

Warringah Council Policy

Policy No. PL540 Engagement Community Engagement Policy

1. Purpose of Policy

To set the framework for all community engagement activities conducted by Warringah Council as part of Council's decision making processes.

2. Policy Statement

Warringah Council recognises that community engagement and participation processes are a vital part of local democracy. Effective engagement is good business practice and critical to good government. For this reason Council is committed to engaging with the Warringah community.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions which affect them. It is critical in the successful development and implementation of acceptable policies and decisions and for improving services by being responsive to the needs of the community. It involves seeking broad informed agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community however it does not necessarily mean achieving consensus.

3. Objectives

- That the Warringah community is well informed about issues, strategies or plans that may directly or indirectly affect them.
- That the people of Warringah have the opportunity for genuine involvement in Council's decision-making and policy development.
- To seek the views of a wide cross-section of the community, selecting engagement methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate to those being engaged.
- That members of the community with the opportunity to hear each other's opinions and to recommend appropriate solutions to community issues.
- That Council is meeting its legislative requirements regarding community consultation in all areas of its service delivery.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations including corporate, strategic land use, financial planning and Council's day to day business activities.

It defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of councillors and staff in engaging with the community and the methods which Council will use to engage with the community.

Community engagement guidelines for private development are outlined in the Warringah Development Control Plan and Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The policy recognises that there is diversity in the activities and projects across Council and the type of engagement undertaken should vary accordingly.



Both ‘consultation’ and ‘community engagement’ are terms used by practitioners and in literature. However in this model of community engagement, consultation is one of the levels of engagement (as per the IAP2 spectrum below).

Council’s approach to community engagement is based on the spectrum of engagement activities as advocated by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The five levels of engagement are shown on the table below:

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT				
INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:	Public Participation Goal:
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives 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.

It should be noted that the ‘empower’ level on the spectrum has limited application in Local Government as the elected Council are the decision making body. However there may be occasions where non-financial empowerment may occur.

5. Community Engagement – Key Considerations

- 5.1. The Warringah Community Engagement Framework consists of this Community Engagement Policy and the supporting documents: Community Engagement Matrix and the Community Engagement Toolkit.
- 5.2. We will endeavour to ensure that its engagement processes are appropriate, accessible, well-planned and adequately resourced.
- 5.3. All community engagement activity is to be undertaken in accordance with the principles of engagement (detailed in Community Engagement Matrix). In summary the five principle headings are:
 - 1. Being open and inclusive
 - 2. Create mutual trust and respect and be accountable
 - 3. Engage early and be clear
 - 4. Consideration and feedback
 - 5. Skills and resources
- 5.4. It should be noted that Council’s Committee Framework forms a key part of the overall engagement framework and is included as one of the engagement methods.
- 5.5. The level of community engagement undertaken relates directly to the level of community involvement required, and should always be appropriate to the nature, complexity and impact of the issue, plan or strategy
- 5.6. Statutory requirements are a minimum and this policy encourages Council to engage the community in addition to statutory requirements providing that any legal timeframes are met.



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- 5.7. We will ensure that the Councillors are informed of community engagement activities relating to high impact projects, staff will advise Councillors of these activities prior to occurring.
- 5.8. The timing of community engagement activities should take into account key dates notably the Christmas and New Year period, and also considering other school holidays and special events to ensure that maximum opportunity is given to encourage community input.
- 5.9. For high impact projects or issues that affect the whole of Warringah (eg Warringah wide Local Environment Plan, Community Strategic Plan, Housing Strategy etc) consider holding engagement activities at sites across the LGA.
- 5.10. In circumstances where the level of involvement requires members of the public to make submissions to Council, content received may be regarded as public and available for general access.
- 5.11. Prior to any decision Council will ensure that it is well informed of the benefits of alternative decisions on matters before them, including accurate reporting of community comments and recommendations that reflect all sides of the argument.

6. Development on Council Land - Special Consultation Requirements

Council acknowledges that when undertaking high impact development on Council owned and managed land, a community engagement process consistent with the engagement framework will be undertaken in addition to the statutory requirements. This includes early input at the concept design stage. (Refer to Matrix for more information).

7. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by Council on 8 February 2011.

It is effective from 9 February 2011.

Reviewed Feb – Sept 2015.

Revised Policy adopted 24 November 2015

Due for Review November 2020

8. Amendments

The original Consultation Policy was adopted by Council on 22 August 2000

The policy was reviewed and amended in May 2005

The policy was reviewed and amended in February 2011 – Title amended to “Community Engagement Policy”

Reviewed in 2011 and changes made to the Matrix Attachment.

The policy was reviewed and amended in November 2015

9. Who is responsible for implementing this policy?

Managers and Project Managers across all sections of Council

10. Document owner

Deputy General Manager Community



11. Legislation and references

Local Government Act 1993 to ensure that community input is a part of the decision making process

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

12. Related Council Documents

Community Engagement Matrix

Community Engagement Toolkit

13. Definitions

Key Term / Acronym	Definition
Community	Includes all the people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of the Warringah area. The community can be referred to as stakeholders or comprise of stakeholders.
Engagement	A broader term which includes all levels of participation for including the community in decision making. Consultation is one level of engagement.
Consultation	Is a process of community engagement that seeks to inform the community or draw out the views and preferences of the community. These views are used to inform decision makers and should provide a guide to decision making
Communication	Generally refers to the exchange of information from Council to the community, and can also include the exchange of information or views from the community to Council
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation (www.iap2.org.au)
Submission	A submission is a formal response to a public document made during the public exhibition period.
Comment	A comment is a response received during early engagement or consultation that is not part of a formal Public Exhibition endorsed by Council
Committee Framework	The Committee Framework includes Strategic Reference Groups and other committees run by Council.