



NAMBUCCA SHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

POLICY NO: CS 01

Our Vision

Nambucca Valley ~ Living at its best

Our Mission Statement

'The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people.'

History

New Policy

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COMMUNICATIONS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

Nambucca Shire Council (Council) understands the importance of having informed stakeholders, who are engaged with Council and what it's trying to achieve. These stakeholders include our staff, our community and all other parties that are affected by Council decisions. Having informed stakeholders ensures we create a common understanding of our goals, how and why decisions are made and the benefits that will flow to our stakeholders.

Council will create this informed community through building relationships with its stakeholders, and developing channels for ongoing dialogue to aid in the decision making processes. Council recognises receiving diverse perspectives and potential solutions enable Council to make more informed decisions and strengthen delivery of our services to our stakeholders.

Council is committed to:

- Informing stakeholders of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives
- Promoting transparency and accountability in Council's decision making processes
- Promoting opportunities for public and employee consultation, feedback and participation in Council activities
- Representing the views of the local community and acting as an advocate to the State and Federal Governments and in all appropriate forums.

Objectives

Council's goal is to provide effective communication in a timely manner, through a variety of communication channels to ensure that information is received by its community, employees and other relevant stakeholders to enable them to contribute their views and opinions, which can then be reflected in Council's decision making.

Council is committed to providing effective and timely communications by:

- Regularly engaging and communicating with its stakeholders
- Undertaking community consultation on key issues affecting its community
- Being open and transparent in its business processes and decision making
- Developing internal communication channels and engagement processes to ensure its staff are fully informed and have input into delivering high quality customer services
- Seeking a range of views on particular issues and if required, develop consultation plans that are tailored to the particular issue
- Actively listening to feedback received from its stakeholders.

This strategy sets out how Council proposes to engage with its stakeholders to achieve these objectives.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is an important process of fostering relationships between Council and its key stakeholders, whereby Council shares information, consults, involves, collaborates, and actively encourages constructive feedback to help shape the planning and delivery of services and Council decisions. It is not a single activity but a way of building a stronger understanding of what

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our community and other key stakeholders want from Council so that we are able to optimise the delivery of services.

Levels of Stakeholder Participation

Council recognises different levels of engagement are required with its stakeholders depending on the purpose of the engagement and the likely impact of the matter(s) to be discussed. Four levels of stakeholder participation have been identified.

Level of Participation	Examples of Participation Level
Informing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising stakeholders of a situation, a proposal or a decision made in response to a situation • Providing advice on an issue • Notification of opportunities to participate further in Council decision making; upcoming events; things happening at Council
Seeking Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking market research to identify needs or issues • Seeking feedback on a service proposal, action or issue • Seeking comment on planning proposals
Involving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community forums to encourage discussion or debate on issues • Personal contact and meetings that encourage participation • Negotiations relating to the planning process; acquisition of goods and services • Employee engagement on workplace reforms that optimises service delivery
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a structure for involvement in decision making, eg working party • Enabling ongoing involvement/collaborating to achieve an outcome • Assuming share responsibility for achieving outcomes

Level of Impact on Stakeholders

Level of Impact	Type of Impact
Level 1	High impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 2	Lower impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 3	High Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community
Level 4	Lower Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community
Level 5	Impacting on internal stakeholders (staff) only

A toolkit to help staff determine the appropriate level of engagement has been prepared and is included at [Attachment A](#).

Communication with Stakeholders

There are a variety of communication methods that Council will use depending on the purpose of the communication and the intended audience. Often, to ensure a representative response, a number of different methods may be used. Below is an overview of the methods Council may use to communicate with its stakeholders.

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Communication Objective and Method				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Fact Sheets Community Newsletters Websites/Social Media Flyers Emails Volunteer networks Staff consultative committee and networks Community exhibitions and displays Community notice board Press releases Council notices Presentations	Public comment and submissions Focus groups Surveys Workshops and meetings Feedback forms Interviews Suggestion boxes Social Media	Open meetings and workshops Competitions Youth and other targeted reference groups Social media/internet discussion and feedback(if possible)	Consensus building Participatory decision making interagency networks and working groups Reference groups	Delegated decisions through Council Committees and Council affiliated volunteers

COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY AND OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and timely communication and consultation with the wider community. Council receives feedback from its community, both verbally and in written format. This feedback provides Council with an opportunity to understand what its community wants from it and also to help inform its decision making.

The major formats where Council receives feedback from, and communicates with, its community and other external stakeholders include:

Correspondence

Council defines correspondence as including letters, facsimiles, and e-mail messages. In all of these cases Council will provide a clear, concise and prompt response to all customer enquiries in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter. Council captures this information into its electronic records management system (TRIM) to ensure that it is accessible and searchable.

Council's commitment is:

- a) To provide a definitive response in clear and unambiguous language within 15 working days, or acknowledge receipt of correspondence and an approximate timeline for a response within five working days from date of receipt of correspondence.
- b) If the information cannot be provided in a timely manner, the responsible officer is required to update the author of the correspondence regularly.
- c) Responses may be made by formal letter or by email which must subsequently be saved in Council's record management system.
- d) All verbal interactions with the correspondent must be recorded by way of file note or email and saved to Council's record management system.

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Telephone Calls

Council staff will answer all calls promptly and will make every effort to resolve the inquiry at first point of contact or quickly refer unresolved calls to the appropriate officer whilst providing clear and concise information in response to caller inquiries.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Answer calls as promptly as possible.
- b) Advise the caller on answering of the name and department of the officer answering.
- c) Deal with the call, redirect the call or take a clear message as appropriate.
- d) Always return calls within two business days and ensure any follow-up activities are carried out promptly.
- e) Record all significant telephone calls in the form of a file note in Council's record keeping system and regularly review these records to identify issues and ensure this commitment is being met.

Face to Face Communications

Council staff engage with members of the community to impart information and gather feedback through face to face contact from over the counter enquiries at its offices and also through attendance at external meetings.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Enter into dialogue in a meaningful and respectful manner
- b) Provide the community with informed and accurate information
- c) Actively listen and respond to verbal feedback in a courteous manner
- d) To follow up in a timely manner any enquiries that cannot be resolved at the time
- e) Record all interactions by way of file note or confirmatory email and save to Council's record management system.

Social Media

Council is committed to keeping its community informed of relevant events on its website and is also looking to establish a Facebook page and an Instagram account to assist in the dissemination of information.

If introduced, Council's commitment is to:

- a) Post a minimum of three Facebook posts regarding Council activities per week
- b) Use its Facebook presence to promulgate and promote community events as it becomes aware of these
- c) Regularly review feedback received through its Facebook page and provide responses, as appropriate, to posts on this
- d) Post a minimum of one Instagram post regarding Council activities per week
- e) Facebook and Instagram posts are to be approved by Managers through General Manager and Assistant General Managers for postings

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- f) Actively maintain its website presence to ensure information provided is current, is relevant to reflect the activities of the Shire and continues to be a source of information for its community
- g) Work to develop its website to encourage feedback from its community
- h) Records all information received through its social media presence in Council's record management system to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Print Media

Council uses local newspapers to ensure its community is aware of things happening at Council through advertising of job opportunities, tenders and other items of public interest. In addition Council provides content for an annual Mayoral Newsletter detailing key activities happening at Council, works planned for the year and general matters of interest to its community.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Keep its community informed through the use of print media for those in its community that do not have access to other means of communication
- b) Provide content for an annual Mayoral Newsletter detailing key activities being undertaken
- c) Advertise some items of potential interest to its community including work opportunities, tenders, planning activities and other relevant matters.

Open Council Meetings

Council holds its meetings on a twice a month basis to discuss matters of interest to its community and progress against achieving the objectives outlined in its Community Strategic Plan. These meetings are generally open to members of the public to attend and view Council deliberations and subject to providing written notice in the prescribed format and within the prescribed timeframes members of the public may address Council on relevant matters. These meetings are held across the Shire on a rotational basis to allow members of the community increased opportunities to attend.

Legislative Compliance

Council also keeps its community and other stakeholders informed through its legislated reporting requirements. Council through its annual integrated planning and reporting processes seeks stakeholder input on key deliverables and the financial impacts of these deliverables. These proposed outputs are then reported to stakeholders through the 10 year Community Strategic Plan, the 4 year Delivery Program and annual Operating Plan.

Council then reports annually, through its annual report, on progress towards achieving these deliverables; and through its financial statements on how it has applied monies received towards achieving these.

These reports are formally adopted by Council and provide opportunity for the community to express its views on Council activities.

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Public Consultation

From time to time Council will undertake additional consultation with its community on specific items where it requires additional feedback that could be obtained through the means outlined above. In these instances Council will advertise widely for submissions and dependent on need, hold public meetings, focus groups and community forums to discuss the relevant issues. Council may also undertake surveys of its residents to obtain additional feedback.

Authority for Communication with External Stakeholders

The General Manager and Mayor are authorised by Council to handle all media enquiries and/or to authorise release of information to the media.

All other communication with external stakeholders should be reviewed and/or approved by the relevant Manager or Assistant General Manager(s) prior to release.

COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

Council is committed to ensuring it has fully informed and engaged staff. To achieve this, it is important that staff are aware of what is happening both within Council and within the community they serve more broadly. Council will engage with its staff through the following means:

Formal Staff Meetings

The General Manager will meet with interested staff the following day after a Council Meeting to inform them of what transpired at the Council Meeting. Managers will also be responsible for meeting with their team members to discuss items of interest from the Council meetings, MANEX A meetings, current work agendas and any other matters deemed relevant to the work environment.

In addition Managers will also meet separately with their respective team members on an “as required” basis to discuss workplace reforms, strategies and plan future work activities.

Informal Staff Meetings

From time to time informal meetings between staff will be held to discuss particular items, to undertake team building and to form a common view of how to achieve organisational objectives. These meetings while conducted in a less formal setting provide an important opportunity to staff across departments to discuss issues in an informal way.

Six Monthly Staff Meetings

On a six monthly basis the General Manager will hold an all staff meeting to discuss progress against Council’s Delivery and Operational Plans and other matters of interest affecting Council operations. These staff meetings will be held at a time to maximise staff attendance and will enable all staff to gain an understanding of the issues impacting on Council and how senior management and councillors are working to address these.

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MANEX A and MANEX B Team Meetings

The General Manager, Assistant General Managers, Manager Financial Services and Manager Human Resources form the MANEX B team and generally meet on the week prior to a Council Meeting to discuss Reports submitted.

The MANEX A team comprises the members of MANEX B and other managers in the organisation. It meets on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting Council, progress against key strategic indicators and other relevant matters. This meeting will be held with a formalised Terms of Reference, agenda, minutes and action list being recorded in Council's record management system TRIM. It is expected managers will discuss the outcomes of these meetings with their relevant team members.

Joint Consultative Committee Meetings

Representatives from employees, the executive and management will meet regularly to engage with staff on matters including training, organisational restructures, job redesign, communication and engagement mechanisms, local government reform and well-being programs.

Emails

Email provides a quick and easy means for keeping staff informed on relevant matters. The content and format of the email will be determined depending on the subject matter and can include all staff emails, specific purpose emails and one on one emails to provide additional information or request particular information to and from staff members. Every effort will be made to hold face to face discussions as opposed to emailing, providing there is not a need to record the communication.

The originator of the email is responsible for determining if the email forms a Council record and if so should be saved in Council's document management system TRIM.

Staff newsletters

A monthly staff newsletter informing staff of commencements and resignations and other matters of interest will be sent to all staff with their payslips.

One on one discussions

As the name suggests regular one on one discussions will occur between staff to discuss various issues that affect the day to day operations of Council. These discussions may be formal or informal and include staff from within the same department or across departments.

Specific purpose meetings

Specific purposes meetings may be called by any staff member to discuss matters affecting the day to day operations of Council. This type of meeting will centre on a distinct topic and may include staff from across Council. This type of meeting can be run as a workshop and may include a facilitator. Examples of this type of meeting include planning workshops and whole of Council staff training.

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Availability of documentation

Council has a number of documents available to staff that help to inform staff on Council expectations, Council work programs and Council structures and responsibilities. These include Council policies and procedures, Council meeting agendas and minutes, Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting documentation, annual reports and organisational charts. Information on the availability of these is provided to employees as part of their induction into Council.

DEFINITIONS

- **Community Engagement:** is a term that covers all the ways that Council and its community come together to improve decision making, build relationships and partnerships, raise awareness and complement representative government. It is a way of working side by side and building support for the shared goal of making the community a better place to live.
- **Consultation:** is the process of developing understanding of the issues and boundaries around a particular topic or issues before decisions are made. We consult with one another when the boundaries around a decision are not understood.
- **Communication:** the exchange of information. We communicate with each other when the boundaries around an issue or decision are understood.
- **Communication of Interest:** all those who have an interest in a particular proposed project, program, issue or action.
- **Capacity Building:** the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve a purpose.
- **Staff:** includes all persons employed by Nambucca Shire Council on a full time, part time and casual basis as part of its overall workforce.

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ATTACHMENT A – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT FOR APPROVED PROJECTS

In undertaking communications with stakeholders, following the approval of a project, it is important to treat this work as a project in its own right and plan the work you need to do to ensure success. This toolkit is designed to help you think about what you need to consider when planning your communication project.

STEP 1: KNOW AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS YOU ARE TRYING TO COMMUNICATE

You will need to have a clear understanding of what it is you want to convey in your message and who you want to convey the information to.

Questions to ask include:

- What is the purpose of the message
- What is the proposal or event, when and why is it occurring
- Who will be impacted by the proposal and what are the likely impacts going to be
- Do other areas of Council need to be included in the communication
- Is there sufficient budget to undertake the communication or consultation process?

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION SUITABLE FOR THE COMMUNICATION PROJECT

Think about who are the key stakeholders for this project, what do you want from these stakeholders – for example do you want feedback, do you want to inform them?

Things to consider:

- Are the stakeholders internal to Council or part of the broader community, or both?
- What is the level of involvement you want from the stakeholders?
- How do you want to receive stakeholder feedback – does it need to be formal or will an informal response suffice?
- How will the feedback from stakeholders be used in the project you are undertaking?

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STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE LEVEL OF IMPACT YOUR PROJECT WILL HAVE ON THE STAKEHOLDERS

Level of Impact	Criteria for determining the level of impact	Examples of projects/initiatives
<p>Level 1</p>	<p>A project that impacts a substantial and significant range of stakeholders (area or people).</p> <p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Shire.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk or significant impact and/or conflict across the Shire</p> <p>Likely high level of interest from the community</p> <p>Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions.</p> <p>Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of the broader community.</p>	<p>Community Strategic Plan and its components (Operational Plan, Delivery program, Asset Plans, etc).</p> <p>Significant policies / plans / strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Action Plan • Capital Works Program • Social Plans • Environmental Plan <p>Removal or changes to a district or regional facility/service; changes to Shire wide services</p> <p>Provision of a district or regional facility/service, eg new library; planning for a regional/district wide facility/activity</p> <p>New industries to the shire such as mining and renewable energy projects.</p>
<p>Level 2</p>	<p>Some lower level real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Shire</p> <p>Potential for some controversy or conflict across the Shire.</p> <p>Potential lower level impact on state or regional strategies or directions</p>	<p>Revising the Capital Works Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor modifications to fees and charges • Minor changes to service delivery

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<p>Level 3</p>	<p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk on a local area, specific community or user group/s of a facility or service</p> <p>Significant change or loss to any facility or service to a specific community / target group.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk controversy and/or conflict in a localised area.</p>	<p>Removal or changes for a local facility/service, for example changes of equipment in a playground; Local road closures</p> <p>Review of community facilities; major works on local facilities.</p>
<p>Level 4</p>	<p>Lower level of real or perceived impact (positive or negative) impacting on a specific target group or activity at a local level.</p> <p>Low or no risk controversy or conflict in the local community.</p>	
<p>Level 5</p>	<p>Impacting on internal stakeholders, eg staff only. No direct impact on the community.</p>	<p>Change to work conditions, changes in internal procedures, matters affecting staff in determining how Council delivers its services to the broader community.</p>

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External Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

Legend: **E** - Essential **D** – Desirable **O** – Optional **N/A** – Not applicable

Type of Consultation	Level 1 High Impact Shire	Level 2 Lower Impact Shire	Level 3 High Impact Local	Level 4 Lower Impact Local
INFORMING	E	E	E	E
Personal Contact Telephone	O	D	O	O
In Person Meeting	O	D	O	D
Written Correspondence	D	D	D	N/A
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	D	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Pamphlet	O	N/A	O	O
Letter Box Drop	O	D	O	O
Notice in Local Paper	E	O	D	O
Notice in Regional Paper	D	O	O	O
Media Release	E	N/A	O	N/A
Site Display	O	O	O	O
Displays in Other Locations (e.g. library)	O	O	O	N/A
SEEKING INFORMATION	E	E	E	D
Suggestion Box	N/A	N/A	O	O
Telephone Survey	D	O	O	O
Written Survey	O	O	O	N/A
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	O	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Hotline/Phone-in	O	O	O	N/A
Letter or Media Promotion Inviting Submissions	E	O	O	N/A
Public Exhibition	E	O	O	N/A
Interview	O	D	O	O
Focus Group Session	D	D	D	D
INVOLVING	E	E	D	D
Meetings with User or Stakeholder Groups	E	E	D	D
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	O	O
Workshop Session	D	D	D	D
Meeting by Invite	D	D	D	O
Site Tour/Meeting	D	D	O	O
Public Meeting	O	O	O	N/A
PARTNERSHIPS	D	O	O	O
Taskforce or Working Party	D	O	O	N/A
Joint Venture	O	O	O	O

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Checklist For Calling Public Meetings

1. AUTHORISATION

Attached is a Council resolution (Minute) authorising the calling of a public meeting OR forum authorisation from the General Manager OR Assistant General Manager(s) approving the selected consultation process.

.....

2. CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Have you established the appropriate level and category of community consultation in accordance with this document? If so, what type and level has been selected?

.....

3. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING/ KEY ISSUES

(a) The purpose of the meeting has been separately identified and is attached

(b) An agenda for the conduct of the meeting has been completed and is attached

(c) The Key Issues have been separately identified and are attached

4. VENUE HIRE

A venue for the public meeting has been arranged which satisfies all of the following:

(a) Access for people with disabilities

(b) Venue is of sufficient size with available chairs to seat all persons likely to attend

(c) All necessary equipment is available for the meeting and working (e.g. lighting, projector / screen, laptop, microphones, air con, PA equipment, etc)

(d) Budget allocation for equipment and venue hire has been identified

(e) Cabling and connections available for technological presentations ie internet

(f) Arrangements have been made to collect keys and obtain security access

5. COUNCILLOR INVITATION

All Councillors have been notified of the public meeting and given all necessary details in writing of the matters noted in this checklist.

.....

6. INVITEES

A list of persons invited to attend the public meeting has been finalised and is documented and attached hereto.

.....

7. CHAIR OF THE MEETING

The Chairperson of the public meeting is and this person has agreed to chair the public meeting.

.....

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8. RECORDING DECISIONS

The officer nominated to record the necessary decisions taken at the meeting is and this person has been advised of this requirement.

9. NOTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

All forms of public notification have been considered and the following forms of public notification have been taken (please tick as appropriate)

- a. Internet/Website.....
- b. Facebook
- c. Guardian News.....
- d. Mid Coast Observer.....
- e. Letter Drop.....

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External Stakeholder Groups – How Should They Be Consulted?

It is important to identify the appropriate sections of the community, “key stakeholders” to be involved in the consultation process. Examples of community segments to be considered are as follows:

Owners of adjoining or affected land	<p>Primarily in development matters, rate and property matters or health matters.</p> <p>In general, an owner or occupier should receive personal notification of any service or activity that will have a specific and direct effect upon them. It is noted, however that in relation to the statutory notification process for development applications, a public meeting would not be warranted.</p>
Streets or Neighbourhoods	For traffic matters, dealings on Council land, garbage collections or for larger scale development matters.
Shire wide	For community-wide issues, providing general information e.g. recycling, Council functions, community land activities, community strategic plans.
Other Government Agencies	Council has a large advocacy role to play in advising other levels of Government of the needs and expectations of the community.
Mid Coast Councils	Council will consult with other councils on issues which cross the boundaries of the Shire e.g. waste management, resource sharing, transport infrastructure.
Elected Representatives	Local, State and Federal representatives act as advocates for the people in a wide variety of matters.
Police	In a community liaison capacity for traffic, vandalism and criminal matters or development matters such as amusement centres and alcohol free zones.
Specific Target Groups (Older People, Cultural and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Youth, Women, Children & People with Disabilities)	To ensure that affected target groups are consulted on relevant Council policies and services.
Sporting Groups	In making decisions about sporting, recreational and leisure facilities in the Shire area.
Environmental Groups	In relation to environmental issues.
Chamber of Commerce	In matters where a Chamber of Commerce (or other organisation representing local business) is active and can provide information regarding the needs of the business community.
Community/Social S.355 committees	Community/social groups comprising local residents should be consulted in relation to their particular interest areas and needs as well as activities and functions conducted by Council. (social, artistic or cultural interest).
Religious Groups	In matters of religious significance and social values.

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ATTACHMENT B - Checklist for Internal Stakeholder Consultation

- a. Have you identified the key areas and purpose for the meeting? Yes No
- b. Have you determined which areas of Council's operations will be impacted by the subject matter..... Yes No
- c. Have you conveyed details of the subject matter to the relevant Assistant General Manager(s)/General Manager prior to consulting with staff? Yes No
- d. Do you need to prepare a presentation to illustrate the information you are proposing to relay to staff? Yes No
- e. Do you need to prepare notes/speaking points regarding the information you are proposing to relay to staff? Yes No
- f. Have you considered if the consultation will be with indoor or outdoor staff or both. If so have you taken into account workloads to ensure maximum attendance? Yes No
- g. Have you booked a venue that is of sufficient size and has sufficient seating for expected staff numbers? Yes No
- h. Have you advised staff of venue and time of meeting? (please provide details of how, eg Outlook, flyers) Yes No
- i. Have you created an attendance sheet for staff to sign in at meeting? Yes No
- j. Ensure you have nominated an employee to record the necessary information given/decisions taken and has been advised of the requirement