

Community Engagement

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Part A Preliminary

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan 2018-2028 identifies Open and Collaborative Leadership; a strong local democracy with an actively engaged community and effective partnerships as one of its strategic directions. Within this strategic direction are the community strategies to:
 - 1.1.1 Item 7.3a - Provide opportunities for genuine engagement with the community to inform the Council's decision-making; and
 - 1.1.2 Item 7.3b - Provide clear, consistent, accessible and relevant information to the community.
- 1.2 City of Newcastle (CN) within the context of the *Local Government Act 1993* (Act), *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* and the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework engages with residents in an inclusive and meaningful way.

2 Purpose

- 2.1 This Policy provides a rationale for the development and implementation of CN's internal and external engagement processes, in order to achieve:
 - 2.1.1 Alignment with CN's priorities for service delivery;
 - 2.1.2 Input into the Council's decision-making by providing mechanisms for understanding and responding to community opinions and perspectives;
 - 2.1.3 Consistent and clear engagement practices; and
 - 2.1.4 Enhancement of CN's reputation as an organisation that listens, responds to and engages with residents and stakeholders while making evidence-based decisions.
- 2.2 The Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit provides advice and oversight of CN's formal community engagement activities.
- 2.3 This Policy in accordance with Section 8A of the Act aims to facilitate the provision of community input and feedback to enable the Council to make decisions and actively engage with their local communities.
- 2.4 Specific CN community engagement strategic directions and associated actions are provided in the City Marketing and Engagement Strategy 2018-2021.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to:
 - 3.1.1 Mandated/legislated processes involving public participation; and
 - 3.1.2 Engagement in specific planning, policy and project initiatives that directly or indirectly impact the community.

4 Principles

4.1 CN commits itself to the following:


- 4.1.1 **Accountability** - CN commits to conduct transparent and inclusive engagement processes that are responsive and accountable.
- 4.1.2 **Inclusiveness** - CN makes its best efforts to reach, involve and hear from those who are impacted directly or indirectly by CN decisions. CN encourages the community to provide meaningful input and feedback.
- 4.1.3 **Transparency** - CN provides clear, timely, concise and complete information, and endeavours to ensure decision processes and procedures are followed and constraints are understood. CN widely shares information about CN services, activities and decisions, and regularly communicates and celebrates local community participation.
- 4.1.4 **Commitment** - CN, within its ability and work plans, allocates sufficient resources for effective engagement. CN uses innovative communication technologies and best practice consultation tools and techniques to engage, plan and encourage information sharing with our community to enable genuine community participation and collaboration.
- 4.1.5 **Responsiveness** - CN monitors and seeks to understand and evaluate current community sentiments through active engagement and collaboration. Timely information is provided about ways to participate through appropriate channels.

Part B Elements of Community Engagement

5 International Association for Public Participation

- 5.1 CN recognises and abides by best practice principles developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). IAP2 was founded in 1990 to promote the values and best practices associated with involving the public in the government and industry decision making process.
- 5.2 CN has adopted in full the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (set out at Table 1) as a core tool to help identify and select the appropriate level of public participation, select methods of engagement, and identify a range of tools.
- 5.3 The model is values-based, decision-oriented and goal-driven. Given the broad range of CN initiatives, services and activities, this Policy does not prescribe exactly how the community should be engaged for every project or issue. Rather, qualified CN Officers determine the most appropriate engagement approach, deciding on the level of community participation based on the nature of the issue, project, plan or decision in question.
- 5.4 CN assigns a high priority to appropriately involving residents and other stakeholders early on and throughout the decision-making process, especially when the decision(s) impact their lives.

Table 1 - Public Participation Spectrum, IAP2



	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 decisions.	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.

Annexure A - Definitions

Act means Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)

CEO means Chief Executive Officer of the City of Newcastle and includes their delegate or authorised representative.

References to the Chief Executive Officer are references to the General Manager appointed under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).

City of Newcastle (CN) means Newcastle City Council.

Community Engagement means purposeful dialogue between CN and stakeholders in the development and implementation of decisions that affect them. In this Policy, Community Engagement is a broad term that incorporates aspects of stakeholder or public relations, consultation and information campaigns, and includes public participation.

Council means the elected Council.

Stakeholders means anyone (person or group of people) who can be impacted by the results of a decision made by CN, and may include: the community generally, residents, ratepayers, businesses, community organisations, other government agencies and any other body interacting with CN.

Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a section or clause is a reference to a section or clause of this Policy.

Document Control

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Relevant strategy	City Marketing and Engagement Strategy (2018 - 2021)
Relevant legislation/codes (reference specific sections)	<p><i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) - S8, S8A</i></p> <p><i>Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</i></p> <p><i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) - 2.6, 2.2.1</i></p> <p><i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW), IPC Charter for Public Participation June 2018</i></p> <p><i>NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)</i></p>

Other related policies/ documents/ strategies	Newcastle 2030 Community Strategic Plan Community (2018 - 2028) Media Policy (2018)
Related forms	Nil
Required on website	Yes
Authorisations	Nil