



# Gladstone Regional Council

## Policy

Topic	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Policy Number	P-2.00.02
Directorate	COMMUNITY SERVICES
Statutory Authority	LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2009
Date of Adoption	6 July, 2010
Resolution Number	10/223
Amendments	This policy has not been amended

### POLICY DETAIL:

#### POLICY INTENT

Community Engagement is now an everyday process of local government in Queensland and is a legislative requirement under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

The intent of this policy is to define the principles underpinning Gladstone Regional 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.

#### **WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (adapted from the Local Government Association of Queensland's, "Community Consultation Guide, 2003")**

Community engagement is the process of connecting governments (in this case Gladstone Regional 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.

Gladstone Regional Council recognises policies on community engagement adopted by the Local Government Association of Queensland:

- 2.3.1.1 Local government recognises that community engagement is vital to the democratic process and that it contributes to building balanced, healthy communities.
- 2.3.1.2 Local government understands community engagement contains the core elements of information, consultation and participation (in decision-making).

- 2.3.1.3 Local government will apply the core elements of community engagement, where appropriate, to facilitate meaningful community involvement in the decision-making process.

Gladstone Regional Council also recognises that the position of the Local Government Association of Queensland is informed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which has developed the following framework:

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

- 1. Information: To provide the community and key stakeholders with balanced and objective information on decisions, policies, plans and strategies.*
- 2. Consultation: To obtain feedback from the community and key stakeholders on analysis and alternatives to inform decision-making.*
- 3. Participation: Responsibility for the final decision rests with Council but may, in some instances, be shared with the community and key stakeholders. It is critical that the final decision maker is predetermined and agreed in the planning process and recognised in community engagement planning. Participation is made up of several parts:*
  - a) Involvement: To work directly with the community and key stakeholders so that their concerns/issues are consistently understood and considered.*
  - b) Collaboration: To partner with the community and key stakeholders in each aspect of the decision process - including the development of alternatives and identification of solutions.*
  - c) Empowerment: All final decisions rest with Council or a delegated officer of Council. Council may:*
    - i. Adopt recommendations from the community, unchanged, if the circumstances warrant such an approach; or*
    - ii. Authorise a community entity to proceed with a task that requires the entity to exercise a degree of decision making with matters contained within the task.*

For Gladstone Regional 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.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

Gladstone Regional 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*.

## **POLICY APPLICATION**

To facilitate this commitment, Gladstone Regional Council has developed a Community Engagement framework designed to build capacity and performance within the organisation through ongoing training, resource development, review and evaluation of its community engagement practices.

This policy will be implemented through the following activities:

- Community Engagement Policy training
- Community Engagement induction process for new employees
- Coordination and roll-out of internal Community Engagement Strategy
- Community Engagement online resources and employee training
- Professional Community Engagement consultancy and support for internal clients.

## **LINKS TO THE COMMUNITY PLAN:**

### *Vision 2028:*

- To ensure that community views are sought and heard by all levels of government and industry, and that such views inform decision-making about the region's future.
- To ensure the community's needs are considered in regional development.
- To attract and retain investment and human capital for a sustainable, diversified economy in a smart growing region.

## **LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN**

### *Corporate Plan 2009-2013:*

- 9.1.1 Outcome 1: Organisational governance that provides highly respected leadership, is transparent and accountable in its decision making, and secure in constitutional recognition.
- 9.1.2 Outcome 2: A strong, effective and sustainable organisation, providing excellence and innovation in custodianship of the community's resources.
- 9.1.3 Outcome 3: A Council that is engaged with its community.
- 9.2.1 Outcome 1: A strong overarching regional identity which also recognises and supports local community identity.
- 9.2.2 Outcome 2: A vibrant community with strong support networks.

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Councillors and employees play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will decide the high level strategic issues on which it will engage the community. These issues 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.

Council employees are required to have an understanding of the objectives and principles of Community Engagement; the methodologies of Community Engagement and the appropriate time to use them; and the types of activities that require advice of expert professionals.

## REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This policy is to be reviewed biennially internally for applicability, continuing effect and consistency with Local Government policy, legislation and departmental operation.

## DEFINITIONS

**Council** is Gladstone Regional Council.

**Policy** is Gladstone Regional Council's Community Engagement Policy.

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

**Community engagement** is the many processes and interactions that occur between Council and the community and community groups.

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

**Councillor** includes all members elected to Council office.

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

**Community** is the people who live, or work in, or visit Gladstone Region.

**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.

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**GRAEME KANOFSKI**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

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