

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2021 - 2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We are proud of our diverse communities within the region. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the many lands within the Scenic Rim - the Mununjali in the Centre, the Wangerriburra to the East, the Ugurapul to the West, and all those of the Yugambeh and Jagera language groups. We pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Contact Scenic Rim Regional Council's Community Engagement team on 07 5540 5111 or email mail@scenicrim.qld.gov.au

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

As elected representatives we need access to many and varied views to enable us to make balanced decisions in the best interests of the whole community, which is why I am delighted to present the first *Scenic Rim Regional Council Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026* (Strategy).

This Strategy is our promise to keep our community informed of and involved in the issues that are important to them.

As part of our Customer Centricity Project, our communities told us that we should be listening and communicating more in order to develop deeper partnerships.

In response to that feedback, a cornerstone initiative of this Strategy is a digital engagement platform, which will fundamentally improve the way we inform and listen to our community. To be launched in February 2022, the platform will enable community members to have their opinions heard, their views considered and acknowledged; while being supported by a range of other engagement activities that are purposeful, inclusive and responsive.

Based on industry best practice, our framework allows us to tailor our community engagement approach so we know who needs to be engaged with, when and to what degree.

How we engage with current and potential residents, ratepayers, business owners, community groups, investors, other levels of government, and our employees is of vital importance to us.

We will start by increasing the community's knowledge of Council's projects and programs, and most importantly, providing more opportunities for community members to contribute to their outcomes.

Community input is already part of every decision made by Council, however this Strategy sets us on a path for improved engagement that will in turn support better decision-making and have a positive impact on the future of our region.

Cr Greg Christensen Mayor

& Chinetex

Scenic Rim Regional Council



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am proud to be leading the implementation of the *Scenic Rim Regional Council Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026* (Strategy) which goes hand-in-hand with Council's commitment to be a progressive, responsive and customerfocused organisation.

Our customers are anyone who Council provides services to or has dealings with, and community engagement is how we connect with, inform and involve our customers in the decisions that affect them.

Some of Council's decisions are required by legislation and the majority impact people's livelihoods, health and wellbeing or their surroundings. Under the *Local Government Act 2009*, all local governments are required to uphold the principle of 'democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement'.

In line with our Customer Charter, this Strategy has been developed on five guiding principles to ensure that community engagement in the Scenic Rim is open and transparent, inclusive and accessible, informed and timely, responsive and respectful.

The implementation principles set out exactly how we are going to improve our internal and external engagement processes, our customer interactions with each Council project or program of works, and our relationships and partnerships with the community.

Starting with the appointment of a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Officer, the adoption of this Strategy will further strengthen our community engagement practice through a number of resources and initiatives, including an online and in-person engagement presence.

Spanning a five-year period from 2021-2026, the action plan has 15 specific initiatives that follow best practice standards, centred around the need for open, two-way conversations with our community.

One of those initiatives is a new digital platform that will allow community members to complete surveys, discuss and comment on projects in a public forum, share ideas, identify solutions and keep up-to-date with project progression and outcomes.

We are committed to making meaningful changes to put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

Jon Gibbons

Jon Gibbons
Chief Executive Officer
Scenic Rim Regional Council



INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scenic Rim Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026 guides the way Council designs and manages interaction with its community. It outlines the principles and mechanisms that should be considered when developing a community engagement strategy and activity plans.

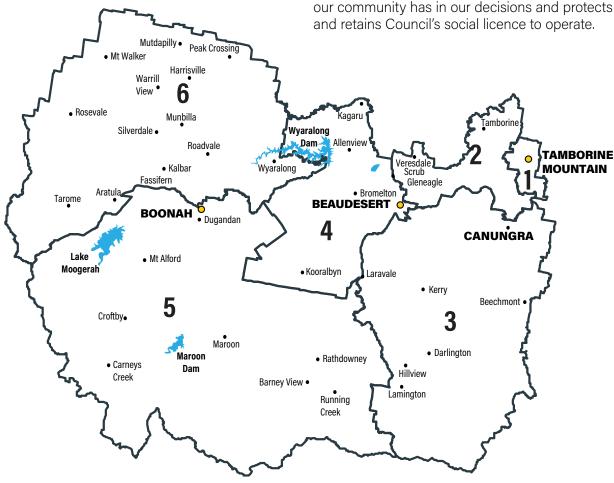
It includes a framework for engagement, which is underpinned by *Council's Community Engagement Policy*. This policy was originally adopted on 23 November 2010, amended on 29 April 2014 and due for review on 29 April 2017. This policy has been reviewed and updated to align with the adoption and implementation of this Community Engagement Strategy.

ABOUT THE SCENIC RIM COMMUNITY

Scenic Rim Regional Council represents the interests of a diverse and aspirational community of 43,575 people. The area's thriving economy is built around agriculture and horticulture, the equine industry, tourism and ecotourism. As a lifestyle destination, it is renowned for its strong community spirit, vibrant arts and cultural scene and outstanding natural environment.

Since the Scenic Rim Regional Council was formed in 2008, Council has been working to bring its network of villages together into one cohesive and united community. This Community Engagement Strategy is a core element in Council's ongoing quest to strengthen confidence, trust and unity across its diverse community as it deals with the complex challenges of future growth and change.

We believe the mutual awareness and understanding that comes from effective community engagement underpins the confidence our community has in our decisions and protects and retains Council's social licence to operate.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement refers to all the different processes we use to involve our community in the decisions that affect them. It strengthens the trust between the community and Council by providing a platform for open discussion. It enables community members to have their opinions heard, their views considered and acknowledged, and helps ensure they are informed of, and involved in, issues which may impact their interests or wellbeing.

All levels of government need to be transparent and accountable in the way they do business. We believe that openness, transparency and accountability are key to building trusted relationships between Council employees, elected representatives and our community.

As well as being the right thing to do, it also ensures we meet our obligations under the law. Under the *Local Government Act 2009* all local governments are required to uphold the principle of 'democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement'.

The Act requires councils to have a community engagement policy, a long-term community plan and to report annually on community engagement activities. This approach is supported by the requirements for fair and ethical behaviour expected of all council officers and elected members, as stipulated by the *Integrity Act 2009*.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Scenic Rim Regional Council is committed to facilitating open and transparent dialogue in order to build trusted relationships with its community. This goes hand-in-hand with our commitment as a progressive, responsive and customer-focused organisation that puts the needs of our customers first.

Council recognises that effective community engagement results in better decision-making and more effective, sustainable outcomes for our whole community because it:

- ensures community views are understood and considered when developing Council plans, strategies, policies and services
- improves the relationship and trust between the community, Council employees and elected representatives by ensuring the community is informed about and involved in Council activities
- strengthens community connectedness by creating opportunities for the community to be involved, and have their say, on matters which are important to them
- assists Council to better understand local needs and opinions
- creates the opportunity to identify new and emerging issues and opportunities
- ensures all voices are heard, including hard to reach constituents
- strengthens feedback and communication from Council so the community knows when and how their input has been considered.

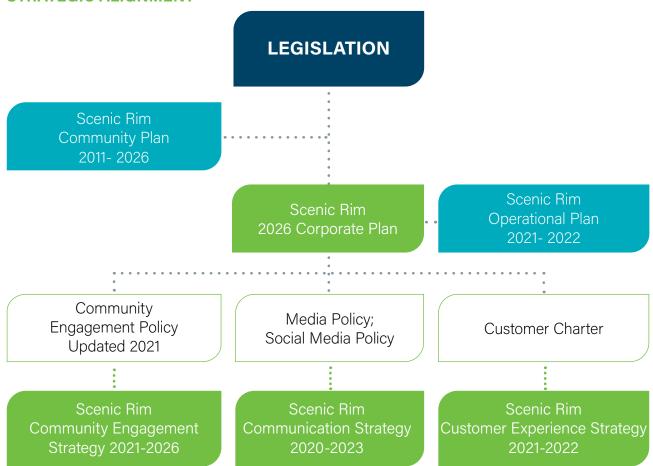
COUNCIL POLICY

The Community Engagement Strategy is underpinned by Council's Community Engagement Policy. This describes our commitment and intent when it comes to interacting with our community in an open, transparent and collaborative way and ensures that Council decisions benefit from community input; that we continually improve and seek feedback on our community engagement practices; and that we comply with all legislative requirements.

We recognise and value effective community engagement because it ensures Council partners with our community to enhance our lifestyles by delivering quality services, well managed growth, sound environmental outcomes, responsible business management and committed leadership. It is a core driver across the seven themes that shape our *Scenic Rim 2026 Corporate Plan*.

Community engagement is built on mutual respect. Effective community engagement does not necessarily mean that there will be agreement, or that every aspect of Council's activities is open to comment or control. Council is ultimately responsible for making decisions that are in accordance with legislative requirements and which it believes best represent the current and future interests of residents.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

PURPOSE

The Community Engagement Strategy guides the way we design and conduct public participation and engagement processes for planning, projects and other strategic decision-making. It describes the commitments we make, and the principles we apply, to ensure everyone's opinion is heard and everyone has a voice on matters of interest and importance to them. It is the process we use to ensure all engagement activities are purposeful, relevant, open, honest, inclusive and responsive.

The Community Engagement Strategy forms part of a suite of documents that tells our community what we are aiming to achieve on their behalf and how we will get there. These documents include:

Scenic Rim Community Plan 2011-2026 Our long-term vision for the future of the Scenic Rim region.

Scenic Rim 2026 Corporate Plan
A medium-term plan which provides continuity beyond the four-year Council term.

Scenic Rim Operational Plan 2021-2022 Developed each year to ensure all departments are working together to deliver desired outcomes. It is supported by numerous project plans.

Scenic Rim Regional Council Communication Strategy 2020 - 2023,

Scenic Regional Council Customer Charter, and Scenic Rim Regional Council Customer Experience Strategy 2020 - 2021

These put our customers and community at the forefront of everything we do and establish the principles by which we will build the trust and confidence needed to operate successfully.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Community engagement activities undertaken by us will encompass a set of guiding principles.

These principles are at the centre of our engagement planning and implementation and provide indicators for measuring the success of our engagement approach.

1. Open and transparent

when there is honesty and integrity about the scope and purpose of engagement so that the community trusts the process.

2. Inclusive and accessible

when there is opportunity for a diverse range of views to be freely and fairly expressed and heard.

3. Informed and timely

when there is sufficient and credible information for discussion, choice and decisions, and space to weigh options, develop common understanding and appreciate respective roles and responsibilities.

4. Responsive

when people have input to designing how they take part, when policies and services reflect their involvement, and when their impact is clear and understood.

5. Respectful

when there is respect for the relationship so we work to understand, develop and learn from engaging with our community.

These guiding principles need to be at the centre of engagement planning and implementation. They will also form the indicators from which engagement practice can be measured and evaluated.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

To support the delivery of the Community Engagement Strategy, a framework ensures Council has a consistent approach to community engagement across all of its activities. Many different employees and project teams consult with the public on a daily basis. The framework is not a toolkit or instruction manual for conducting engagement activities but it does provide guidance on when and how to undertake engagement and what steps and processes should be considered when planning consultation activities.

The framework recognises that different levels of consultation are required for different issues and situations. The model is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum – an internationally recognised tool, designed to help organisations select the appropriate level of participation required to achieve the objectives of different stakeholder activities. It is closely aligned with the international quality Standard for Stakeholder Engagement AA1000SES (2015).

The IAP2 spectrum provides a methodology to help Council determine the level of influence and interest our community has in a decision, which groups are impacted, and therefore what degree of engagement is likely to be appropriate. It shows that different levels of participation are suitable, depending on the outcomes, timeframes, resources and levels of concern or interest in the decision to be made.

Most importantly, it acknowledges that each participation level involves a promise to the community about how their input will be used in decision making. This helps to ensure our expectations are clearly aligned with those of our community and to avoid any misunderstanding that can lead to community dissatisfaction with our processes and costly delays for our projects.





Image courtesy of John Mongard Landscape Architects



IAP2 SPECTRUM

There are five different levels of engagement within the IAP2 spectrum. Each one embodies a different level of influence in decision making and a different promise about how Council will conduct the engagement. Council acknowledges that this framework is a guide only.

	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.
Council's Promise	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.
Role of the Community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Decide

All council decisions require some level of community input. This framework helps us decide who needs to be engaged, when and to what degree.

Generally, as the level of public interest and impact increases, so too should the level of engagement. Community engagement plans need to be tailored for each project and each segment of the community.



MEETING THE NEEDS OF EVERYONE IN SCENIC RIM

It is also important to recognise that stakeholders are not an homogenous group and, while a project may have an overarching engagement level, some sections of the community may have a greater or lesser interest in the issue and expect more or less participation. This includes stakeholders who decide they have an interest and insist on a say, even if they are outside the planned scope of consultation.

A stakeholder analysis is critical in determining the level of engagement required, noting that all stakeholders will require or expect the same depth of engagement. During the life of the project, it may also be necessary to adjust the level of communication, as the project evolves and community interests change.

The Scenic Rim is made up of many different communities. It is important that our engagement activities are planned and implemented to accommodate community groups with specific needs to ensure they are fairly included in the process and their views are taken into account. These groups include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
- Seniors and young people
- People with disability
- People from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The main reasons people do not participate in consultation and engagement include:

- Lack of information and awareness of the issues
- Perception that their input will not make a difference
- Lack of follow-up with issues raised in the past
- Not knowing how their input has been used in the past
- Intimidating or inappropriate engagement methods
- Language, cultural or technology barriers
- Accessibility venue, time, disability access, online access etc.

Council employs a variety of communication mechanisms and techniques to ensure everyone in the community has the opportunity to express their views and is actively represented in decision-making.





Image courtesy of John Mongard Landscape Architects

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The impact of social distancing and the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of online communication and technology-based community engagement mechanisms where face-to-face meetings and events are not possible.

This is a challenge in Scenic Rim where up to 15.9 per cent of the community do not have internet access (according to 2016 Census data), are geographically dispersed, and may therefore have little access to Council communication as well as limited opportunity to participation in consultation and engagement activities.

DATA COLLECTION AND PRIVACY

Council collects and manages personal information. Council respects the privacy of the personal information held by us. Council complies with the privacy principles in the *Information Privacy Act 2009* when we collect, store, use and disclose personal information.

ROLE OF MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

Any engagement process being undertaken by Council needs the involvement of the Mayor and the relevant Division Councillor/s. The Mayor and Division Councillors are elected to represent the views and interests of our residents and ratepayers. Their key role is to provide community leadership, guidance and facilitate communication between the community and Council.

The Mayor and Division Councillors are required to establish priorities between competing demands for limited resources. This means that our elected representatives need access to many and varied views that will enable them to make balanced decisions that are in the best interests of the whole community.

Community engagement is therefore critical to the success of the relationship between the Mayor and Division Councillors, the community they represent and Council. Consistent communication of engagement opportunities between a project team and elected representatives presents a conduit that is consistent, collaborative and focused on outcomes resulting in informed decision-making.



IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Council is strengthening community engagement practice through a number of resources and initiatives. Specifically, a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Officer role has been created in the Communications and Marketing Team. This position will provide best practice engagement advice and support to teams across the organisation. The Council officer will help with our internal and external stakeholders including:

- designing community engagement activities
- creating an online and in-person engagement presence
- providing support for projects to achieve their branch engagement requirements and goals.

Council's focus for the future of community engagement practice will become more proactive and consistent. Future actions can be considered in three main areas.



1. HOW THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATES IN ENGAGEMENT

Planning for community engagement Step 1: Setting engagement objectives

Clearly define the objectives and what you are hoping the engagement will achieve. Identify the project's negotiable and non-negotiable goals but use these as a guide only as different stakeholders may require different levels of engagement and some may disagree on the level of influence and involvement assigned to them.

Step 2: Identifying stakeholders

It is important to identify all groups and individuals who may have an interest in the decision being made, not just those who may be directly affected. Consider interest groups beyond Council's geographic boundaries and any hard to reach groups who may be impacted by the outcome. Special consideration should be given to groups with specific cultural requirements or other barriers.

Step 3: Determining the level of impact

Assess the levels of interest and impact each stakeholder group is likely to experience (high, medium, low). The level of impact may change, as the project evolves, due to changes in conditions or greater understanding of its implications.

Step 4: Selecting appropriate engagement methods

Different stakeholder groups are likely to require different levels of engagement based on the level of impact they are likely to experience. There are many different engagement methods available and these should be carefully selected based on the needs and demographics of each group. It is important to ensure engagement activities are inclusive and maximise the potential for participation.

Step 5: Timeframes and budgets

Timelines and budget for community engagement vary depending on factors such as level of impact, level of participation required and the engagement tools and techniques chosen, as well as any legislative requirements and timeframes. Generally, the higher the level of impact and more stakeholders involved, the more time and resources need to be allocated.

Step 6: Reporting and feedback

It is essential that the outcomes of engagement and consultation are reported back to the community to build confidence in the process, demonstrate how community input is being taken into account and encourage ongoing engagement. Strict standards of governance with respect to privacy, confidentiality and use of personal information are applied in accordance with the Office of Information Commissioner Queensland.

Step 7: Evaluation and monitoring

Effective evaluation and monitoring are important to demonstrate value and ensure continuous improvement of Council's community engagement processes. A summary evaluation should also be made accessible to the community, particularly stakeholders who participated in the community engagement activities.

Protocols for implementing community engagement

There are a number of Council policies and protocols that apply when conducting community engagement activities. These are important to ensure we present accurate, reliable and consistent information to our community and only authorised representatives speak on Council's behalf. The Communications and Marketing Team can provide advice on communication planning, managing and approvals.

2. HOW WE STRENGTHEN OUR SERVICES IN ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

The newly created role of Community and Stakeholder Engagement Officer brings specific expertise and experience to the organisation. This role will create a consistent planning and design approach to engagement, supporting project officers with protocols, guidelines, documentation, facilitation and training.

Council will also improve digital engagement capabilities with the implementation of new, interactive community engagement software. 'Have Your Say' is our current webpage hosting engagement surveys on Council projects and initiatives. A specialised digital engagement platform will expand the range of involvement with community, and provide a one-stop portal for whole of life reporting on projects. It will allow stakeholders to:

- complete surveys
- discuss and comment on projects in a public forum
- share ideas
- identify solutions to region-wide challenges
- keep up-to-date with project progression and outcomes.

3. HOW WE CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE IN ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Organisational capacity building and training

To support the implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy, learning and development opportunities are encouraged across the organisation. By providing these opportunities, Council is continuously building its capacity to deliver successful community engagement by ensuring employees have the appropriate skills and knowledge to plan, manage and facilitate effective engagement activities.

ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

We will deliver on our principles and objectives to keep our community connected, informed and involved. To help us achieve our objectives, we have established key strategies which underpin our action plan.

Improve our internal operations

We will review our current internal operations and revise to include a clear and consistent approach to planning and engaging with the community.

Build internal capacity

We will adopt the community engagement framework to ensure we work to best practice standards and engage in two way conversations by genuinely listening to the community.

Build external capacity

We will endeavour to be more accessible and inclusive in our engagement activities and opportunities, connecting with a broad spectrum of our community.

Support our elected members

We will support our elected members with up-todate information gathered through engagement processes to allow for informed decision making regarding council projects and programs.

Build transparency and trust

We will endeavour to coordinate opportunities for open and honest conversations across existing and proposed council projects and programs.





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ACTION PLAN FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021 - 2026

The strategy will be reported on quarterly and initiatives reviewed every 12 months before the end of each financial year.

Success will be measured by increased satisfaction with Council's new or reviewed projects and programs, and measured through surveys and other research conducted as part of, but not limited to, the Customer-Centric Project.

IMPROVE OUR INTERNAL OPERATIONS

We will review our current internal operations and revise to include a clear and consistent approach to planning and engaging with the community.

INITIATIVE	LEAD	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	TIMEFRAME
Create engagement planning process	Community Engagement	Planning document created and in place	30 January 2022
Monitor and evaluate community engagement	Community Engagement	Engagement schedule documented and used for monitoring and reporting	Ongoing

BUILD INTERNAL CAPACITY

We will adopt the community engagement framework to ensure we work to best practice standards and engage in two way conversations by genuinely listening to the community.

INITIATIVE	LEAD	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	TIMEFRAME
Write protocols, procedures and guidelines	Community Engagement	Internal processes and guidelines documents developed, deployed and used by employees	30 June 2022
Establish internal community of practice	Community Engagement	Key employees provide feedback that they are connected and have peer support, can exchange ideas and discuss lessons learned about community engagement.	30 June 2022
Training of employees	Community Engagement and Human Resources	 Project officers are trained, experienced and supported with the organisation's internal protocols and guidelines. Key personnel are trained in the IAP2 framework 	Ongoing

BUILD EXTERNAL CAPACITY

We will endeavour to be more accessible and inclusive in our engagement activities and opportunities, connecting with a broad spectrum of our community.

INITIATIVE	LEAD	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	TIMEFRAME
Increase accessibility and inclusion	Community Engagement	Evaluation of each project engagement demographics to inform reach and future methods.	Ongoing
Improve accessibility and inclusion	Community Engagement	 Increased opportunities to engage through Council's public facing counters. Increased opportunities to engage through Council's digital engagement platform. Strategic inclusion plans for identified demographics developed and used in designing engagement. 	30 June 2022 1 December 2023
Identify focal points within the community	Community Engagement and Customer Service	 Community Reference Group/s framework and scope developed and approved. Community Reference Group/s established.* Positive feedback from group survey results.* 	30 June 2022 Ongoing

^{*} Please note, development of focus groups is also included in the Scenic Rim Regional Council Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2023.

SUPPORT OUR ELECTED MEMBERS

We will support our elected members with up-to-date information gathered through engagement processes to allow for informed decision making regarding Council projects and programs.

INITIATIVE	LEAD	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	TIMEFRAME
Establish internal engagement notification protocol	Community Engagement	Engagement notification document format created and in place with details of engagement timeframes and opportunities.	Ongoing
Inform decision makers	Community Engagement	 Engagement reports will accompany project presentations to elected representatives. Positive feedback from elected representatives of content provided. 	Ongoing

BUILD TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST

We will endeavour to coordinate opportunities for open and honest conversations across existing and proposed Council projects and programs.

INITIATIVE	LEAD	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	TIMEFRAME
Improve project and engagement visibility	Community Engagement	 Digital engagement platform launched. Positive feedback from community on information and opportunities provided to connect with Council projects. Engagement e-newsletter sent to engagement platform database monthly. 	February 2022 30 June 2022 Ongoing
Inform decision makers	Community Engagement	Engagement report format created and accompanies project reports to Council.	Ongoing
Public engagement activity report	Community Engagement	Overarching quarterly reporting on engagement activity for the community published.	Ongoing
Check-in with community	Community Engagement and Customer Service	 Local government area sense check survey to benchmark sentiment. Customer service check-up. 	2023
Community Engagement Strategy reviewed	Community Engagement	Community consulted on our draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026 - 2030.	2025

