

Policy Type	Corporate
Function	Governance
Policy Owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Contact	Director Corporate and Community Services
Effective Date	27 February 2024

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote a consistent and effective approach to community engagement activities in building a vibrant Burdekin community in compliance with the Local Government Act 2009 and other relevant local government legislation.

## Scope

This policy applies to all councillors, employees, contractors and consultants engaged by Council in their dealings with the Burdekin Shire's community. This policy has application across the full range of policy, planning, programs, and services delivered by Council.

## Exceptions

This policy does not commit Council to consult on every issue before Council.

## Objectives

This policy aims to achieve the following key objectives:

- Ensure the community is well informed about Council's role, and the issues that may affect them.
- Ensure the community views are heard and considered as a part of decisions when developing Council plans, strategies, policies and service delivery initiatives.
- Ensure Council decisions are appropriately communicated to the community, to foster a culture of collaboration and partnership.

## Policy Statement

While it is not possible or effective to consult with the community on every issue, Council is committed to ensuring inclusive and productive community engagement to enhance Council's decisions and to facilitate well-informed community participation in policy, plans, programs, and service levels. This will be achieved through:

- compliance with the Burdekin Shire Council Community Engagement Guidelines ("The Guidelines").
- provision of appropriate training and tools to ensure compliance with the Guidelines;
- application of appropriate engagement methods for each activity;
- appropriate scheduling of engagement activities; allowing sufficient time and resources for community input and avoiding periods when community participation may be compromised.

## Principles

Community engagement does not replace the decision-making function of Council. Community engagement assists the Council in accessing a broad range of information about needs, opinions, and options prior to decisions being made. Community engagement can also form part of Council's commitment

to transparent government by ensuring the community is appropriately consulted and informed about Council decisions and activities.

Community engagement activities will be undertaken using the guiding principles from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum:

- *Integrity* – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement;
- *Inclusion* – when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;
- *Deliberation* – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice, and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understanding, and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities; and
- *Influence* – when people have input into designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.

Community Engagement is a two-way process whereby aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are considered and incorporated into Council policies, decisions, projects and activities. It encompasses a wide variety of Council-community interactions ranging from information sharing to community consultation, and, in some instances, active participation in decision making processes.

Council also engages with the community by providing open and accountable communication about its decisions and activities.

Community engagement uses various methods and tools to reach and involve different groups of people. Some examples are direct mail, e-mail, social media, surveys, phone calls, face-to-face interactions, focus groups, workshops, forums, online platforms and public meetings. Council also utilises advisory committees to consult with on relevant issues.

## Challenges

In addressing community engagement, Council is aware of the following challenges:

- the need to engage the broader community and avoid focussing all engagement activities with one person, community group or stakeholder;
- the need to set aside sufficient time and resources to undertake comprehensive and effective community engagement;
- ensuring that employees, consultants and contractors are sufficiently skilled in community engagement;
- the need to develop an Engagement Framework that strategically guides and assists Council in undertaking appropriate engagement activities with residents, local stakeholders and the diverse communities of the Burdekin in a consistent, transparent and effective way.
- the need to consider a variety of engagement tools and not just certain methods, such as public meetings, which are not always productive;
- the need to provide participants with post-engagement feedback;
- ability to manage community expectations that may have been raised during the engagement process;
- the need to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness and quality of the engagement activities and report on the lessons learned and improvements made;
- to recognise the need, from time to time, to protect the minority interest.

## Risk Management

Council's adopted Enterprise Risk Management Framework is to be applied to all community consultation and engagement activities. Where large-scale community consultation projects are planned, a formal risk assessment will be undertaken as part of the project planning process. This Policy helps to mitigate against the risks of poor public perception and lack of transparency by ensuring that adequate community consultation is considered and conducted by Council.

## Legislation

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Local Government Regulation 2012*

*Planning Act 2016*

## Definitions and Abbreviations

**Community Engagement** is any process or activity that involves the public in decisions, provides education, or sharing of information.

**Council** refers to the Burdekin Shire Council

## Related Documents

Reference Number	Document Title
GOV-GDE-0003	Community Engagement Guidelines
GOV-PLN-0003	Enterprise Risk Management Framework 2022

## Document History and Version Control

<b>Title of Document</b>	Community Engagement Policy
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