement which is timely and clear and open about its purpose and the level of input the community can have to decision making. Council will avoid duplication or over-consultation through use of effective planning and engagement techniques.

Community feedback will be used to continuously improve the services Council provides.

- **Accessible and inclusive**

Council will offer a variety of ways the community can be kept informed and have their say.

Council will actively encourage the participation of community members who may be affected by, or are interested in a decision. The method of engagement will be appropriate to the project and the needs of the affected community.

Council will work with the community to encourage involvement in engagement, especially with children and young people, people of non-English speaking backgrounds, indigenous Australians and any other community members who need support in engaging.

PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT

The decision to engage and the methodology used will be made by conducting the following analysis.

- **What decision has to be made?**

Community engagement is a process whereby the community can provide input into a decision making process. The decision to be made will be the key determinant of how each engagement is designed. Council will take a cross-divisional and multi-disciplinary approach to designing engagement processes.

- **Stakeholder analysis**

Council defines community as all people and groups who are interested in the future of Wollongong. This includes government and non-government agencies, community groups, businesses, residents and visitors.

Council will target engagements to stakeholders directly and indirectly impacted by a decision and those likely to be interested in a decision.

- **When will we engage?**

Council will assess the level of interest and impact a plan or project will have on the community to determine the level of engagement that will be undertaken. The levels of engagement and our promise to the community are outlined in the attached table.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

Council will meet or exceed all legislative obligations for engagement methods and durations.

Council will consider the appropriate timing and duration, including the availability of community members and cultural sensitivities, in planning engagements. Council notes that its program of works, finance and other constraints will influence timing.

- **How will the community participate?**

Council offers a variety of ways for the community to participate in engagement to be accessible to a wide range of needs. The range of activities offered will be determined according to the needs of the specific project, location and the needs of the stakeholders targeted. The *Levels of Engagement* table outlines a number of methods Council currently uses but other method will be offered when appropriate.

- **What will happen to the community's feedback?**

Council considers all submissions received during an engagement or exhibition period. Closing dates and times will be clearly advertised to the community. Late submissions will be accepted if possible, dependent on reporting deadlines.

Council accepts community feedback in the form of written letters, emails, surveys and feedback forms. Council also uses workshop techniques to gain community feedback. Petitions will be accepted and must clearly state the request being made on each page. Signatures must be in the original handwriting of the signatory, be legible and include a valid address. Submissions from organizations, groups or companies will be considered as one unless containing multiple signatures.

Submissions can be made available for public inspection. Community members may request that Council suppress their personal information from their submission.

An analysis of feedback will be undertaken and a report prepared. A summary of community feedback will be included in Council reports to form an element of the decision making process.

- **How are decisions made?**

Council values community input into decision making processes. Council will consider community feedback along with other key considerations including:

- Council policies, resolutions and policy statements

- Financial impact

- State and Federal legislation

- Technical and professional assessment and industry best practice

- Quadruple bottom line: Economic, Environmental, Social and Governance assessment.

As a Local Government Authority, decisions are made by the elected Council or by Council officers under delegated authority.

- **How will the process be evaluated?**

The community's satisfaction with engagement services will be evaluated through its bi-annual Community Survey. Participants in engagement activities may also be given the opportunity to complete an evaluation form. Council encourages feedback about services through its customer relations unit.

ROLE OF COUNCILLORS

Councillors have an active role to play in engaging the community in order to understand their concerns and aspirations and consider these in decision making. The community can contact their Councillors "to discuss and contribute their views and ideas" (Councillor Guide, DLG, 2013)

Councillors will be invited to engage with the community through Council staff led processes. The role of both Council staff and Councillors in these engagements is to facilitate discussion, listen and record community feedback in order for it to be considered in decision making. Council staff are responsible for providing clear, unbiased information to assist the community in understanding the project and process of having a say, and reporting on feedback received. Councillors can also seek to create their own opportunities to engage the community without staff involvement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This Policy applies to Council's:

- Councillors
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Consultants

EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

Council's engagement activities will be regularly evaluated and reported to the community through Council's quarterly and annual reports and Delivery Program Progress report.

This Policy will be reviewed early in each new Council term.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- **Civil Works Notifications Policy** - describes a standardised notification process for civil infrastructure construction and maintenance projects across the local government area.
- **Public Notification and Advertising Procedures** - this appendix to the Wollongong Development Control Plan sets out a standardised notification and advertising process for development assessment and determination. It sets out criteria for assessments to be referred to the Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel.
- **Customer Service Policy** - sets out Council's commitment to delivering quality customer service to the community, to effective complaint handling, and providing the organization with information to inform continuous improvement.
- **Customer Service Charter** - identifies the minimum standards the community can expect from Wollongong City Council. It explains how information can be obtained and outlines how the community can provide feedback for improving services.
- **Reference and Advisory Group Charters (various)** - set out the purpose, recruitment and meeting practices for a variety of special interest topic reference and advisory groups. These groups consist of community, Councillor and Council staff members.
- **Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel Charter** - the panel is used to add value and improve decision making in relation to development assessment in specific situations. It provides an independent forum for stakeholders (applicants and objectors) to present and discuss issues relating to controversial development proposals.
- **Public Access Forum Charter** - provides community members with an opportunity to address Councillors prior to an ordinary meeting of Council, acknowledging that consultation and contribution to the decision making of Council enhance the quality of Council's decisions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT *				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Goal	Clear communication from Council to the community to assist their understanding of decisions that have been made.	Council seeks feedback from the community on draft plans, services, projects or policies. The community has an opportunity to have their say before a final decision is made.	Council works with the community to understand issues and involves community members in designing possible solutions.	Council will offer opportunities for members of the community to work with us to understand issues and develop a range of solutions. We will work together to make a decision on a preferred solution.
Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will use a variety of communication methods to keep the community informed. We will strive to ensure that information about Council services and plans is accessible and readily available. Council will provide community updates and information on decisions. Council acknowledges that sometimes it has to inform the community on decisions the community cannot change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council will provide opportunities for the community to provide feedback on plans and projects that will be considered in decision making. Council is committed to providing clear information about how and when the community can have their say and how feedback will be used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council will provide opportunities for the community to work directly with Council to ensure we understand aspirations, opportunities, and concerns and that these are incorporated as often as possible into plans. We will provide feedback on how community input influenced decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council will partner with the community on the development of alternatives and solutions.
Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's website and online media channels Council newsletters Letters and emails Fact sheets Customer service Events and festivals Kiosks and information sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Access Forum Ward meetings Community forums Kiosks Surveys and submissions Online engagement Communication channels Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ward meetings Community forums Kiosks Reference and Advisory groups Focus groups Workshops Online engagement Communication channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups Workshops Reference and Advisory groups Online engagement Communication channels

* Adapted from IAP2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COUNCIL POLICY

SUMMARY SHEET

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Date adopted by Council	8 April 2013
Date of previous adoptions	Previously titled "Community Consultation" 25 May 2010, 28 November 2005, 28 October 2008
Date of next review	8 April 2016
Prepared by	Engagement Coordinator
Authorised by	Manager Community Cultural and Economic Development