




COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY VERSION AND REVISION

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1. PURPOSE

Etheridge Shire Council is committed to meaningful community engagement to assist in the delivery of high quality local government. The purpose of this policy is to provide commitment and direction for Council's Community Engagement activities and establish a consistent, coordinated approach for including community participation in Council's decision making process where appropriate.

The importance of community engagement is reflected in two key principles of the *The Local Government Act 2009*: democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement" and "transparent and effective processes and decision making in the public interest".

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees of Etheridge Shire Council including consultants and contractors engaged by Council. The scope of this policy includes the principles underpinning Etheridge Shire Council's engagement activities; the role of Councillors and employees in engaging with the community; and the processes that Council will use to engage with the community.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

3.1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Etheridge Shire Council recognises that community engagement is vital to the democratic process and that it contributes to building balanced, healthy communities.

Etheridge Shire Council understands community engagement contains the core elements of information, consultation and participation (in decision-making).

Etheridge Shire Council will apply the core elements of community engagement, where appropriate, to facilitate meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process.

For Etheridge Shire Council, "community engagement" is any activity that enables it to respond appropriately to community issues; inform the community about proposed policies and actions; provide opportunities for the community to voice opinion on Council matters; and invite the community to assist in the shaping of Council policies and the determination of priorities that may impact on their lives.

3.2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Etheridge Shire Council is committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement with its community to facilitate a dialogue between Council and the community on key decisions and projects.

Council also recognises its obligation under the *Local Government Act 2009* to inform, consult and encourage active community participation in the decision-making processes of Council.

Council's policy on community engagement is reflected in the following principles or "statements of value" that commit Council to:

- Provide regular information to its community regarding matters of interest using a mix of methods and utilising a variety of media.
- Be inclusive and connect with those in the community who can be difficult to reach.



- Actively seek community input into decision-making processes and, in so doing, foster collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders.
- Provide timely, appropriate and meaningful opportunities to engage with the community on matters affecting them.
- Be responsive and respectful to community members who raise issues or concerns. Council will listen, and seek to understand experiences that may be different from our own.
- Follow ethical principles of conduct, making engagement processes open and accountable, identifying together the rules of engagement and reporting on outcomes.
- Demonstrate good governance by ensuring accountable, robust and transparent processes through which individuals and groups can exchange views and influence policy and/or decision making.
- Recognise the diverse range of values and interests in the community and actively pursue engagement opportunities that are tailored to intended audiences.
- Meet its legislative obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

3.3. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum and the Local Government Association of Queensland community engagement principles guide the community engagement conducted by Etheridge Shire Council.

The five principal elements of IAP2's community engagement spectrum are:

1. *Inform: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.*
2. *Consult: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.*
3. *Involve: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.*
4. *Collaborate: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.*

Empower: To place the final decision making in the hands of the public.

3.4. ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

When will Council engage with Community?

Priority will be given to engaging with the community when:

- It is a requirement under legislation or under a funding agreement;
- When Council resolves to recommend the need for community engagement;
- When the decision is likely to impact on people and the places they live and work; or
- When a Council operated event, program, service, facility, community focussed policy or plan is to be introduced, changed or discontinued, which may impact on the community.

When will Council not engage with Community?

There are certain situations that are not suited to community engagement and these include:

- When decisions must be made immediately;



- When decisions relate to everyday Council business operations or legislative matters and there is no scope for community views to be considered; or
- When legal or commercial and other confidentiality restrictions prevent.

4. REPORTING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting

No additional reporting is required.

Responsibilities

Councillors and employees play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Community engagement will be linked to an identified corporate plan priority or a significant emerging regional issue. Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local communities and Council employees have responsibility for engaging the community in their day-to-day activities and projects.

5. DEFINITIONS

Council - Etheridge Shire Council.

Community - For the purpose of this policy, 'community' refers to individuals or groups associated with the Etheridge Shire's local government area, including, residents, ratepayers, business, industry, community groups and organisations, emergency services, educational institutions and church groups.

Community engagement - the many processes and interactions that occur between Council and the community and community groups. Community engagement is the process of connecting governments (in this case Etheridge Shire Council), citizens and communities on a wide range of policy, program and service issues. It can be formal or informal and operates on the premise that the best decisions are made if those involved in the outcomes are considered.

Community groups - are groups, organisations and Council advisory bodies that have community-based members and who may share common interest(s) of a location, cultural activity, language or value(s) nature. Individuals can be members of different communities of interest.

Councillor - includes all members elected to Council office.

Employees - encompass all staff including permanent full-time, part-time, contract and casuals.

IAP2 Spectrum – The International Association of Public Participation's core structure of community engagement based 5 principles including Informing, Consulting, Involving, Collaborating and Empowering.

Policy - Etheridge Shire Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Stakeholder - a person or group who has or feels they have an interest.

6. RELATED LEGISLATION, DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Related Documents

Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)

Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld)

Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025

References

Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. 2017. Community Engagement Toolkit for Planning

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). 2018. Spectrum of Public Participation



Local Government Association of Queensland. 2010. Community Engagement Policy Development Guide

7. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer to monitor the adequacy of this policy and implement and approve appropriate changes. This Policy will be formally reviewed every four (4) years or as required by Council.