# Community Engagement Communications

# Staff Toolkit

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# Contents

# DEFINITIONS

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Depending on the situation in which you are working, 'engagement' can cover consultation, communication, education, public participation, participative democracy or working in partnership.

For our purposes, 'engagement' is used as a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery consultation involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

The word 'community' is also a very broad term used to define groups of people; whether they are stakeholders, interest groups, citizen groups, etc.

A community may be a geographic location (community or place), a community of similar interest (community or practice), or a community of affiliation or identity (such as industry or sporting club).

'Community engagement' is therefore a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest, or affiliation or identify to address issues affecting their well-being. The linking of the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

## WHY DO WE DO IT?

Some benefits from undertaking community consultation include better decision making, identifying the (real) problem, improved partnerships and collaboration with community and empowering the community to make decisions and to implement and manage change.

The community has a legitimate right to have an interest in local government activities.

*THE PROVISION OF GUIDELINES, TEMPLATES AND RESOURCES WILL STANDARDISE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT*

# INTRODUCTION

## CONSISTENCY ACROSS THE ORGANISATION

The focus of this toolkit is on getting the basics right. This involves planning effectively for community engagement and fostering community involvement in decision making.

A planned approach will provide a strong foundation for the City of Albany to build on and drive community engagement initiatives and ensure that community engagement is undertaken consistently across the organisation.

With effective communication, dialogue and increased involvement, the Council will be better positioned to make informed decisions about issues that affect the local community.

Community engagement processes are open, two way and ongoing.

As such the results of all community engagement processes initiated by the City will be available to the public except in those cases where confidentiality must be applied.

## SEEKING SOLUTIONS

It is important to remember that community engagement is not a magic wand that can be waved to ensure that all parties are happy.

Ineffective or tokenistic community engagement can be detrimental to the good faith of the community in the long term.

The development of this toolkit is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), best practice case studies, programs across Australia and guidelines outlined by the WA Premier and Cabinet.

This toolkit outlines the tasks that should be undertaken and provides suggested approaches that encourage community involvement in the decision making process.

### SEE RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOU PLAN:

→ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

→ DE-BRIEF/EVALUATION CHECKLIST

→ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

# BACKGROUND

## WHAT WILL THE CITY ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY ON?

The City will undertake community engagement for the following broad reasons:

**Site Specific**

Matters about a particular site, such as a change in use.

**Area Improvement**

Matters that affect people in a neighbourhood or suburb eg traffic management.

**Service Planning**

To develop, review or improve a service. The service could have an impact across the whole local government.

**Policy Development**

To develop or improve policies for Council's position on particular matters.

**Key Strategic Issues/Major Projects**

Projects of such a size that they impact on the future of the whole local government area.

**Strategic Plan Review and Development**

Establishing the decision-making framework for Council and future long term planning for the City.

**Legislative Requirement**

Where required under the Local Government Act, Planning and Development Act and Town Planning Scheme or relates to changes to legislation, where Council is responsible for administering the legislation.

# KEY PRINCIPLES

## FOLLOW THE CITY OF ALBANY AGREED PRINCIPLES

### Commitment

Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels.

### Inclusiveness

Consultation will be planned and undertaken with the aim of engaging all people affected by the activity. Given consideration to the City's policies, eg. Access and Inclusion Policy and the Aboriginal Accord Agreement.

Affected and interested parties will be given opportunities to participate. Consultation will be sensitive to the needs of particular groups to maximize their ability to contribute.

### Clarity

Objectives for and limits to information, consultation and active participation should be well defined from the outset.

The respective roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder must be clear to all. 'Plain English' will be used wherever practical, with all technical terms explained using simple explanations.

## PRINCIPLE BENEFITS

TWO WAY AND ONGOING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS.

INTEGRITY IN DECISION MAKING

ENSURING DECISION IS EVIDENCE BASED

PROVIDES A MAP ON WHAT TO CONSIDER

## Timing

Community engagement and active participation should be undertaken as early in the process as possible to allow a greater range of solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of best practice outcomes.

Adequate time must be available for engagement and consultation to be effective.

Communication is needed at all stages of the project cycle.

## Transparency

The stakeholders in any consultation process should be clear about why and how the consultation will be undertaken and how much influence the consultation can have in the decision making process and outcomes.

Stakeholder should be made aware of the any limitations in the process and if options are restricted. Stakeholders should be updated regularly on the progress and outcomes of the consultation.

## Resources

Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in planning and/or assessment of major planning projects are to be effective.

The City must have access to appropriate skills and resources. An organisational culture that supports their efforts is highly important.

## Accountability

The City has an obligation to account for the use they make of community and stakeholder inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation.

Measures to ensure the process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing accountability overall.
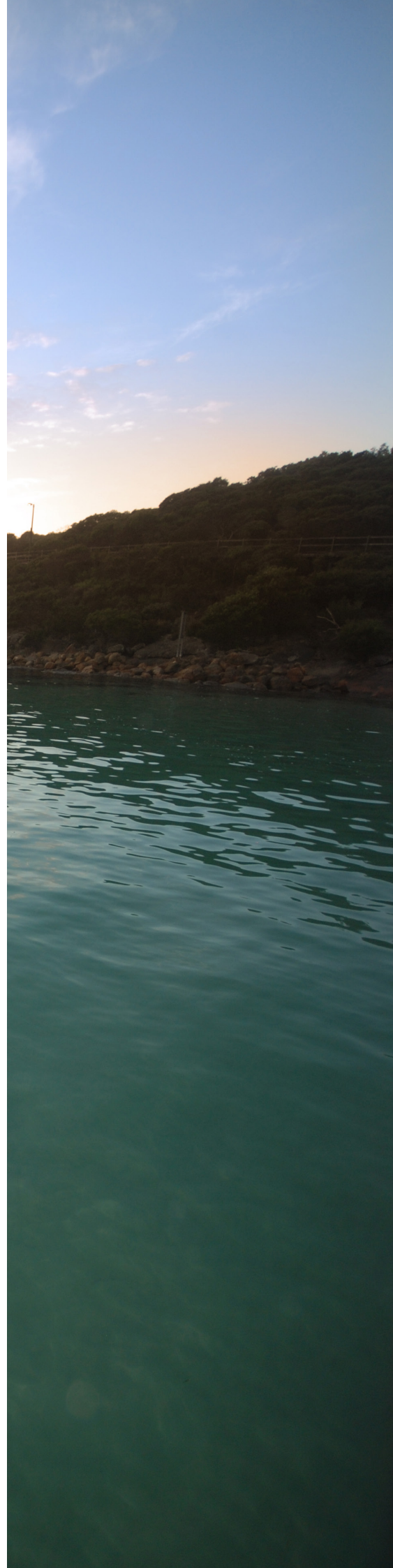
# UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR KEY LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## METHODOLOGY

This toolkit is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model and has been adapted for use by the City of Albany.

The four levels utilized by the City have differing requirements with impacts on resources and timelines.

The City will consider the differences that the level of impact on the community can have on the goals and messages that can be used as shown on page 9 and 10 across the levels of engagement.

For example a "collaborative process" will take far longer and require additional resources compared to a "consult process".
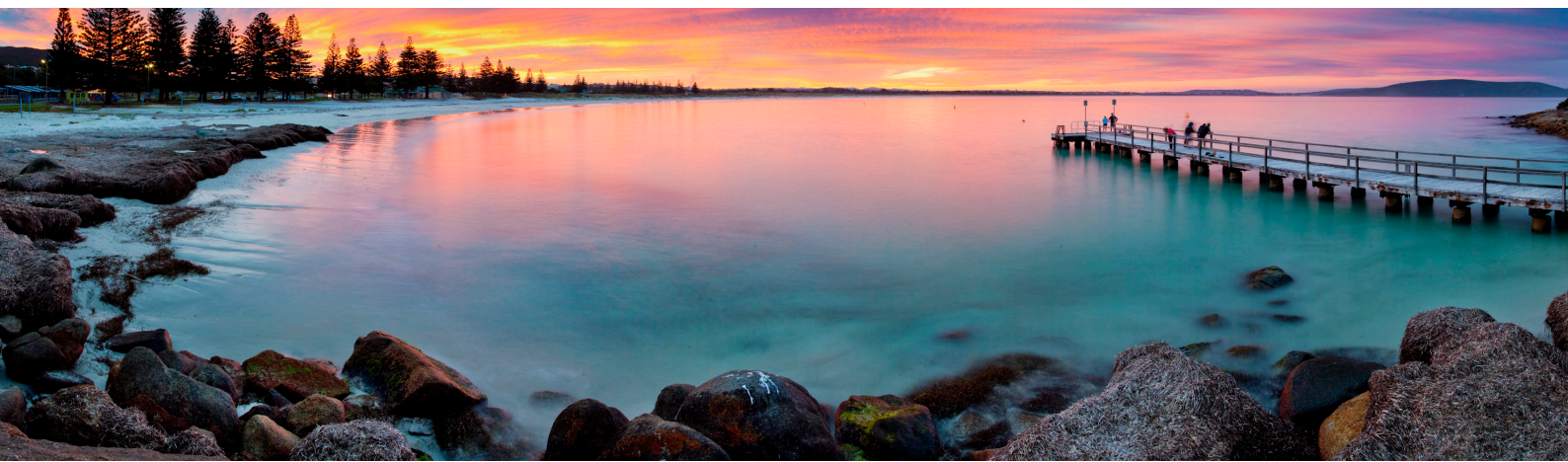
# UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES ON THE LEVEL OF IMPACT

Successful community engagement involves building good person-to-person relationships, which treat participants with respect and are free from perceptions or hidden agendas. Clear ground rules, clearly communicated is extremely important in any community engagement.

| | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public Participation Goal: | To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions | To work with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution. |
| Promise to the Public: | We will keep you informed. | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. |
| Example techniques: | • Fact Sheets<br>• Web Sites<br>• Open Days | • Public Comment<br>• Focus Groups<br>• Surveys | • Workshops<br>• Deliberate polling | • Citizen Advisory Committes<br>• Consensus building<br>• Participatory decision-making |

# RULES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For any community engagement process identify what you require from the community and how you will deliver what you provide in exchange.

**1.** Establish what you are promising as part of the engagement process.

This could include provision of information or feedback on how contributions have influence decisions, through to implementation of stakeholder decisions.

**2.** It is important to consider the implications and risks associated with your proposed level of participation when designing your engagement approach.

**3.** Avoid promising a level of participation and power that is never intended to be given, or designing processes that claim to be empowering, but merely offer 'token' levels of participation.

All community engagement plans must be endorsed by the Executive Director.

**4.** An annual program such as notification of works, can identify community engagement planning, which will then identify community engagement consultations required.  Start planning the consultatoin at once your program is set., at the beginning of the budget year.

**5.** If the project meets any of the following criteria then the community engagement plan will need to be endorsed by the Executive Director Team, unless previously approved as part of a yearly program.

- Projects over $100,000;
- Projects with medium to high political sensitivity;
- Projects with high complexity; and
- Projects that require legislative changes.

Community engagement plans that do not require Council approval are to be recorded on synergy.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

## PROCESS MAP-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Objective**
*To foster community involvement in decision making by ensuring that community engagement is undertaken consistently across the organisation on every relevant project or initiative.*

| PROCESS STEP | RESPONSIBILITY | OUTCOME | EVIDENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Project Planning | *Project Control Group / Project Manager | The need for community engagement considered and integrated into the project planning process for every project undertaken | *Community Engagement section of the **Project Profile** |
| 2. Engagement Level | Project Control Group / Project Manager | Using the **Community Engagement Matrix** the appropriate engagement level and participation agreed based on the impact of the project on the community | Community Engagement section of the **Project Profile** |
| 3. Engagement Strategies | Stakeholder Relations Manager / Project Manager | Using the **Community Engagement Matrix** the appropriate consultation approach agreed based on the complexity of the project and any legislative requirements | Community Engagement section of the **Project Profile** |
| 4. Action Plan | Project Control Group / Project Manager | Based on the agreed engagement level and consultation approaches, activities, resources and timeframes allocated and monitored within the Project Plan | **Work Breakdown Structure** or GANT Chart |
| 5. Approvals | Project Manager with EMT or Council | For projects above $100,000, projects with a high level of complexity or political sensitivity or projects requiring legislative changes gain approval to proceed | **EMT Minutes** or **Council Resolution** |
| 6. Implementation | Project Control Group / Project Manager | Undertake the consultation processes as planned and approved ensuring that stakeholder expectations are met throughout | Minutes, file notes and correspondence |
| 7. Monitoring & Evaluation | Project Control Group / Project Manager | Throughout the duration of the project approaches taken monitored and adjusted where necessary to ensure the community feel engaged and involved in decision making | **Project Profile, Work Breakdown Structure** or GANT Chart |

*A Project Control Group consists of the project owner, manager, client and relevant key stakeholders.
*A Project Profile is the name of a document that summarizes the project deliverables and activities.

# HOW TO: STEPS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CITY OF ALBANY

## STEP 1: PROJECT PLANNING

Before undertaking any community engagement project it is important to **scope the project** and ask, what are we trying to achieve and how are we going to do it?

In scoping the project, consider the following:

•Objectives – what are you trying to achieve;

•Timeframe - be aware of school holidays, public holidays, festivals or other Council activities that may have an impact on your project;

•Available resources, staff, materials etc;

•Budget - including costs of consultation methods, e.g. public notices, marketing materials, officer hours;

•What background information is already available;

•Issues – identify any community concerns or expectations you may already be aware of and any research or history;

•Identify the key stakeholders (target audience)

•A **stakeholder** is defined as someone who may be affected by or have a specific interest in the decision or issue under consideration;

•**Primary Stakeholders** are those who have a direct interest in an outcome such as:

•Mayor and Councillors; and

•Key community members, groups, agencies, organisations and businesses who live/operate in the near location of a project or who will be directly affected by a project or decision (this may include "absent owners" of leased/rented premises or residential properties).

**Secondary Stakeholders** are those who have a general interest in a project or issue such as:

•City staff working on a project;

•People who live and work in the broader area;

•Business owners;

•Community groups in the City of Albany area; and •Consultants involved in a project.

# HOW TO: STEPS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE CITY OF ALBANY

**Tertiary Stakeholders** may also need to be considered depending on the type of community engagement and can include:

•State and Federal Government agencies and organisations;

•Surrounding local government authorities;

•Non-government agencies and organisations; and media interest.

**Review** community profiles and databases to assist with identifying people/groups to be consulted including:

•ID Profile

•Community LINCS.

**Consider** engagement options with other City areas:

•Other internal City staff may be able to provide specialist advice and practical support to assist staff with the engagement project. Consider establishing facilitator database to call on when needed.

**Decide** what the decision to be made is:

•An effective decision statement is about a clear statement of the problem to be solved, a reflection of the needs of decision makers and the community, something that stakeholders want to solve or explore, a challenge or a dilemma that is clear and expressed in common language, something that can be accepted by the majority of stakeholders, keeping the statement simple and straightforward.

**Consider** what the legislation requirements for engagement are:

•For example, major planning proposals are governed under the Local Government Act 1995 and the Planning and Development Act 2005.

## STEP 2: DETERMINE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REQUIRED

The level of community engagement will be driven by the expectations of internal and external stakeholders. Consideration should be given to the following:

•Level of interest from the community as perceived by internal stakeholders (Council and staff);

•Level of interest being shown by the community;

•Degree of complexity – is there a single issue or multiple issues?

•Degree of potential community impact and/ or outrage – what is the general community perception of the issue/s;

•Degree of political sensitivity – is there potential for individuals/groups to use the situation to make political gains?

•Availability of resources; and media Interest.

To determine the consultation approach may require initial discussions with the Executive Team and or key stakeholders if the issue is politically sensitive or is high on the complexity scale.

Use one of the matrices to determine what level of participation is required. Depending on the impact, the level of participation could be informing, seeking information, involving or collaboration.

Simple engagement processes are to use matrix no 1. major projects, planning projects and processes that require a decision of Council at the end of the engagement are to use both matrices to determine the level of engagment to be used.

The community engagement template can be used to follow the steps to complete your plan, the plan includes the matrices that follow.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATRIX 1

| | Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Degree of Complexity** | | | |
| There is 1 clear issue and/or problem that needs to be addressed. (low) | | | |
| There are more than 1 or 2 issues and/or problems that can be resolved. (medium) | | | |
| There are multiple issues and/or problems and its unclear how to resolve them (high) | | | |
| **Degree of Potential Community Impact/outrage** | | | |
| The project will have little effect on communities and they will hardly notice any • changes (low); or | | | |
| The project will fix a problem that will benefit communities and the change will cause • minor inconvenience (medium); or | | | |
| The project will create a change that will have an impact on communities and the living in the environment, and the degree of impact/outrage and acceptance will vary (high). | | | |
| **Degree of Political Sensitivity** | | | |
| The project has acceptance throughout communities (low); or | | | |
| There are groups in communities who may see potential in raising the profile of a • project to gain attention for their cause (medium); or | | | |
| Community expectations about the project are different to those of the decision • makers and there is high potential for individuals and groups to use the uncertainty to gain attention (high). | | | |



The model (to the right) provides guidance on interaction in respect to the degree of complexity and political sensitivity to assist when deciding on the appropriate level of engagement.

**Low** indicates minimal affect on the community involved

**Medium** indicates the community is likely to be affected and there is potential for negative feedback to council

**High** indicates the community will be involved and there is potential for significant consequences

You will need to bear in mind that as the level of engagement increases so does the need for effective management of the engagement process eg for collaboration to be possible, effective working relationships between stakeholders need to be established and fostered.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATRIX 2

The choice of the community involvement process depends on your assessment of two factors:

• the risk inherent in the situation e.g. the potential for negative environmental/social impact, or community conflict.

• the complexity of information which needs to be digested before informed participation is possible.

**Low:** little affect on community involved.

**Medium:** community will be affected and some outrage to Council.

**High:** could result in major consequences for the project.

| Inherent risk | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1) How do you rate the potential for conflict with the community over this decision? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 2) How do you rate the potential for social damage if the wrong decision is made? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 3) How do you rate the potential for environmental damage if the wrong decision is made? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 4) How do you rate the potential for political damage if the wrong decision is made? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 5) How do you rate the potential financial damage if the wrong decision is made? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 6) How many unknowns are there in the current decision-making equation? | | |
| None | A few | Many |
| 7) How much information needs to be communicated to the community for them to participate? | | |
| Simple facts | Detailed proposal | Significant technical data |
| 8) How much learning is required by the participants before they can be expected to make an informed decision? | | |
| Low | Medium | High |
| 9) How many abstract or technical concepts need to digested before an informed decision can be made? | | |
| None | A few | Many |

# INTERPRETATION

•If most of your answers are in the left hand boxes (page 16 top of matrix), then inform or consult methods may be sufficient.

•If your answers are scattered between the left, centre and right hand boxes, then consult methods may be sufficient.

•In the most of your answers are in the right-hand boxes, then you should consider using involve or in extreme cases collaborate techniques to minimise your risk and maximise the amount of knowledge and perspectives brought into the decision-making process.

The martrix (page 15 bottom of matrix) shows how the four levels of engagement overlap and interact in respect to the levels of complexity and political sensitivity which can assist with deciding on the appropriate method.

## STEP 3: DETERMINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

**Review the strategy examples** based on the determined level of community engagement and the best mix of engagement strategies. In appendix B is a full list of techniques and strategies that can be used at each level.

When looking at the list of strategies available it is important to consider the following:

•Being clear about the community engagement objectives to be achieved.

•What techniques are most suited to the level or levels of community engagement already selected?

•What will maximise participation in the community engagement process?

•What will be the most effective ways to reach out to different groups of stakeholders?

•What will be most suited to the three key areas that techniques can be divided into, namely, information sharing, collecting information, and bringing people together?

Examples are provided in the table below. There are more examples listed in the communityt engagement plan template.

| Strategy Examples | | |
|---|---|---|
| Information sharing | Collecting information | Bringing people together |
| • Newsletter<br>• Website<br>• Displays<br>• Movie Nights<br>• Speak out walls | • Phone Poll<br>• Survey<br>• Social Media | • Field trips<br>• Workshops<br>• Mapping |

The following table is an extract from the IAP2 Spectrum which indicates examples of techniques suited to each level of community engagement: , which are also listed in the plan template.

| Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Fact sheets<br>• Websites<br>• Open Days<br>• Correspondence<br>• Adverts | • Public comment<br>• Focus groups<br>• Surveys | • Workshop<br>• Field trips<br>• Deliberate polling | • Advisory Committees<br>• Citizen juries<br>• Deliberate Dialogue |

For specific planning proposals such as Outline Development Plans, Master Plans, Planning Policies and Major Strategic Planning Proposals please refer to the specific methods of engagement as identified in the matrix.

## STEP 4: DEVELOP ACTION PLAN

**Develop an Action Plan** for the chosen type of consultation. This includes allocating resources, setting timeframes and developing a feedback mechanism to monitor the consultation process.

**The Action Plan** should also include an outline of how decisions will be fed back to participants and note any opportunities for "hands-on" community involvement in the implementation of the policy/program/plan.
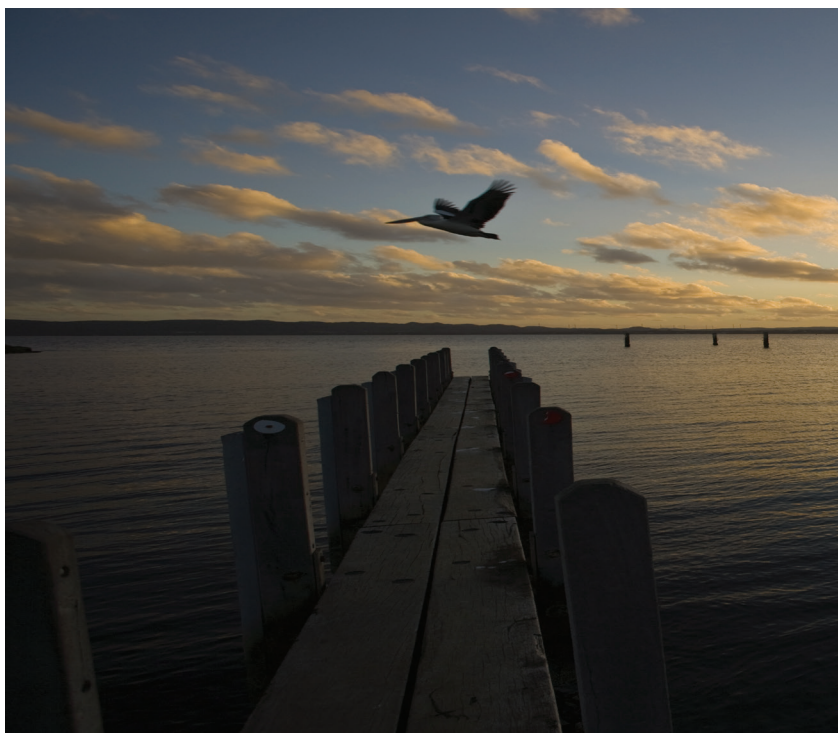
An action plan template has been developed and includes the following headings:

•Specific tasks;

•Actions and resources required to achieve the tasks;

•Responsibilities for tasks;

•List of key messages to be used during community engagement; and

•Significant dates and deadlines.

Community Engagement plans not required to go to Council.

## STEP 5: SUBMIT PLAN FOR EXECUTIVE APPROVAL

All community engagement plans required endorsement by the Executive Management Team. **If the project meets any of the following criteria then the community engagement plan may need to be endorsed by Council:**

• Projects over $100 000;

• Projects with medium to high political sensitivity;

• Projects with High complexity; and

• Projects that require legislative changes.

Community engagement plans are generally not required to go to Council, but often become part of a paper submitted to Council. Each plan must be synergised and approved by executive directors.



## STEP 6: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

**Undertake the consultation approach** developed. Be aware of timelines, budget implications and managing expectations during the process.

The officer responsible for the community engagement implementation will ensure that a community engagement record has been created, which is to include the following information:

• Links to relevant Council reports

• Projects briefs and proposal

• Project team meeting notes

• Communication materials

• Public participation registrations

• Survey feedback and responses

• Project plans and drawings

• Feedback and outcome reports

• Media releases.

All community engagement strategies and information relating to the community engagement record are to be saved in synergy using the following codes:

• CR.PLA.14 - Office of the CEO

• CR.PLA.15 - Corporate Services

• CR.PLA.16 - Works & Services

• CR.PLA.17 - Planning & Development Services

• CR.PLA.18 - Community Services

## STEP 7: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**Monitor and modify** the approach taken throughout the consultation as required. For example, the type of consultation may need to change if the level of impact of the issue changes, eg. if an issue that was considered to be low impact becomes high impact, the level of consultation should increase or vary accordingly.

**An evaluation** of every community engagement program should be undertaken at the conclusion. Stakeholders and relevant community members should be informed of the outcomes as per the action plan.

**The final evaluation report** may include:

•an introduction and description of the community engagement process;

•summaries of the evaluation of each phase of the process;

•commentary on what worked and added value, what did not work and detracted from the process, areas for improvement, lessons learned, the sustainable nature of the decision; and

•recommendations for future community engagement projects.

For further information, resources and support relating to your community engagement  plan, contact the City of Albany Stakeholder Relations Manager, Julie-Ann Gray.

# APPENDIX B: DE-BRIEF /EVALUATION CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used as a de-briefing tool to assist in the evaluation of community engagement exercises.

| Objectives | • Were the objectives of the Community Engagement exercise clear to all involved? |
|---|---|
| Who was consulted? | • Did you get responses from the intended target group(s)?<br>• Did you provide feedback to those consulted?<br>• Did the people you engaged with feel that the consultation was worthwhile?<br>• How are you aware of this? |
| Consultation Methods | • Were the methods used the right ones for your objectives?<br>• If you used more than one method, which method worked better than others and why? |
| Did you get the required information? | • Quantitative and/or qualitative information?<br>• Response rate? Representative sample? |
| Timeframe | • Was the timeframe clear? Was the time frame kept to? If not, why not? |
| Information provided | • If information was provided as part of the consultation process, eg. draft documents for comment; was the information easy to access?<br>• Was the information available in the appropriate format? |
| Resources | • Did you budget adequately? Were there any unexpected expenses?<br>• Did you have appropriately skilled staff for the exercise?<br>• Were you able to use the knowledge and/or expertise of other Council departments? |
| Outcome of the community engagement | • Has the process been of benefit to stakeholders? What has changed as a result of the consultation process?<br>• Did you use the views generated by the process? |
| Follow through | • Who will provide the follow-up? How will you monitor the outcomes of the exercise? |

# APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

When undertaking a community engagement exercise, ensure you have covered the following checklist:

• What is the purpose of the consultation exercise?

• Does information already exist on the issue?

• Have you set a clear consultation timeframe?

• Have you considered the best time to consult and the timeframes required especially if Council approval is required?

• Have you identified all relevant stakeholders and who need to be targeted including hard to reach stakeholders?

• What is the best consultation method(s) to use?

• Should the consultation be undertaken in-house or externally?

• Have you determined a budget for the project, including possible consultation costs eg. advertising, mail outs, advertising, publications, facilitators, catering, childcare, staging, hire fees

• Have you considered what information is available to support community engagement?

• Is there any legal requirement to consult with the community?

• Have you considered the in-house skills available in other City departments?

• Have you consulted with other relevant City departments?

• Do you need to consider any sensitive or cultural issues?

• Are there any opportunities for "hands on" community involvement in the implementation of the project/plan?

• How will decisions be fed back to participants involved in the consultation/ engagement exercise?

• Have you considered how Council will be involved and briefed during the process?

• Consider sending "Thank You's" to the people that helped with the consultation exercise.

• Ensure a copy of the consultation project is added to synergy.