



**GEORGES  
RIVER  
COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN  
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL | Community Engagement Strategy

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that Council's Community Strategic Plan is developed in collaboration with our community, and remains a relevant document that reflects the aspirations, needs and priorities of the community.

The strategy outlines the methods of engagement that will be used to ensure all members of the Georges River Community are provided with an opportunity to share their thoughts on the development of the Community Strategic Plan and its review every four years.

## **BACKGROUND**

Local councils in NSW are required to undertake planning and reporting activities as part of an integrated planning framework in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005. The integrated planning framework requires councils to prepare a long term Community Strategic Plan, a Resourcing Strategy, a four (4) year-Delivery Plan, an annual Operational Plan, an Annual Report and an End of Term Report.

Under Section 402(4) of the Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009 councils are required to "establish and implement a strategy (its community engagement strategy) for engagement with the local community in connection with the development of the community strategic plan."

The Community Strategic Plan will be a long term plan for the Georges River Community covering a period of at least ten (10) years. It is not expected that the plan will remain unchanged for that period and it is a requirement of the Local Government Act that the Community Strategic Plan is reviewed every four (4) years. Each council will complete the review of its Community Strategic Plan by 30 June in the year the review takes place and will roll forward the planning period by at least four (4) years so that it is always a ten (10) year minimum plan.

### **1. Community Engagement Model**

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

#### Social Justice Principles:

The Social Justice Principles of equity, access, participation and rights underpin the development of Council's Community Strategic Plan

**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 be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds 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.

#### Engagement Spectrum:

In addition to the Social Justice Principles, the Community Strategic Plan Community Engagement Strategy is aligned with the engagement spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

This engagement spectrum outlines the following five (5) levels of community engagement:

**INFORM** – To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

**CONSULT** – To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

**INVOLVE** – To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

**COLLABORATE** – To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.

**EMPOWER** – To place final decision-making in the hands of the Community.

The Community Strategic Plan Engagement Strategy has particular emphasis on the Inform, Consult, Involve and Collaborate levels of engagement.

## **2. Stakeholders**

Community engagement will be undertaken with a range of stakeholders, both within and outside our local government area, these include but are not limited to:

- Councillors
- Georges River Council staff – General Manager, Directors, and Operational staff
- Georges River Council volunteers

- Neighbouring Councils
- Council's Advisory Committees
- Local Federal and State MPs
- State and Federal Government bodies
- Residents and rate payers
- Major businesses and industries and small businesses in the region
- Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations
- Community and sporting groups
- Non-English speaking residents
- Visitors and commuters to the area

### **3. Legislative Requirements**

The preparation and implementation of this Community Engagement Strategy is required to meet relevant provisions of the NSW Local Government Act (1993) and the accompanying Planning and Reporting Guidelines for Local Government in NSW (2010).

Section 402 of the Act specifically provides that Councils “must prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles for engagement with the local community in developing the Community Strategic Plan”.

The Planning and Reporting Guidelines set mandatory requirements for Community Engagement Strategies. While the guidelines do not stipulate a prescribed format for these strategies, they do provide the following direction:

#### *Essential Element 1.1*

The Community Strategic Plan should be developed and delivered as a partnership between council, state agencies, community groups and individuals. It should address a broad range of issues that are relevant to the whole community.

#### *Essential Element 1.2*

Information that identifies key issues and challenges must be presented to the community in an accessible format to assist its participation in the planning process.

#### *Essential Element 1.4*

Due consideration must also be given to the expected levels of service expressed by the community when preparing the Community Strategic Plan.

#### *Essential Element 1.5*

As a minimum, the Community Engagement Strategy must identify relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outline methods of engaging each group.

#### *Essential Element 1.6*

Council must place the draft Community Strategic Plan on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days and comments from the community must be accepted and considered prior to the endorsement of the final Community Strategic Plan.

#### **4. Council's Consultative and Advisory Committees**

Council has a variety of consultative and advisory groups which are a valuable asset that enable Council to consult with informed residents on an ongoing basis.

*Aboriginal Advisory Committee*

*Community Development and Services Advisory Committee*

*Economic Development Advisory Committee*

*Lunar New Year Advisory Committee*

*Traffic Advisory Committee*

*Implementation Advisory Committee*

*Youth Advisory Committee*

#### **5. Previous Engagements**

Council has undertaken a number of community engagement activities on a number of projects recently including:

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Stronger Communities Fund Program
- Georges River Council Logo
- Former Oatley Bowling Club
- Venue Hire Grant Funding Program

Findings from these engagement activities and the upcoming Administrator one-on-one sessions will help inform the development of Georges River Council's Community Strategic Plan.

#### **6. This Engagement**

Objectives:

The objectives of this engagement are to identify:

- Long term community objectives
- Strategies to achieve these objectives
- Means to determine the level of service to be provided

Target Groups:

It is intended to focus on the following groups:

Georges River Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cross section of demographics and cultural groups</li><li>• Council service users</li><li>• Community service providers Local businesses and local industry</li><li>• Non-resident workers and visitors</li><li>• Neighbouring Councils</li></ul>
Government Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Federal</li><li>• State</li><li>• Local</li></ul>
Administrator and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administrator</li><li>• Elected representatives of Council</li></ul>
Council Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General Manager and Directors</li><li>• Management</li><li>• Operational Staff</li><li>• Volunteers</li></ul>

Approach:

The engagement plan has been split into eight (8) distinct phases as outlined in the table below.

*Engagement phases*

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Level of Engagement</b>
Phase 1	Gathering of ideas	February - 30 May 2017	postcard survey – hardcopy and online	Community	Collaborate
				Council staff	Collaborate
				Government agencies - local	Collaborate
			Key internal staff workshop	Council staff	Inform
			Activities at community events	Community	Collaborate
Phase 2	Customer satisfaction and importance ratings. Issue generation	June - 30 August 2017	Administrator and Implementation Advisory Committee's input into short list of issues and start prioritisation	Administrator and Councillors	Collaborate
			General Manager and Directors input into short list of issues and	Council staff	Collaborate

	and prioritisation.		start prioritisation		
			Issues and ideas from subject matter experts	Internal staff	Collaborate
				Government agencies	Collaborate
			Customer Satisfaction survey	Community	Collaborate
			Distribution of discussion paper	Community	Inform
				Government agencies	Inform
			Discussion paper follow up survey – phone and online	Community	Involve
				Government agencies	Involve
Phase 3	Prioritisation amongst the community	May– 30 August 2017	Pop up stalls in each ward	Community	Involve
			Discussion forums	Community	Collaborate
Phase 4	Community Strategic Plan development	August – September 2017	Writing up results from consultation and considering relationship with state and regional plans	Council staff	Collaborate
				Government agencies	Collaborate
Phase 5	Initial thoughts of draft plan content	September - December	Community feedback loop – email to registered participants, share your thoughts online and hardcopy survey, pop up events	Community	Consult
Phase 6	Councillor briefing – confirmation of priorities	September – October*	Face to face presentation and discussion	Councillors	Decision
Phase 7	Confirmation of draft plan content	November – December*	Community feedback loop – email to registered participants, share your thoughts online and hardcopy survey, pop up events	Community	Consult
Phase 8	Plan exhibition and adoption	February – April 2018*	All draft documents finalised and approved for exhibition. Public exhibition feedback sought at key events and at customer service points via hardcopy and online	Community	Collaborate

			feedback forms		
			Alterations made based on community feedback. Final Plan adopted by Council	Councillors	Decision
			Brochure summary printed. Finalised Community Strategic Plan on Council's website. published on council website	Community	Inform

\*dates subject to change based on advice from Office of Local Government and incoming Councillors.

#### Communication Strategy:

Council will encourage broad awareness of and participation in the development of the Community Strategic Plan by providing information through diverse and easily accessible channels such as at Council's Service Centres, libraries and other community meeting places; Council's website and social media channels, the local media, Council's newsletters and face to face engagements. Information and feedback will be gathered through workshops, online engagement activities, and phone and hardcopy community surveys. The following key communication methods will be used to communicate with our community and partners about the Community Strategic Plan.

#### *Media*

Council will work with local print and radio agencies to promote relevant phases of the community engagement with the community. Council will include messages in its column in the St George and Sutherland Shire Leader and will create Media Releases to alert the press of opportunities for community consultation.

#### *Council Website and Social Media*

Council will use its website and social media channels to provide information on the Community Strategic Plan and encourage participation in online surveys, polls and engagement activities. Council will also use these tools to promote opportunities for face to face engagement on the development of the Community Strategic Plan.

#### *Newsletters*

Council will promote opportunities to participate in the development of the Community Strategic Plan through its quarterly newsletter *Georges River News* and in other eNewsletters sent to the community through its cultural and community services networks.

How engagement will inform the Community Strategic Plan:

At the conclusion of each activity, all information received will be recorded and reviewed. Summaries of outcomes will inform the development of the draft Georges River Council Community Strategic Plan.

## 7. Review and Communication of Outcomes

As this Engagement Strategy is implemented the Senior Corporate Planner and Community Engagement Officer will regularly inform staff, management, Councillors and the community of the outcomes achieved and next steps.

Opportunities for staff to review the Community Strategic Plan Engagement Strategy will be provided at the conclusion of each component, to ensure it develops in line with the results of engagement completed. In managing the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan regular reports will be provided to the Executive, Councillors, staff and the community.

A review of the Community Strategic Plan and subsequent development of the Delivery Program and Operational Plan for 2018 will occur before 30 June 2018. As part of the review Council will seek feedback from the whole community on the community vision statement and the strategic objectives for the community that address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues identified by the community.

## 8. Further information

For further information on the Engagement Strategy of the Georges River Council Community Strategic Plan please contact:

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## RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibility
<i>Position Title or Team</i>	Senior Corporate Planner

## VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

<b>Version</b>	<b>Amendment Details</b>	<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Period Active</b>
1.0	<i>Draft Community Strategic Plan Engagement Strategy</i>	<i>Senior Corporate Planner</i>	<i>4/04/2017 - 19/05/ 2017</i>

Strategy Approved:

Council Resolution:

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