

GOONDIWINDI REGIONAL COUNCIL



Community Engagement Strategy

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1	GRC 0010	27 August 2008	Review August 2009
2	Reviewed and Amended	19 August 2009	Review August 2011
3	Reviewed and Amended	28 August 2013	Review August 2017
4			

BACKGROUND

To ensure information is disseminated in a clear and accurate manner, Goondiwindi Regional Council has adopted this Community Engagement Strategy to provide clear guidelines for the various public participation and information distribution processes aimed to facilitate understanding and improve Council decisions.

DEFINITIONS

“Community” refers to Goondiwindi Regional Council residents, and other users of Council’s services and assets.

“Engagement” refers to interactions between governments, citizens and communities on a wide range of policy, program and service issues to inform decision making and develop partnerships.

“Council Officer” encompasses all staff including permanent full-time, part-time, contract, casual and in-house consultants.

For the purpose of this policy, public relations is defined as *‘actions taken by Council in promoting goodwill between itself and the public, the community, employees, customers and other stakeholders’*.

For the purpose of this strategy, public participation is identified as *‘an activity that may include any of the following: informing the community of a Council decision or activity, other promotional activities initiated or supported by Council, public education initiatives, public consultation and responding to general public concerns.’*

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The following community engagement principles from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) will apply to this Strategy. They have been endorsed by the Queensland Government and the LGAQ and are detailed as follows:

Integrity – where there is openness and honesty about the purpose and scope of engagement;

Inclusion – when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;

Deliberation – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decision, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understanding and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities;

Influence – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.

Level of Public Participation

The preferred level of public participation will be related to the following considerations:

- The impact (or perceived impact by the community) on the public;
- The complexity of the matter at hand;
- The number of negotiables¹ in the decision making process; and
- The level of participation the public appears to want.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Policy Scope

- Community engagement is the responsibility of all staff and elected representatives. The Policy applies to all Councillors, Council Officers, Contractors and consultants of the Goondiwindi Regional Council when making decisions that impact significantly on the community.
- The responsible Director will establish the most appropriate engagement techniques at the project planning stage and will then be responsible for providing information on the issue and facilitating the community engagement. As each situation is different, Council and staff will use their judgement to ensure that the community is appropriately engaged as necessary.

2. Consultation

Goondiwindi Regional Council will apply the following concepts when engaging with the community:

- Clearly communicating the purpose of the engagement and the extent to which the outcome will be guided by the community input.
- Using an appropriate level of engagement for the purpose.
- Encouraging maximum participation.
- Building engagement skills and knowledge across Council.
- Reporting on community engagement activities.

¹ Negotiables are defined as those actions or outcomes at any stage of a project which requires a decision, where that decision outcome is flexible and may be improved by public participation.

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- Being transparent in our processes and honest in our communication.

3. Financial Implications of Public Participation

- At all times Councillors and staff will consider the financial impacts of any proposed public participation process and adopt a process which takes into account relevant budgetary constraints.
- When considering budgets for proposed projects or activities, the relevant officer should, where possible and relevant, include an allowance for public participation at an appropriate level.

4. Public Relations Activities

General promotion and evaluation of Council and its associated activities will be undertaken in the following ways:

- An annual newsletter to householders to accompany distribution of rates notices;
- Maintenance of a comprehensive and up to date website;
- An information column for inclusion in the Goondiwindi Argus and Macintyre Gazette;
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys be conducted every two years;
- Ensuring sufficient information is available to the public to assist them in understanding Council decisions where public interest is anticipated.

PURPOSE

To define Council's commitment to community engagement and the principles and processes that Council will follow to encourage active participation by the community in Council's decision making.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

To establish a framework to guide Council's community engagement processes and activities.

The Goondiwindi Regional Council acknowledges the public has a right to be consulted about decisions that may impact on their quality of life. We will strive to ensure that a transparent, two-way communication process exists between Council and stakeholders, and that the public has sufficient information required to allow effective participation in the communication process.

RELATED POLICIES PROCEDURES OR LEGISLATION

- Local Government Act 2009
- Sustainable Planning Act 2009
- Local Government regulation 2012

REVIEW DATE

August 2017