

STRATHFIELD COUNCIL

COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
STRATEGY

6 DECEMBER 2022



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1. Introduction

The Strathfield Council Community Engagement Strategy sets out how Council will undertake community engagement to ensure that the community and relevant stakeholders are involved in decision making in a transparent, open, and accountable way.

All Councils are required under section 402 (A) of the *Local Government Act 1993* to adopt a Community Engagement Strategy.

This strategy sets out the overarching principles and approach to engagement with the local community concerning decisions or proposals of likely impact on the communities and relevant stakeholders of the Strathfield Local Government Area (LGA).

The purpose of the strategy is to improve and strengthen community involvement in decision making by ensuring that communities and stakeholders are able to access, participate and have input into the development, implementation and review of Council policies, strategies, plans and programs.

1.1 About Strathfield

The Strathfield LGA has a growing population with significant diversity of experiences, perspectives, cultures, languages, interests and needs. The diverse needs of our many communities indicates that engagement is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is important Council utilises a range of engagement methods to encourage community participation in decision making.

The LGA has a residential population of over 45,000 people. Many people work or study in the LGA. There are over 6,500 businesses, 26,000 jobs and more than 10,000 student places at local schools and university.

Strathfield is highly multicultural and 58.9% of our population were born overseas. More than 65.3% of our population speak a language other than English at home including Mandarin, Nepali, Cantonese, Korean, Arabic, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Vietnamese, Urdu and Italian.

The median age of the LGA is 33 years, however the spatial distribution of age groups across the LGA is diverse ranging from median age of 41 years in Belfield to 31 years in Homebush and Homebush West. More than 29% of the population is aged less than 24 years with 12% aged over 65 years. 24% of our population are aged between 25-34 years.

While over 40% of the local population live in family households, over 19% live in lone person households. 67% of our LGA population live in medium to high rise units with over 80% in suburbs such as Homebush and Homebush West, while other parts of the LGA have greater proportions living in houses in Strathfield, Strathfield South and Belfield.

Strathfield LGA also has vulnerable or 'hard to reach' people including low income households, older residents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, people experiencing homelessness, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) people.

4.3% of our population need help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. Council is committed to supporting people with disability to be engaged in our community, which includes commitment to our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

1.2 Strategic objectives

The objectives of the Community Engagement Strategy are:

- that the Strathfield community is engaged in decision making processes concerning proposals or decisions that are likely to directly or indirectly affect them
- to provide accessible and appropriate opportunities for the community to participate in decision making on both present and future issues
- to ensure that engagement processes are appropriately targeted and purposeful
- that engagement methods are flexible, accessible and inclusive
- that community input is genuinely considered in decision making and outcomes are reported
- that Council meets its legislative and policy requirements for community consultation

1.3 Community Engagement approach and principles

Council's approach to engagement is designed to deliver open, transparent, accessible, purposeful, timely and meaningful community engagement processes. Council considers that the community has a right to be informed about matters that affect them, which is underpinned by the following principles that engagement:

- is purposeful and has clear aims and objectives
- is commenced as early as possible to provide reasonable time for community input
- is undertaken appropriately for the scope and likely impacts of the proposal
- is inclusive and accessible for the community to participate including 'hard to reach' groups with information presented in accessible and inclusive
- is respectful of the contributions from the community and that personal information is managed appropriately.

Council's overarching engagement approach is guided by the principles of social justice. Social justice means a commitment to ensuring:

- fairness in the distribution of resources (equity)
- rights are recognised and promoted (rights)
- fair access to the economic resources and services essential to meet basic needs and to improve quality of life (access)
- opportunity for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting lives (participation).

1.4 Coverage and Limitations

This strategy applies to all Council officials, including Councillors, and other workers (including staff, contractors or volunteers) undertaking community engagement on behalf of Council.

This strategy applies to proposals and decisions that are likely to interest or have direct or indirect impacts on the local community.

This strategy does not include community engagement processes for development and associated applications, planning proposals, Development Control Plans (DCP), Contribution Plans, Planning Agreements and Local Strategic Planning Statements. These processes are set out in Council's Community Participation Plan (CPP), which incorporates the engagement and notification requirements outlined in the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979*.

1.5 Definitions

- **Community** – Community broadly refers to the people who have an interest in the Strathfield LGA as a resident, ratepayer, visit, work or study in the LGA. However, a person may be a member of different communities eg location, interests, language etc.
- **Community Engagement** - The involvement of the community in the decision-making process of Council, where the community is encouraged to provide feedback on a range of issues that affect them and inform Council's initiatives.
- **Stakeholder** – individuals or groups that have an interest or are impacted by decisions of Council.

2. Planning Community Engagement

Community engagement will be undertaken when Council considers that a proposal or decision is likely to have a direct or indirect impact on either whole or part of the community. The extent of engagement will be guided by the:

- likely level of impact of the proposal or decision on affected communities and stakeholders
- the extent of existing data to convey community views on the issue
- community interest for engagement (consideration of consultation fatigue)

Situations likely to require Council to undertake formal community engagement includes:

- where a proposed decision or change to a service, program, project, policy or plan is likely to have an impact on the community
- in response to an issue of community concern, either raised or initiated by the community
- to identify community views that are not already known
- where Council resolves to consult the community on a particular matter
- preparing new or reviewing plans under the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework including the Community Strategic Plan
- when community engagement is required by law, policy or agreement with a government agency or statutory body.

Community engagement will not occur in circumstances, which relate to minor operational matters, confidential or commercial in confidence information, or where Council must make emergency or safety related decisions.

2.1 Developing community engagement plans

Council recognises that community engagement is not a 'one size fits all' process. Each engagement must be planned and tailored to address the purpose and likely impacts of the proposal or decision. An individual plan for each engagement will be prepared which addresses the following:

- purpose and scope of the engagement
- likely impact and engagement levels
- determining the level of engagement required
- identifying affected community and stakeholders
- relevant engagement methods and tools
- timeframe, key reporting dates and resources
- outcomes and reporting

2.2 Purpose and scope of the engagement

Determine the purpose and scope of the engagement and address:

- a) Background, context and key issues
 - i. describe the background to the issue
 - ii. identify any legislative or policy requirement
 - iii. describe the key issues that need to be addressed in the engagement process

- b) Goals, objectives, timeframes and resources
 - i. define the goals and objects that the engagement process aims to achieve
 - ii. estimate timeframes (including key milestones and reporting deadlines) and available resources

- c) Roles and Responsibilities
 - i. identify the key roles and responsibilities in the process

2.3 Assessment of level of impact

Assess and determine the likely level of impact of the proposed decision or initiative. The table below sets out the likely levels of impact probable levels of impacts.

Level	Explanation	Examples
High level – LGA wide	LGA-wide high level of impact on the majority of the Strathfield LGA. The issue has a high potential level of interest and/or conflict.	Major Strategic and Operational Plans including Community Strategic Plans, Delivery Program etc Changes affecting a LGA-wide service Significant changes to a major facility eg park or community centre/hall Major changes to rates, fees and charges Statutory requirements
High level – localised (specific area or suburb)	Localised high level of impact of a local nature, on a local area, specific community or user group. The issue has a high potential level of interest and/or conflict at a local level.	Closure of changes to access for facility servicing a localised area Changes to a local area traffic or infrastructure eg roads network
Low level – LGA wide	LGA-wide lower impact on the majority of the Strathfield LGA. The issue has a low risk of conflict and/or controversy.	Improvements or changes to a localised services and/or infrastructure Minor or temporary changes to facility access, local park or fees and charges
Low level – localised (specific area or suburb)	Localised level of impact of a local nature on a local area, specific community or user group. The issue has a low risk of conflict and/or controversy.	Improvements or changes to a local service Changes to a major facility eg park or community centre/hall, of a temporary or minor nature.

2.4 Determining the level of community engagement

Council's approach to engagement is guided by International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum. IAP2 is the industry standard for community engagement. The table below illustrates that the various engagement techniques ranging from inform to empower, which reflects the increasing level of influence of the community. Tools are selected to ensure that the capture of relevant feedback is appropriate to the level of engagement and influence.

	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 provided feedback on how public feedback 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.

2.5 Determine tools and methods for community engagement

The greater the level of impact, then it is likely that a more extensive amount of consultation will be involved utilising more extensive tools and methods to reach various community sectors or stakeholders.

The table below sets out examples of communication techniques that may be used in response to assessment of level of impact and communication options. Not all examples need to be used for each engagement. Some engagements will utilise a mixture of tools and methods.

Level of impact	Examples of mechanisms and techniques to utilise based on level of impact and communication.				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
High level – LGA wide	Letter/flyer to households Media release Rates notice Information displays Website Social media Newsletter E-News email Flyer, poster Signs and banners	E-News and/or email campaigns Surveys Submission Pop up stalls Public Meetings Letter/flyers to households Media release Information displays Website Social media Events	Interviews – in –person or online Workshops Web based meetings Site visit Focus Groups	Resident panels Community Facilitators Task force or expert committee	Charrettes Citizen juries Deliberative dialogues Deliberative Polling
High level – localised (specific area or suburb)	Letter/flyer to specific households Media release Information displays Website Social media E-News email Signs, notices &/or banners on specific local sites	E-News and/or email campaigns Printed flyers or communications Internet surveys Events Social media	Interviews – in –person or online Workshops Web based meetings Site visit Focus Groups	Resident panel	Charrettes Citizen juries Deliberative dialogues
Low level – LGA wide	Household flyer Website notification Rates notice insert Information displays Social media	E-News and/or email campaigns Printed flyers or communications Survey Internet surveys Events Social media	Social media options Interviews – in –person or online Workshops Web based meetings	Resident panel Task force or expert committee	Deliberative polling
Low level – localised (specific area or suburb)	Letter/flyer to specific households Website notification	E-News and/or email campaigns Printed flyers or communications Survey Events Social media	Workshops Public meetings Social Media	Advisory groups	Charrettes Citizen juries Deliberative dialogues

2.6 Identifying and engaging communities and stakeholders

An important component of the community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key communities and stakeholders who will be impacted by or who have an interest in a decision.

Community is a term often used generically, however many people belong to more than one 'community' and engage with Council on issues that are relevant to them at a particular time. A community may be a geographical location (eg place), community of similar interests (eg school, business, cultural group) or community of affiliation or identity (eg sporting or community organisation).

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

For each engagement, Council will identify those communities or stakeholders who are likely to be impacted, including those that are 'hard to reach'. Council will adapt its engagement tools and processes to optimise fair, inclusive and accessible community participation for each engagement. This can include providing delivery through online or face-to-face communications, digital and print, social and emerging methods as well tools that support specific community needs eg translation services, multi-language formats, large print etc.

Local community or stakeholder groups who may be identified in a community engagement process in the Strathfield LGA include (but not limited to):

- People who live, work, or visit the Strathfield LGA
- Community, sporting, cultural and environmental clubs and organisations
- Public and private schools (primary/secondary) and universities
- Local businesses
- Not-for-profits and non-government organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and organisations
- Young people/students
- Children and families
- Older residents
- Women
- LGBTQI+ community
- Childcare services and centres
- Health and support services (government and non-government)
- Persons with disabilities and disability/carers providers
- Emergency Services
- Local Police Command
- State and federal government agencies/services
- Local Members of Parliament
- Neighbouring local councils

2.7 Participation of 'hard to reach' groups

'Hard to reach' communities and stakeholders are those whose voices are often not heard in community discussions or may find it more difficult to participate in community engagement activities due to barriers to engagement such as experience, language and accessibility.

These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Children and young people
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), particularly with limited English skills
- Persons with disabilities LGBTQI+ community
- Older residents
- People living in units
- People living in social housing/homelessness

2.8 Engagement timeframes

Council will seek to provide the community adequate time to participate and aim where possible to run engagements for a minimum of 28 days (4 weeks), unless otherwise prescribed by Act or regulation.

Engagements may be extended to allow for public holidays, school holidays or where the engagement may require longer periods of consultation due to issues relevant to the specific engagement.

2.9 Public Exhibitions

Public exhibitions are a method of notifying Council proposals, plans and policies. It is often a legislative requirement and requires Council to make copies of relevant documents publicly available and seek comments or submissions from the public during the period of exhibition.

At a minimum, documents are published on Council's website and print copies are available from Council's Customer Service Centre and Strathfield Council Library and Innovation Hub.

The conditions of the exhibition are set out in the exhibition notification such as timeframes and method of lodgement. Timeframes vary in length, depending on legislative requirement or Council discretion but most have a 28 day minimum.

Submissions are received in accordance with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998* and Council's Privacy Management Plan.

3. Outcomes and Reporting

Council will provide feedback back to the community participants. The community will be informed on how its feedback has influenced a decision or project, policy or plan and respond to participants

Reports presented to Council meetings following community engagements will include a summary of the community engagement outcomes and how Council has addressed the community feedback.

This will include details on how the engagement was conducted, the key issues raised and feedback. Council will take all reasonable steps to protect the personal information of those involved in community engagement activities in accordance with Council's Access to Information Policy, Privacy Management Plan, and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

4. Version Control

Date	Type	Minute
6 December 2022	Adoption by Council following exhibition from 3 to 30 November 2022	280/22