

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Dates	Policy approved 23/08/2021 (Version 2) This policy is effective upon its approval. Policy is due for review August 2024
Approved by	Council on 23/08/2021 (Version 2) Council Resolution CCL055-21 (COM028-21)
Exhibition Period	N/A for version 2
Policy Owner	Coordinator Communications and Engagement, City Strategy and Innovation
Related Documents	Community Engagement Strategy 2018 – 2028 Communications and Media Management Policy, 2017 (under review)
References & Legislation	Local Government Act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Act 2009 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 Environmental Planning & Assessment Regulation 2000 Crown Lands Act 1989 Roads Act 1993 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act) NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
Document Identifier	Policy #: Pol-008.02 Doc #: D17/112864
Breaches of Policy	Breaches of any policy will be dealt with and responded to in accordance with adopted codes and/or relevant legislation.
Record Keeping	All documents and information obtained in relation to the implementation of this policy will be kept in accordance with the NSW State Records Act 1998, Georges River Council's Corporate Records Policy and adopted internal procedures.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy (Policy) is to provide the framework for a consistent and best practice approach to engaging with the community across all Georges River Council (Council) functions. It also ensures Council is open and transparent and that decisions are made in the best interests of the public.

SCOPE

Community engagement is integral to developing Council plans, policies and the provision of services and assets. Engagement is not a substitute for decision-making; however, it is an important part of the democratic system under which councils operate.

This Policy outlines the commitment, principles and engagement framework under which opportunities will be made available for the Community to directly contribute to Council's decision-making process.

This Policy applies to all Council Officials (defined below). It also applies to volunteers and third-party consultants that engage with the Community on Council's behalf.

This policy is delivered through Council's [Community Engagement Strategy](#).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Community	People that live, work, or invest in the Georges River local government area. More specifically Community includes residents, ratepayers, business owners, sporting groups, not-for-profit organisations, schools, religious institutions and State and Federal agencies.
Council Official	As defined in Part 2 of Council's Code of Conduct, a Council Official includes councillors, members of staff of a council, contractors, administrators, community members of wholly advisory committees, members of the Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC), members of reference panels, council committee members and delegates of council.
Engagement	A two-way dialogue between Council and the community where input, ideas and feedback are sought to assist with the decision-making process on various projects and activities.
Spectrum	International Association for Public Participation – IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum . Levels of participation that define the public's role in any community engagement.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Commitment

1.1. When undertaking community engagement, Georges River Council is committed to:

- Making decisions in the best interests of the community;
- Being open and transparent;
- Respecting the views of the community;
- An equitable practice that gives all members of the community the opportunity to actively participate in democratic processes;
- Being accessible to all members of the community; and
- Meeting legislative requirements.

2. Principles

2.1. Effective community engagement is built on openness, transparency, trust and respect. Council's commitment to community engagement is underpinned by the following principles:

- Engagement contributes in a meaningful way to the development and enhancement of Council's plans and policies and the delivery of services and infrastructure;
- Staff demonstrate integrity when working with the community;
- Council looks for opportunities to engage with the community in order to gauge a better understanding of their thoughts and ideas;
- Systems and tools will be used to help make engagement activities accessible to a wide a range of the community;
- For some major engagements, a summary of community feedback may be made available to participants, for review and response.

3. Engagement Framework

3.1. Council uses the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum as the framework for engaging with the local community. The purpose of this Spectrum, which is considered a best practice benchmark worldwide, is to improve the practice of public participation or community engagement.

3.2. This Spectrum encompasses five (5) key concepts for engaging with the public:

- Inform
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Empower

3.3. The below chart outlines the promises and goals Council has for each of these concepts.

	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 seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	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 work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Reference: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

3.4. By using this industry best practice approach, Council will ensure all members of the community can have their say.

3.5. While Georges River Council encourages the whole community to provide feedback and have their say during the engagement process, Council recognises and respects that not everyone wishes to participate. Participating in community engagement activities is completely voluntary.

4. Community Involvement

4.1. Council recognises the importance of providing opportunities for the community to make their voice heard. Council values community input in the engagement process, which enables Council to make decisions based on the views of residents, ratepayers, business owners and community groups.

4.2. Council will promote avenues for accessible and quality community engagement to inform its decisions and functions. Appropriate and diverse methods will be used to engage in line with industry best practice and with a focus on continuous improvement.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibility
<i>Coordinator Communications and Engagement</i>	Responsible for the implementation, application and review of the Community Engagement Strategy and Community Engagement Policy.

VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
1.0	New Georges River Council Community Engagement Policy Council Resolution CCL097-17 (which included public exhibition period 4/4/17-19/5/17)	Senior Corporate Planner	5/06/2017 – 23/08/2021
2.0	Version 2 adopted by Council, which includes minor amendments to provide further clarification and to ensure currency, as outlined in the Council Report.	Coordinator Communications and Engagement	23/08/2021 - ongoing