

**NOVEMBER 2019**

# Engagement and Communications Strategy

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**Engagement and Communications Strategy**

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# introduction

## BACKGROUND

Community engagement is how Bayside Council connects with the community to seek their opinion on plans, projects and policies being developed. It ensures community opinion is reflected in the decision making process. A coordinated and strategic approach to community engagement and communications aims to:

- ▷ inform decision making
- ▷ build relationships and trust
- ▷ strengthen community
- ▷ build a sense of belonging
- ▷ keep the community informed

Community Engagement improves the efficiency and effectiveness of Council by ensuring that Council is aware of and responsive to community concerns. It also ensures that the community has a broad understanding of the functions and constraints of local government.

## DEFINITIONS

### Communications

Communication keeps the community and key stakeholders up to date and informed. It raises awareness of all aspects of council business including services, events, projects, plans and decisions of council.

### Community engagement

Engagement involves the community in problem solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions. Best practise engagement always requires good communications.

### Community Participation Plan

A document outlining how and when Council will engage with the community under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)*.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this Strategy is to guide a coordinated and strategic approach to community engagement and communications.

The principles outlined in this Strategy apply to all of Council's engagement and communication activities.

The provision of a Community Participation Plan (refer to Appendix 1) is a requirement of the EP&A Act. The Community Participation Plan applies to the exercise of planning functions by Council and its delegates.

# principles

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Council's commitment to community engagement is underpinned by the following principles:

### Community Engagement is Relevant and Authentic

Community engagement will be undertaken where there is an opportunity for the community to influence Council's decisions or actions. Engagement is tailored and its purpose is clear with enough flexibility to be adapted if any unexpected issues arise.

### Community Engagement is Timely

We will commence community engagement as early as possible to ensure the community has reasonable time to provide input. Engagement stages will be clearly defined and communicated so that community input can identify issues and opportunities.

### Community Engagement is Open and Inclusive

All community members, stakeholders and staff have the right to participate in a respectful environment and behave in a manner that supports everyone's right to present their point of view. Our engagement is accessible and inclusive and seeks input from 'hard to reach' groups. To achieve this we use a range of tools and techniques, balancing technology with traditional methods.

### Community Engagement is Transparent and Meaningful

We will explain how input was taken into consideration and ensure the response is relevant and proportionate. Council will close the loop on engagement and advise participants and the community on engagement outcomes. Council protects privacy and respects confidentiality and is guided by its Privacy Management Plan.

### Community Engagement is Easy

Information will be provided in a variety of formats. It will be relevant, concise and written in plain English.

## COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Council's commitment to communication is underpinned by the following principles:

- ▶ Communication will ensure that stakeholders are well informed about Council business and activities, and opportunities to connect with Council on a variety of matters
- ▶ Communication will promote Council's reputation and image and work to increase awareness of the Bayside brand
- ▶ Communication will support and complement Council's community engagement activities
- ▶ Communication will be accessible and publications will be in formats that reach the whole community

# key stakeholder identification and analysis

Stakeholders are any individual or group who have an interest in decision making. They may be residents, ratepayers, business owners, customers, community interest groups, agencies or hard-to-reach groups

Many people belong to more than one 'community' and will engage with Council on issues that are relevant to them at a particular time. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest or a community of affiliation or identity (such as business or sporting clubs).

While most community engagement undertaken by Council staff is done in-house, from time to time Council will engage consultants to undertake work on behalf of Bayside Council.

## reference groups and committees

Council from time to time will establish and engage with community reference groups and committees.

These groups are generally project based and recruited via an expression of interest and/or invitation. They can consist of elected representatives, community members and representatives of government and non-government organisations.

The values and input provided by these representatives will help inform decisions on matters impacting the community.

# communication and engagement tools

## FRAMEWORK

Council is a member of the International Association of Public Participation Australia (IAP2), which provides a best practice framework worldwide.

**Figure 1: Demonstrates how engagement activities and subsequent tools are classified on the spectrum**

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide



## APPROACH

Council recognises that engagement is planned and tailored and offers a diverse range of opportunities and activities to participate online and face-to-face using traditional, social and emerging methods. Council's dedicated online engagement portal means that people can participate at a time that suits them in the comfort of their own home.

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Council's primary channel for engagement is Have Your Say Bayside (HYS). This online engagement tool is used to engage on a range of projects to gain community feedback. Online techniques under HYS include surveys, mapping tools, idea generators and other interactive tools.

## EXHIBITIONS

Exhibitions are a key technique used to encourage community engagement. An exhibition can be both mandatory and non-mandatory. During an exhibition Council makes available soft and hard copies of all relevant project documents for community input.

In conducting an exhibition Council receives submissions in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998, Privacy Management Plan and defamation and discrimination laws.

Exhibition timeframes vary in length. Some timeframes are prescribed in legislation and others are at Council's discretion.

The community can make a submission in a variety of methods that are outlined in the exhibition materials. These methods include online via Council's website or Have Your Say, writing directly to Council and visiting one of Council's Customer Service Centres.



# evaluating and decision making

Bayside 2030 indicates “people should be able to follow and understand the decision-making process”. This means the community can see how and why a decision is made, what information Council considered, and any legislative requirements (when relevant) Council followed.

To ensure people can follow the process an individual Engagement Plan is prepared for each project. The plan outlines:

- ▶ Engagement purpose
- ▶ Stakeholders (internal and external)
- ▶ Engagement level
- ▶ Timing/schedule/critical dates
- ▶ Engagement methods
- ▶ Risks
- ▶ Outcomes and closing the loop
- ▶ Reporting and evaluation

Community Engagement improves the efficiency and effectiveness of Council by ensuring that Council is aware of and responsive to community concerns. It also ensures that the community has a broad understanding of the functions and constraints of local government.

Projects are monitored throughout the process and evaluated against the Engagement and Communications Plan.

There are many ways for the community to provide feedback or raise questions outside of formal exhibition and engagement periods and Council will always consider and respond to community views and concerns.

In reaching decisions Council balances a range of factors to ensure that decisions are in the public interest. These factors include strategic priorities as outlined in corporate plans and related policy, community input, the objectives of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, land use priorities identified in strategic plans and applicable policies and guidelines.

Council notifies the community of decisions and details how their views were considered in reaching the decision. This is achieved by updating the Have Your Say project page, updating the website and in some instances publication of submission reports, exhibition reports and notices of decisions.

# strategy implementation

## STRATEGY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Manager Community Life is responsible for the maintenance of this Strategy and its day to day operation. All staff conducting communication or engagement activities are responsible for adhering to this strategy.

## PROCEDURES

The General Manager, or nominee, may approve corporate procedures associated with this policy.



# document control

## REVIEW

This Strategy will be reviewed to align with Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting schedule and the Department of Planning, Industry & Environment's (DPI&E) review of the Community Participation Plan and the proposed amendment to the Local Government Act regarding Development Controls Plans.

Following this, it will be reviewed every 4 years or when relevant legislation changes.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Legislation relevant to this Strategy includes:

- ▶ Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- ▶ Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

- ▶ Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- ▶ Local Government Act 1993 Section 402

Council policies and plans relevant to this Strategy include:

- ▶ Privacy Management Plan
- ▶ Access to Information Policy
- ▶ Code of Conduct
- ▶ Electronic Communications Policy
- ▶ Social Media Policy
- ▶ Bayside 2030 Community Strategic Plan

## VERSION CONTROL

VERSION	RELEASE DATE	AUTHOR	REASON FOR CHANGE
1.0	Adopted 12 April 2017. Communications and Community Engagement Strategy	Unknown	
2.0	Engagement and Communications Strategy	Coordinator Community Engagement	Update for DPI&E legislation introduction of Community Participation Plan. Update to current practice.

# appendix 1: community participation plan

The Community Participation Plan (CPP) determines how and when Council will engage with the community under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), including legislative reform, plan making and making decisions on proposed development. Council will always exhibit a project / proposal for the minimum CPP timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe for exhibition based on the scale and nature of the proposal.

The objectives of the EP&A Act include:

- ▶ The promotion of orderly and economic use of land
- ▶ Facilitating ecologically sustainable development
- ▶ Promoting social and economic well-being
- ▶ Promoting good design and amenity of the built environment
- ▶ Providing increased opportunity for community participation

## WHY IS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

Community participation creates a shared sense of purpose, direction and understanding of the need to manage growth and change, while preserving local character. It provides access to community knowledge, ideas and expertise; and builds confidence in the planning system.

## WHAT FUNCTIONS DOES THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN APPLY TO?

The CPP applies to Regulatory Plan Making and Assessments.

### Plan Making

Council plans for communities by undertaking strategic planning and considering social, environmental and economic issues in light of the special attributes of the area. Examples of this work include preparing new local environmental plans; planning proposals to amend local environmental plans; development control plans; contribution plans; policies; strategies and master plans.

### Assessments

Officers of Council make recommendations to independent local and regional planning panels in relation to development applications and planning proposals, and to Council itself in relation to Planning Proposals. When making assessments about proposed developments some may also be determined under delegation by Council staff. Consideration is given as to whether the proposals are in accordance with strategic priorities outlined in state and local government policies and strategies, and whether impacts are acceptable and in the public interest in accordance with applicable policies and guidelines, including the EP&A Act. Consideration is also required to be given to public submissions in accordance with the EP&A Act.



## WHO DOES THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN APPLY TO?

Council's CPP is a requirement of the EP&A Act (see division 2.6 and Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act) and applies to the exercise of planning functions by Council and its delegates. The Bayside CPP will be reviewed on a periodic basis. It does not apply to other New South Wales (NSW) planning authorities, such as other local councils. All other NSW planning authorities will prepare a CPP as per the requirements of the EP&A Act.

## DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN (DCP) NOTIFICATIONS

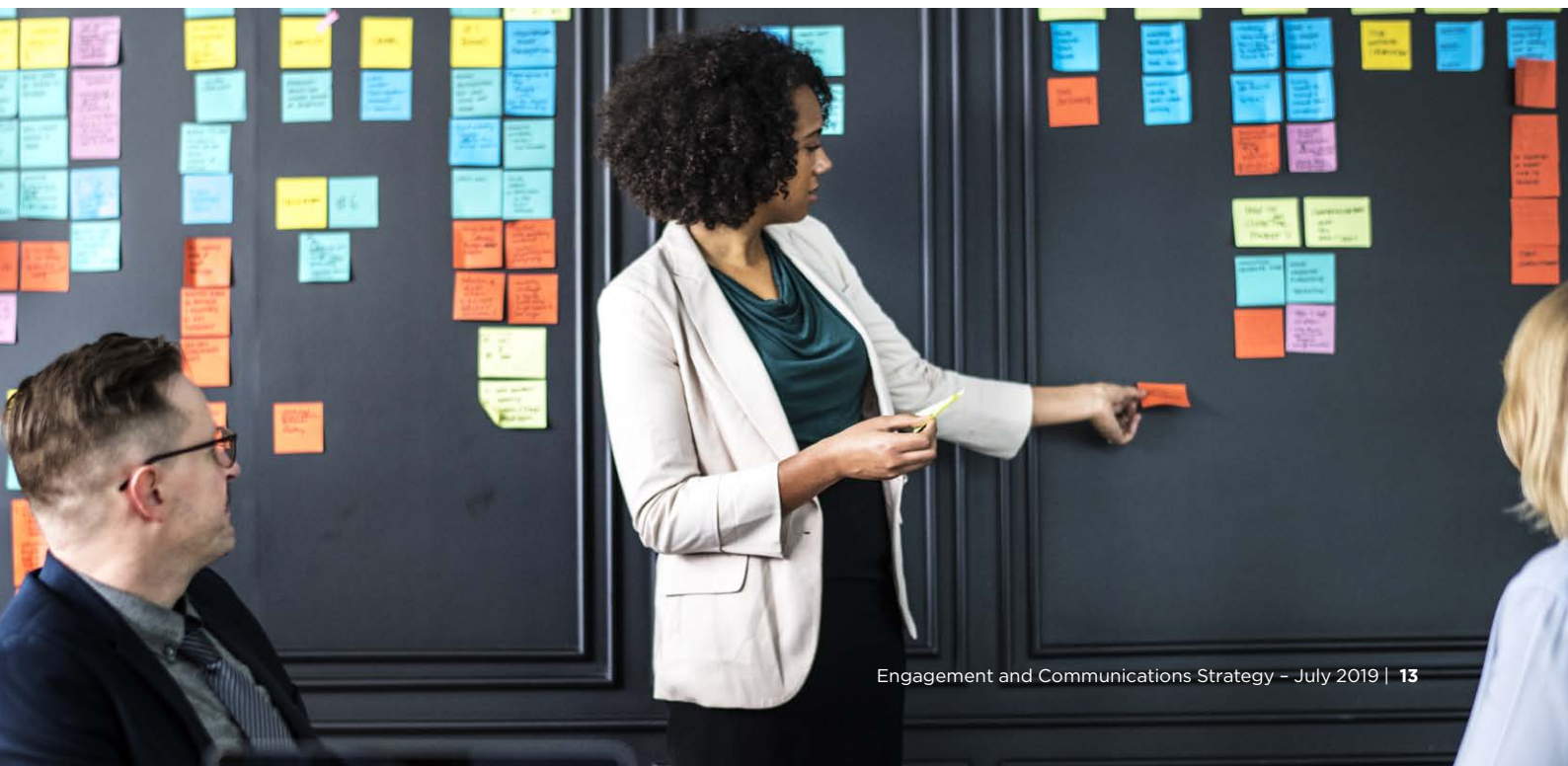
Bayside Council is currently undertaking a review of the Rockdale and Botany DCP's to create a single Bayside DCP. This is expected to be finalised in late 2020. The DCP notifications in the individual Rockdale and Botany DCP will apply until the adoption of the Bayside DCP. The CPP will then be updated to reflect the Bayside DCP notifications.

## EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES

Section 2.21(2) of the EP&A Act details the types of proposals that must be considered in the CPP and Schedule 1 sets a minimum exhibition timeframe for most of these proposals. Council will always exhibit a proposal for this minimum timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe for exhibition based on the scale and nature of the proposal. The only requirements in this plan that are mandatory are those set out and these are the same as the mandatory minimum timeframes in Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act.

Key points to note about public exhibitions include the following:

- ▶ A public authority is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason
- ▶ Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends
- ▶ If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday Council may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day
- ▶ The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition



## MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES

### PLAN MAKING MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES

Draft Community Participation Plan	28 days
Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)	28 days
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination	28 days or as specified by the gateway determination, or due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required
Draft Development Control Plans	28 days
Draft contribution plans	28 days

### DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES

Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for State significant development)	14 days or as specified by the gateway determination, or due to the minor nature of the proposal no public exhibition is required
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days
Application for the modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	The period, if any, to be determined by the consent authority in accordance with the relevant community participation plan
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1	28 days



## NON-MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES

Several Council functions and proposals do not have minimum exhibition timeframes. As a matter of course in line with our community participation objectives, Council will typically exhibit documents related to the exercise of these functions and proposals for the timeframes described below

NON-MANDATORY EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES	
Draft legislation, regulation, policies and guidelines	28 days based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal
Application for modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	Up to 14 days based on scale and nature of the proposal
Plans for urban renewal areas	Commonly six weeks
State Environmental Planning Polices (SEPP's)	Discretionary based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal
Re-exhibition of any amended application or matter referred to above	Discretionary based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal

There may be other proposals not subject to the mandatory exhibition timeframes for which Council will have the option to exhibit for at least 28 days and engage with the community in line with our community participation objectives. Additionally, there may be some occasions where a government priority or administrative requirement demands immediate action on proposals that prevents the implementation of our usual community participation process.

## GLOSSARY

Contribution Plan	A plan developed by councils for the purpose of gaining financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public amenities and/or services required to accommodate new development
Development Control Plan	A plan that provides detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in a LEP
Gateway Determination	A gateway determination is issued following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP. It allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition
Local Environmental Plan (LEPs)	An environmental planning instrument developed by a local planning authority, generally a council. An LEP sets the planning framework for a Local Government Area.



# Bayside Council

Serving Our Community

## **Bayside Customer Service Centres**

Rockdale Library, 444-446 Princes Highway, Rockdale  
Westfield Eastgardens, 152 Bunnerong Road, Eastgardens  
Monday to Friday 8:30am - 4:30pm, Saturday 9am - 1pm

Phone **1300 581 299 | 9562 1666**

Email **[council@bayside.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bayside.nsw.gov.au)**

Web **[www.bayside.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bayside.nsw.gov.au)**