

Community Engagement Strategy

Community Strategic Plan
CSP 2032



Ngayan marrungku paran wiyen Wanarruwa, mirumalikan
para ani parraykupa, ngatan ngayan marrung wiyen
Ngarrakay paranpa yurakaykal ngatan pangaykal.

We acknowledge the Wonnarua people, traditional
keepers of this land, and we pay respects to their Elders,
past and present.

Translation by Aunty Sharon Edgar-Jones.

A new approach

Council is required to undertake their planning and reporting activities in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. In 2009 the Local Government Act was amended to create an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) requirement.

A requirement under this framework is the production of a Community Strategic Plan every four years to be endorsed by Council before 30 June. Council is required to have a Community Engagement Strategy which outlines how they will engage the Community during the development of the CSP 2032.

Upper Hunter Shire Council recognises that proactive and effective engagement of the community is critical in the development of the Community Strategic Plan 2032. We also understand and are committed to basing the strategy on the social justice principles of access to resources, equity, participation, diversity and human rights.

Council has committed to a new engagement approach to specifically reach out to people in the Upper Hunter Shire who are less likely to participate in conventional methods of consultation or have been traditionally 'hard to reach'.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions which affect them. It is critical in the successful development and implementation of acceptable policies and decisions and for improving services by being responsive to the community. It involves seeking broad informed agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community however it does not necessarily mean achieving consensus.

Why we engage?

The purpose of Council's community engagement is to ensure that the Council:



Improves relationships with the community



Has improved decision making



Increases participation amongst the community in the activities and decision making processes of Council



Enables the community to work together on issues that matter to them



Builds on the community's understanding of the Council's role and responsibilities as well as our financial and legislative requirements; and



Provides engagement opportunities that are inclusive and accessible.

What is Community Engagement?

Our definition has been adapted from the International Association of Public participation (IAP2) model:

“Engagement is involving the community in a decision making process”. The IAP2 defines community engagement as ‘Any process that involves the community in problem solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions’.

Community engagement is a two-way process that seeks to inform, identify issues and seek resolutions by engaging with the community using a range of techniques. Engagement does not replace the final decision making power of Councillors or the General Manager but is considered invaluable in the Council’s capacity to make well informed, acceptable and sustainable decisions. Council’s approach to community engagement is based on the spectrum of engagement activities as advocated by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The five levels of engagement are shown in the following pages.



Who we engage?

IAP2 considers the community to be any individual or group of individuals, organisation or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a decision – they are often referred to as stakeholders. They may be, or perceive that they may be, affected directly or indirectly by the outcome of the decision. Internal Stakeholders (individuals who work for or with the decision-making organisation) are also part of the community and the community participation process should reflect their needs as well.

Council is committed to encouraging participation of all members of the local community. Many residents and organisations have had varying experience and have different capabilities to participate in consultation processes. Community groups, local organisations and advisory groups often represent many local residents, landowners, business owners and workers. Building partnerships allow for greater inclusion and can reach people that may not have otherwise participated.

These groups include, but not limited to:

- Government agencies;
- Environmental Groups;
- Social groups and service clubs;
- Businesses, Chambers of Commerce and other business/commercial network groups.
- Volunteer and Not for Profit organisations; and
- Community and sporting groups.

Using legitimate local groups and community organisations to reach individuals, particularly people less likely to engage is an effective approach.

Council acknowledges that there is a need to specifically reach out to people who are less likely to participate in conventional methods of consultation or have been traditionally ‘hard to reach’.

The following ‘hard to reach’ target groups have been identified: • Young people; • Working Families; • Individuals aged 25-49; and • Villages and Rural Communities.

Social Justice Principles

The Community Strategic Plan Engagement Strategy is underpinned by the following social justice principles:

Equity

There should be fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.

Access

All people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation

Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.

Rights

Everyone should have civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights to participate in community life. These principles are interrelated and will continue to guide Council through the delivery and assessment of the effectiveness of our Community Strategic Plan.

The Role of Councillors and Council Staff in Community Engagement

Community engagement is about ensuring that the community have an opportunity to participate in the decisions made by Council.

A councillor's role in community engagement is to participate as an elected member, listen to the views of the community and consider these views when making decisions at Council. Community engagement provides valuable opportunities for councillors to hear and understand the voice of the community and ensure that this voice is properly represented when Council meet and make resolutions which impact the future of our community.

A Council staff member's role in community engagement is to organise and facilitate the discussion, record, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community's views when making recommendations to Council.

Covid-19 Pandemic

Council will conduct all community engagement with COVID-19 Pandemic safe engagement methods and will ensure that as many people as possible can participate in community engagement in a COVID-19 Pandemic safe way. We will adhere to all recommended actions from the NSW Government in relation to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Our community engagement methods will be amended in the event of a lockdown at the time of engagement activities.

Levels of Engagement

The levels of engagement are determined by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum – Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. An important part of this process is to understand the scope of the community's input and the role those consulted will have in relation to the decision making process. Council will conduct community engagement processes at the 'inform, consult, involve and collaborate' stages as defined in the following action plan.



Community Engagement CSP 2032

Action Plan

The Community Engagement Plan is attached and outlines actions and timeframes for engaging the community in the development of the Community Strategic Plan 2032.

Report back to the community

During the preparation of the Community Strategic Plan 2032 and on completion, staff will report back on the progress of the community engagement through a variety of methods including: • Councillor briefings; • Facebook updates and information posted on Council's social media; • Website Updates; • Media Releases; • Summary papers of the key themes identified at each pop-up engagement; • Exhibition Brochure; and • Reports to Council, including seeking endorsement of CSP 2032.

Evaluation

To ensure the Community Engagement Strategy – CSP 2032 is effective in achieving its objectives, a number of indicators will be used to measure success.

Council will assess the following:

- Compare Key Theme Summary Papers with CSP 2032 strategies;
- Number of people who participated in each engagement pop-up and activity;
- Number of enquiries and submissions received;
- Social media engagement;
- Traditional media coverage; and
- Number of email enquiries.

Community Engagement CSP 2032

Action Plan

Technique	Action	Timeframe
Inform	Council website	December 2021
	Social media	December to June 2022
	Media	December to June 2022
	Stage 1 – Communication with CSP 2032 Stakeholders	December 2021 to February 2022
	Stage 2 – Communication with CSP 2032 Stakeholders	February to June 2022
	Displays	January to June 2022
Consult	Council website	December 2021 to April 2022
	Survey/ open comments	
	Surveys	December 2021 to May 2022
	Submissions	December 2021 to May 2022
	Councillor workshops	February 2022 to April 2022
	Briefing	
	Committees	February to June 2022
	Pop-Ups	December 2021 to March 2022
	Events aimed at Target Groups:	
	• Families	
	• Individuals aged 25-49	
	• Rural Communities	
Involve	Visit communities and villages in UHSC	
	Summary papers of key themes identified at each Stage 1 pop-up	End of March 2022
	Community Pop Ups	March to April 2022
	Visit communities and villages in UHSC	
	Summary papers of key themes	End of April 2022
	Surveys	December to June 2022
	Meetings – key stakeholders	January to April 2022
Collaborate	Meetings – target groups	January to April 2022
	Draft CSP 2032 Exhibition	April to June 2022
	Meeting/Advisory group	Ongoing
	This will occur where Council shares the decision making on an issue with various stake-holders including levels of government and it impacts the CSP 2032.	

Communications Tools

We will use a range of tools to provide you with relevant information about local issues.

The table below provides a summary of the various types of communication tools we use.

Stage 1

Pre-recorded video webinar briefing of Your Say Panel – with survey for early input for priority projects

Stage 1

Direct invitations to workshops / webinars/ drop ins for Your Say Panel and Advisory Groups

Stage 1 -

Short video about the CSP using existing footage where possible

Stage 1 & 3

Radio media releases

Stage 1 & 3

Media releases newspapers

Stage 1 & 3

QR codes on various mediums

Stage 1 & 3

Dedicated email address
haveyoursay@
upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

Stage 1 & 3

Messages on hold

Stage 1 & 3

Posters with QR code

Stage 1 & 3

Newsletters to engaged 'Your Say' recipients

Stage 1 & 3

Community newsletter – timing dependent

Stage 1 & 3

Community e-newsletter

Stage 1 & 3

Social media platforms

Stage 1 & 3

Council's website

Stage 1 & 3

Signage - Customer Service Centres, Libraries, bus shelters

Stage 1 & 3

Advertisement newspapers

Stage 2

'Your Say' - online survey

Stage 2

Hard copy surveys available at Customer Service Centres and Libraries

* Stage 2

Two 'Drop In' sessions COVID dependant

* Stage 2

Three workshops with webinar or recording capability

* Stage 2

Pop up banners 'Your Say' for workshops and drop ins

Stage 2

One Government stakeholders workshop – MPs, State and Federal Government Departments, neighbouring councils. (after community input to project and advocacy priorities)

Stage 3

Public notice in Leader about exhibition of draft Plan

Timeframes

Stage 1

Inform: December 2021 to February 2022

Stage 2

Inform / Consult / Engage: February 2022 to April 2022

Stage 3

Inform / Consult: May to June 2022

Action Plan notes

CSP 2032 Stakeholders

A CSP 2032 Stakeholders list will reflect Council's commitment to encouraging participation of all members of the local community.

Making contact with community groups, local organisations and advisory groups early in the process will allow for greater inclusion and can reach people that may not have otherwise participated.

These groups include, but not limited to: • Government agencies; • Environmental Groups; • Schools and education; • Social groups and service clubs; • Businesses, Chambers of Commerce and other business/commercial network groups. • Volunteer and Not for Profit organisations; and • Community and sporting groups.

Using legitimate local groups and community organisations to reach individuals, particularly people less likely to engage is an effective approach.

Target Groups

Council acknowledges that there is a need to specifically reach out to people who are less likely to participate in conventional methods of consultation or have been traditionally 'hard to reach'.

The following 'hard to reach' target groups have been identified: • Young people; • Working Families; • Individuals aged 25-49; and • Villages and Rural Communities. A smiley face in the action table, identifies an action which directly targets the 'hard to reach' groups

Protecting Your Privacy

We take privacy very seriously and when you provide us with information about yourself, we will never publish your personal data publicly, without consent. We will also take all reasonable and appropriate steps to protect the privacy of individuals as required by relevant legislation. We will ensure we use correct collection notices and privacy statements on all online and hardcopy consultation materials that capture any identifying personal information. The way information is collected, stored and used will also comply with legislative requirements.

