



POLICY MANUAL

POLICY NO: 1.2.15	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY
OBJECTIVE:	To broadly define Lismore City Council's approach to community engagement.
STRATEGIC PLAN LINK:	Engage With the Community
PROGRAM:	Communications
AUTHORISED: 5/8/97	REVIEWED: 23/6/2009

PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to:

- demonstrate Lismore City Council's commitment to the values and principles of best practice community engagement
- define Council's approach to community engagement
- provide a framework to Council to guide the implementation of community engagement activities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all community engagement activities undertaken in the name of Lismore City Council.

FRAMEWORK

Lismore City Council uses a framework developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). The levels of community engagement range from inform to empower.

- **Inform** - to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, benefits and/or solutions
- **Consult** - to obtain public feedback on alternatives, projects and/or designs
- **Involve** - to work directly with the public throughout the decision-making process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered
- **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** - where the public makes the final decision*.

**Please Note - In the local government context elected representatives are empowered by the community through the democratic process to make decisions following input from the community and Council officers.*

PRINCIPLES

Lismore City Council will use the following principles for engagement with the community.

Council will:

- Be open and transparent about the intent and nature of any community engagement activity.
- Be clear about the level of influence the community has in any decision-making process.
- Communicate the values underpinning Council's engagement processes where individuals:
 - are respectful of each other
 - act fairly and with integrity with each other
 - actively listen to each other, and
 - are each accountable for their actions.
- Recognise that varying levels of engagement are required at different times across the range of Council planning services and operations.
- Develop inclusive community engagement plans that reflect diversity across the community.
- Provide the community with timely, clear, quality information that is accessible.
- Work with the community to understand their issues and interests to enable informed decisions to be made.
- Be open to practical and innovative ideas
- Work within agreed timeframes for all community engagement activities
- Demonstrate and explain to the community how their feedback has been considered in the decision-making process.
- Forward all relevant information arising from community engagement to other areas of Council for further action.
- Continually evaluate engagement activities and learn from past performance to improve future community engagement.

POLICY CONTEXT

This Community Engagement Policy is informed and underpinned by a number of Council policies and procedures including:

- Lismore City Council *draft* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultation Guidelines
- Lismore City Council Policy on the Notification and Advertising of Development Applications, Chapter 10, Part A of the Lismore Development Control Plan. (This policy reflects the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.)

TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms and definitions are used in this policy and in the planning and delivery of community engagement activities by Council.

Community - people who live, work, study, visit, or use facilities and services in the Lismore local government area.

Community engagement - community engagement provides opportunities for people who are affected by, or interested in, a Council decision or project to participate in the decision-making process and contribute to the outcome.

Project - refers to any Council project, program, plan or scheme.