



Murrumbidgee
COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2022-2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OF COUNTRY

We would like to show respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, Elders past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pictured is local boy Bobby admiring the incredible mural which graces the walls of the Council Chambers at Jerilderie.

The mural is titled 'Yo-thun-ing-yuna-ngarratya', meaning 'Coming Together'. Created for the 2000 Olympic Games, it was hung in Parliament House to provide a visual welcome to visitors and wish them peace and safe travel.

The painting depicts various Aboriginal design elements, including the Eaglehawk, which is the Barundji/Barkindji totem. It also depicts a white feather to symbolise safe travel.

The mural was created by four Barundji/Barkindji artists: Elsie Black, Gertrude Gittins, Eileen Ballangarry and Sos Hawkins.

These women can trace their family back at least 700 years as direct matriarchal descendants of the tribe. We sincerely thank these talented artists for this masterpiece and for allowing us to share it for all to see and appreciate.



THIS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN KEEPING WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993.

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Postal address: PO Box 96 Jerilderie NSW 2716

T: 1300 676 243

E: mail@murrumbidgee.nsw.gov.au

W: www.murrumbidgee.nsw.gov.au

Coleambally Office: 39 Broлга Place Coleambally NSW 2707

Darlington Point Office: 21 Carrington Street Darlington Point NSW 2706

Jerilderie Office: 35 Jerilderie Street Jerilderie NSW 2716

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1

ABOUT THIS

STRATEGY

At Murrumbidgee Council, we are committed to engaging in effective and meaningful conversations with our community. Together, we shape the future of our community. Together, we embark on a shared journey to realise these visions. We value the contribution our community makes and the benefits this brings.

This strategy describes how we engage with the community within the Murrumbidgee Council Local Government Area. It is part of a suite of Integrated and Reporting documents.

2

WHAT IS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is a planned, purposeful process. During this process, we work with stakeholders in the community, such as organisations, groups and individuals to shape the decisions, directions or actions that affect, impact or interest them.

3

WHY WE

ENGAGE

We have a strong belief in connecting with our community and working together to make sure activities and initiatives in the area build on the area's qualities as an idyllic place to live, work and play - factors we know are held dearly in the hearts of residents. Engagement is an ongoing, two-way process in all of our strategic planning and operations. Consultation is just one part of the engagement process.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT

- Informed decision making.
- More awareness in the community.
- Greater commitment and ownership in the community.
- Healthy relationships and partnerships with individuals, organisations and groups in or involved with the community.
- Increased capability in Council and the community.
- Better long term outcomes and a stronger community.



4 | OUR APPROACH

Our community engagement activities are based on eight fundamental principles. These have been guided by feedback from our community.

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

1

GENUINE AND ONGOING



We want you to know about and contribute to decisions about plans, policies, programs and activities in our community.

2

TIMELY



We shall reach out in the planning stage and before key decisions are made so you have the opportunity to guide plans, policies, services and decisions.

3

SIMPLE AND ACCURATE



We will report information clearly and correctly so you can make an informed and balanced decision. We will use plain English.

4

ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE



We will use a variety of communication tools to reach the different target audiences in the community. Everyone should have the chance to have a say.

5

COLLABORATIVE AND TWO-WAY



We listen to each other and build a collaborative culture.

6

TRANSPARENT



We want you to understand the process and know how your feedback will be used in the decision making process.

7

RESPONSIVE



We will make sure your feedback is used to guide Council's decisions and that you are aware of the outcomes.

8

RESPECTFUL




We will respect your privacy, confidentiality and beliefs at all times in the engagement process.



HOW WE DECIDE ON THE

SCALE OF THE ENGAGEMENT

We decide on the level of engagement required for each project or issue by looking at the size of the project and the impact it will have on the community. Generally speaking, if a project has a high impact on the community or throughout the whole Council area, there will be more complexity in the community engagement. The following matrix describes the three impact categories and provides examples.

 LOW IMPACT	 MEDIUM IMPACT	 HIGH IMPACT
<p>Small discrete project with a clear decision path. It is likely that the decision will be widely accepted by the community and seen as having positive outcomes or being required. Only a small change, or enhancement to any Council service or facility.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade of local playground or park – such as new equipment or landscaping. • Extension of operating hours for a service. • Local street upgrade. • Introduction or changes to a local program. 	<p>It is likely that the decision will be accepted by the majority of the community impacted, however the decision may be an inconvenience for some people in the community. There is potential for some controversy or conflict within the Council area.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of a Council facility, such as sporting, recreational or leisure venue. • Redevelopment of a local playground. 	<p>There is potential for the decision to create controversy and/ or varying levels of acceptance. There is a high level of complexity in the issue being considered. It is likely to impact sections of the community.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Term Financial Plan. • Closure of Council service or facility. • Rates harmonisation. • Proposals from State or Federal Government that significantly impact the community.

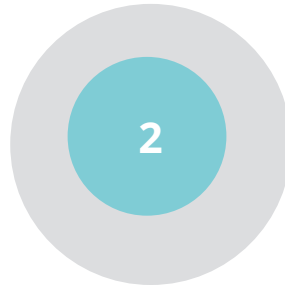


6 | OUR GOALS



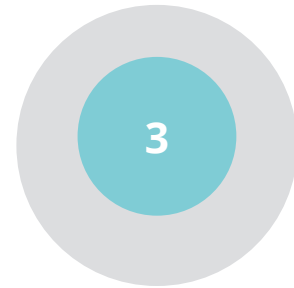
INFORM

We will provide balanced and objective information so you can understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.



CONSULT

We will seek feedback from you on alternatives, projects and/or decisions.



INVOLVE

We will engage in a two-way conversation by working directly with you throughout the whole process and considering feedback received.



COLLABORATE

We will partner with you and seek advice and innovation to find a balanced solution.



EMPOWER

We will place the final decision making in the hands of the community, when possible.

These goals align with the Community Engagement Spectrum defined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum (iap2.org.au).



HOW WE ENGAGE

The steps involved

Large projects, such as the Community Strategic Plan, require a phased Engagement Plan, with the four steps below included in each phase.



The tools we use to engage

For each engagement activity, we consider carefully how to best reach the target audience/s. This will be usually be a mix of digital, face-to-face and paper based tools.

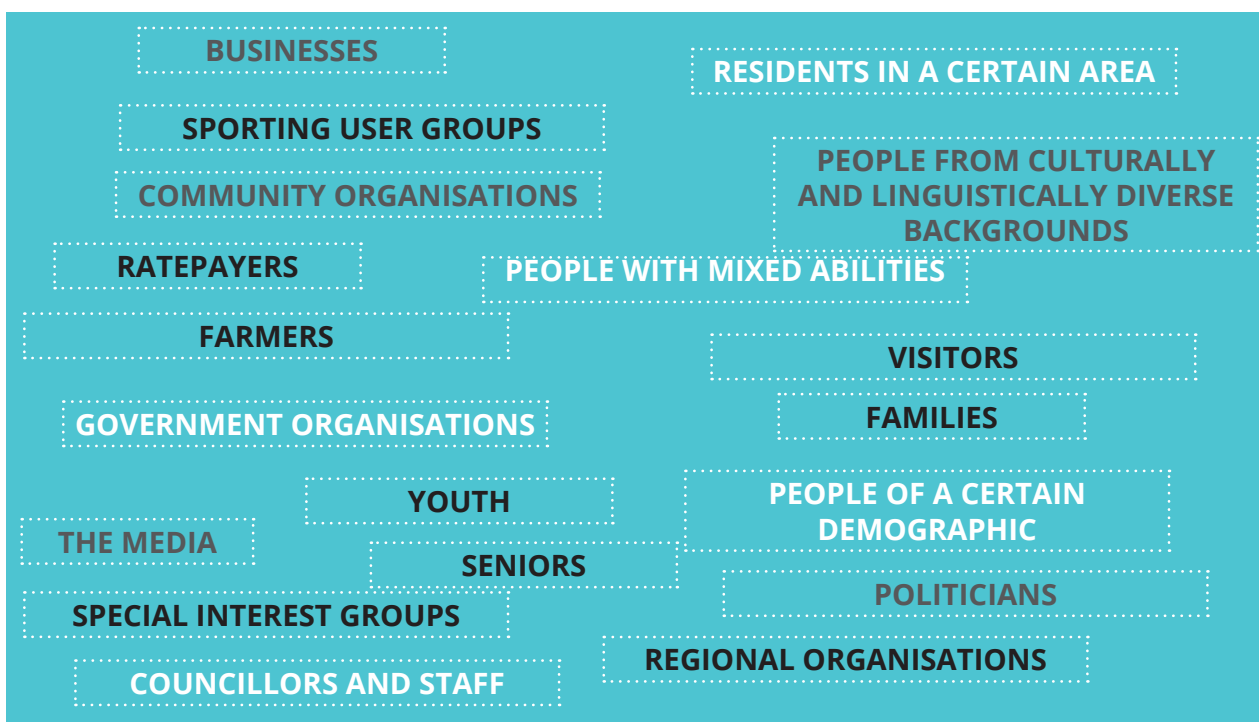
Appendix A shows the Engagement Matrix in relation to the level of participation and our 5 goals of engagement.



8

WHO WE ENGAGE WITH

Every time we are planning an engagement activity, we identify who we need to reach in the community to achieve the objectives of the engagement activity. We decide on the best approach to reaching these specific target audiences.



When we don't engage

While we value every opportunity to engage with the community, there are times when engagement will be limited or when we will only let the community know about decisions or actions.

Examples of this are:

- In an emergency.
- When an immediate resolution is required.
- When public health and safety is at risk.
- When the information is confidential or there are legal constraints.
- When we are developing internal policies.
- When there are clearly defined legislative responsibilities that we must meet.



9 | HOW WE IMPROVE

Every time we engage with the community we review the process and outcomes to analyse how effectively we reached the intended audience and if it achieved results.

We want to make sure we continue to improve our engagement activities and maintain an environment where the community feels valued as having genuine input into Council's decisions, actions and strategies.

We will consider factors such as reach, response level, audience understanding, feedback and budget.

Each time we aim to learn from an engagement activity and continue to improve on all that we do.



10 | USEFUL LINKS

Our other strategic documents can be found on our website in the 'Publications' tab, or by calling or emailing our office. Contact details are listed on the inside front cover.

You can read more about the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum at www.iap2.org.au.

APPENDIX A

Engagement Matrix



Level of participation and method/tool	Level of impact on community		
	Level 3 (high)	Level 2 (medium)	Level 1 (low)
INFORM			
Personal telephone contact	Strongly desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
In person meeting	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	May be appropriate
Written correspondence, mail out	Strongly desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Fact sheets, brochure, community newsletter	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	May be appropriate
Notice or advertisement in paper		Desirable	
Media release	Strongly desirable	May be appropriate	
Information sessions/briefings	Strongly desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Social media	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Email – community contacts	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Website – information/updates	Strongly desirable	Strongly desirable	Strongly desirable
Banners/posters/signs	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
CONSULT			
Telephone survey	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Written survey (paper based or online)	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Written submission	Strongly desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Public exhibition	Strongly desirable	May be appropriate	
Focus group sessions	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Public meetings	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	
Feedback form	Desirable		Desirable
Social media	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Online discussion forum	Desirable	Desirable	
INVOLVE			
Meetings with key stakeholders	Strongly desirable	Strongly desirable	May be appropriate
Meetings with other target community groups, e.g. parents, youth, aged, disabled, various CaLD groups	Desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate
Workshop sessions	Desirable	Desirable	
Site tour/meeting	Desirable	Desirable	
Public Art session	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	
Community forum/debate	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	
Community reference groups	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	
Section 355 Committees	May be appropriate	May be appropriate	
COLLABORATE			
Community summit	May be appropriate		
Expert reference groups	Desirable		
Community reference groups	Desirable	May be appropriate	
Joint Advisory Committees	Desirable	May be appropriate	
EMPOWER			
Citizen's Jury	May be appropriate		
Ballot	May be appropriate		
Legend	Strongly desirable	Desirable	May be appropriate

