Community Engagement Strategy

February 2025

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Overview

Nambucca Valley 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.

Council communicates with the community in a variety of ways including, online surveys, webcasts, online meetings, social media, Antenno community engagement mobile app, independent telephone surveys, Council website, local newspaper, and traditional face to face meetings and consultations with community members.

Objectives

The objective of this strategy is to outline Council's best-practice approach to community engagement and the methodologies which can be utilised, as well as to provide information to the community as to how and why Council may consult on any given topic. 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.

Community Profile

The Nambucca Valley Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Gumbaynggirr Country on the Mid North Coast of NSW, approximately 500 kms north of Sydney and 480 kms South of Brisbane.

It covers and area 1492.8 km2 nestled between the foothills of the Great Dividing Range and the coastline of the Pacific Ocean, the landscape ranges from plateau, to lush valley, to pristine coast.

Key demographics

Median Age:
52 years

Estimated residential population (ERP) 2023:
20,774

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:
8%

	2016	2021	CHANGE
Total persons	19,212	20,407	+5.86
Aged 14 and under	3,196	3,207	+1.34
Aged 65 years and over	5,306	6,132	+13.47%
Born overseas	3,558	3,890	+8.53%
Median age	51	52	+1 year
Unemployment rate	9.4%	6.8%	-2.6%
Source: ABS			

Towns, villages and rural populations (ID Community 2023):

Bowraville & surrounds
2,696

Macksville & surrounds
6,173

Nambucca Heads Hyland Park
7,153

Scotts Head Way Way
1,302

Valla & Valla Beach
2,565

Rural West
888

Community Engagement

Why We Engage

Engaging with the community in a meaningful and genuine way provides numerous benefits, including a more informed Council with shared solutions and empowerment of residents in participation and decision-making.

Council's approach to all community and stakeholder engagement activities reflects the social justice principles

Social Justice Principles

Council's approach to community engagement is based on the following social justice principles.

Equity
Council is committed to fairness in providing services, making decisions and distributing resources equally, particular consideration given for those in need to ensure an increased collective benefit for the whole community;

Access

Council is committed to providing and advocating for services and facilities that are available to all regardless of background, ability or capacity. To ensure this, social justice principles help guide Council's urban design and social infrastructure planning protocols

Participation
Council recognises the rights of people to contribute to decisions that affect their lives and is committed to supporting opportunities for stakeholder engagement in planning and decision-making processes.

Rights
Council recognises and supports the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. This includes civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights; and the right to be treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination.

Who We Engage

Effective engagement means identifying and understanding our key stakeholders. Stakeholders are groups or individuals who have an interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes.

Key stakeholders in Nambucca Valley Council LGA include:

- Nambucca Valley residents and rate-payers
- Local business community
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils within the LGA
- Organisations that service members of our community
- Council Reference and Advisory committees
- Service providers
- Interest and Industry groups
- Community, sporting, cultural, environmental, and volunteer groups.
- Schools and educational services
- Emergency services
- Federal and State Members
- Relevant government agencies.

Internal engagement

- Elected Councillors
- Subject Matter Expert Council staff.
- Libraries
- Council committees and council affiliated volunteers (i.e., Section 355 Committees)

How We Engage

Nambucca Valley Council's approach to community engagement is based upon the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), which is the best-practice model for directing community engagement methods.

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

There are five levels of engagement on the IAP2 spectrum: *Inform*, *Consult*, *Involve*, *Collaborate*, and *Empower*

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Level of engagement	Council provides the community with information to help them understand services, a situation, or a decision in a timely manner.	Council requests feedback on possible decisions, solutions, and needs of the community	Councils works directly with community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Council partners with the community In each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of solutions.	Council places the final decision in the hands of the community.
Example	Advising of a road closures or other public works	Community feedback for development proposals. Reviews of fees and charges	Upgrades to a public playground Actioning activities in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan	Plans of Management Emergency preparedness	Community Strategic Plan Disability Inclusion Action Plan Asset Management
Methods of engagement	Notices in newspaper Social media or website Flyers or community noticeboards	Public comment and submissions Focus groups Surveys Interviews Door-knocking	Community meetings and workshops Consultative and Advisory Committees Project Working Groups	Deliberative Panels, Round-tables. Advisory and Consultative Committees	Appreciative enquiry Deliberative Panels Symposiums

Source: Informed by IAP2 International Public Participation Spectrum

Level of Impact on Community

Level of Impact	Criteria for determining the level of impact	Examples of projects/initiatives
Level 1 **High impact across LGA**	A project that impacts a substantial and significant range of stakeholders (area or people).	Community Strategic Plan and its components (Operational Plan, Delivery program, Asset Plans, etc). A Major development application impacting on a significant number of stakeholders or on a significant geographic area of Council.

	High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Valley.	Significant policies / plans / strategies such as: • Disability Action Plan • Capital Works Program • Social Plans • Environmental Plan Proposed new projects either from Council or external parties .that may be of high risk eg Hydrogen plant construction,
	Potential for a high risk or significant impact and/or conflict across the Valley	Removal or changes to a district or regional facility/service; changes to Valley wide services such as waste removal
	Likely high level of interest from the community	Provision of a district or regional facility/service, e.g., new library; planning for a regional/district wide facility/activity such as a regional waste facility that includes waste from neighbouring councils
	Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions.	New industries to the Valley such as mining and renewable energy projects.
	Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of the broader community.	For example a proposed nuclear waste storage facility, high temperature incinerator
Level 2 **High Impact to localised area**	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	Removal or changes for a local facility/service, for example changes of equipment in a playground; Local road closures
	Significant change or loss to any facility or service to a specific community / target group.	Review of community facilities; major works on local facilities.
	Potential for a high risk controversy and/or conflict in a localised area.	Dog free beach areas, 4WD areas on beaches
Level 3 **Low Impact across the LGA**	Some lower level real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Valley	Revising the Capital Works Program Changes to Customer Services i.e., rate payments or office hours

	Potential for some controversy or conflict across the Valley. Potential lower level impact on state or regional strategies or directions	Minor modifications to fees and charges. Minor changes to service delivery. Installation of street furniture Minor amendment to Local Environmental Plan or Development Control Plan
Level 4 **Low impact to localised area**	Lower level of real or perceived impact (positive or negative) impacting on a specific target group or activity at a local level. Low or no risk controversy or conflict in the local community.	Rezoning, reclassifying land Weed control and Landcare programs. Installation of street furniture Minor amendment to Local Environmental Plan or Development Control Plan

Developing a Community Engagement Plan

All projects and consultations need to begin with a plan to engage community at the levels appropriate for the project/information Council seeking to relay or receive.

The Community Engagement Toolkit provides guidance for staff on how to create a Community Engagement Plan. The basic principles of which include:

Develop a strategy	Establish a purpose Define the scope Identify stakeholders Identify appropriate level of engagement Identify engagement methods and techniques to suit
Prepare and engage	Organise resources Carry out engagement Receive community input
Analyse and feedback	Collate data and analyse results Report back to community and other stakeholders Evaluate success of engagement

A Community Engagement Toolkit to help staff determine the appropriate level of engagement and develop a Community Engagement Plan has been developed and included in this Strategy

Methods for Engagement

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 engage with Nambucca Valley community.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
• Fact Sheets • Community Newsletters • Websites/Social Media/Antenno mobile app • Flyers • Emails • Volunteer networks • Staff consultative committee and networks • Community exhibitions and displays • Community notice boards • Media releases • Council notices • Presentations	• Public comment and submissions • Focus groups • Surveys/ Workshops /meetings • Feedback forms • Interviews • Suggestion boxes • Social Media	• Open meetings and workshops • Competitions • Youth and other targeted reference groups • Council Advisory Committees • Social media/internet discussion and feedback (If possible)	• Consensus building • Participatory decision-making interagency networks and working groups • Reference groups • Deliberative Panels • Roundtables	• Delegation of decisions to Council Committees and Council affiliated volunteers (i.e., Section 355 Committees) • Deliberative Panels • Roundtables

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.

Community Engagement Plan and Toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to assist Council staff and contractors in the delivery of community engagement activities that comply with the Strategy.

The toolkit provides support to create an engagement plan and appropriate methods Council can use in community engagement activities.

Community Engagement Planning

1. Establish a purpose
2. Define scope
3. Identify and analyse stakeholders
4. Select level/s of engagement
5. Select tools and techniques

6. Community Engagement Plan
7. Organise resources
8. Conduct engagement activities
9. Receive community input

10. Collate and analyse data
11. Report back
12. Evaluate process

Level of Engagement: INFORM

Advertisements		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Paid advertisement in print media. Useful for promotion of engagement activities or projects. Changes to the Local Government Act have removed the requirement to advertise tenders, development approvals and other information. Council is still required to publish Council related information on its website.	Opportunities exist for Council advertisements in the Nambucca Valley News of the Area. Potentially reaches most households, however not all parts of the Valley are reached by these publications. Advertising can be expensive.	Be aware of the cut-off dates to submit an advertisement for publication that meets your needs or the legal requirement where it applies. Ensure draft advertisements follow appropriate internal approval processes and that requisition and Purchase Order is raised.

Antenno App		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Antenno provides ability to broadcast information across the Valley or target location specific. Useful as a push alert to residents to encourage engagement and can be used to encourage participation in higher levels of engagement (i.e., direct people to complete a survey) Council is still required to publish Council related information on its website.	Can target an area of across the LGA. Take up of the App across the LGA is not major and engagement with App dependent on levels of technological uptake and reliable connectivity. Free of charge and easy to send messages at any time	Ensure you engage with Antenno only on approved areas of Council responsibility (do not spam community) Check about any other concurrent messaging campaigns – balance bombarding community and breaking trough the noise Obtain approval of use and messaging.

Council website and social media		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
The use of Council's website home page or dedicated pages to convey information to the public. Could be static (basic and simply delivers information) or dynamic like Social media platforms which have the capability for interaction between Council and the community, e.g. discussion board, the public can upload document or add information, etc. A dedicated community engagement project blog can be created to receive feedback on specific issues or projects. Video messages and photo posts can convey quick and effective messaging	Effective in getting information to the general public on demand and in real time. It is cost effective and can deliver detailed information in alternative formats, e.g. video, audio, images. Suitable for many hard-to-reach audiences. According to ABS 2016 (last time surveyed on the issue), 68.8% of Nambucca Valley households had internet connection, 22.8% had no connection. This number of connected households is likely to be higher in 2025, but important to note some locations and demographics continue to have barriers to access.	Ensure content is reviewed by relevant Manager and approved by the relevant Director (DCS or DES) or GM Use pictures to enhance visual appeal and ensure text is easy to read.

VMS Boards, Signage, Posters & Noticeboards		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
VMS Boards, Notice Boards and large outdoor signs located along major roads and / or thoroughfares. Mainly used for high volume promotional campaigns about single issues and targeted at passers-by and motorists Council is still required to publish Council related information on its website.	Can be placed in single or multiple locations to capture the attention of members of the public. Potential to reach large audience driving or passing by. Only limited information can be given. Reaches people not engaged with online communication sources, however, highly	Should contain a single simple message. Use very large text size. Use graphics and / or images to re-enforce the message – i.e: water restriction levels. QR Codes can be incorporated for mobile users

	dependent on them passing by.	

Direct Mail/ Letterbox Drop		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Personalised or bulk letters mailed directly to interested or affected community members or stakeholders. Personalised letters are a legal obligation in some circumstances. They convey information to recipients and are useful for requesting direct feedback. They are often suitable for issues that are highly sensitive.	Effective in building relationships and when engagement timeframe is short. High probability that target recipients will be informed. Letter drop can potentially reach all households in a postcode, including renters and those not engaged with other channels of local information. It can target specific locations or the entire Valley. Can be low cost but requires time to prepare.	Keep it short and simple. Ensure content complies with legal requirements where necessary. Use envelopes that indicate it is an official communication. Use reliable third party for distribution if not done by Council staff (resource intensive depending on size of drops)

Email distribution lists		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Allows you to send emails to a list of registered persons. Someone creates a message and sends to a distribution list. It is a convenient means of reaching directly a preselected audience with information and receiving feedback.	Information passed can be easily passed on to other members of the public not on your mailing list if you have so requested. Saves time and is cost free. Sometimes, emails fail to deliver to the target or get dropped into spam folders and could therefore be missed by the recipient. Only those with an email address and internet connection can be reached.	Keep it short and simple. User-friendly text styles and sizes is necessary. Make sure to create and/or use the correct distribution list. Observe privacy laws and do not share email distribution list with external persons. Always use blind copy to ensure recipients do not see the email address of others.

	An effective way of providing information on outcomes and decisions to participants in community engagement activities.	Ensure your distribution list is up to date.

Local Radio and Television		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Notifications in the form of announcements and/or interviews via local radio or television can be useful for informing the public on proposed initiatives or Council's decisions	Able to reach a wide and diverse audience. Can be effective in campaigning for behavioural change. Television requires colour and movement in footage to also capture the audience. Both methods require informed Council spokesperson to talk to. Television: NBN and 7 Prime Radio: 2NVR and ABC Coffs Coast/Mid North Coast. Audience can sometimes find it hard to remember details if they don't write it down	Refer to Council's Media Policy. Timing of announcements is important, depending on your target audience.

Media release		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A media release is provided to journalists to publish for free through their media organisation. Media can be print, broadcast or online. Media releases are useful in keeping the media informed	Media releases are often perceived as more credible by the public because it has been vetted by an independent third party (the media organisation). If the media organisation deems the issue to be pertinent, they are likely to make further enquiries on it.	Be clear about the specific information you wish to communicate and do your research. Follow the appropriate approvals process as stated in Council's Media Policy

on important community issues and Council's position. They are often suitable on issues that are highly political.	This can help disseminate information quickly and broadly. Media response can be poor if the issue is not considered newsworthy	The Mayor and the General Manager are the official spokespersons of Council. Provide media with contact details for further enquiries

Printed Fact Sheets/Brochures/Flyers Newsletters		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
These are information updates issued around specific subjects. Can be used to inform, receive feedback and update the community on issues	Provides an overview and not in-depth analysis. Great way to provide feedback on Council decisions and engagement outcomes to the community. Q & A format usually effective. Encourages written responses if comment form is enclosed. Can be passed on from one person to another but no guarantee material will be read. Needs a good distribution network to be effective. Information materials can be inserted within local newspapers	Keep it short and simple. Use reader-friendly graphics. Encourage response via enclosed postage-paid comment form. Provide contact details for further enquiries

Rates Notices		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Information flyer included with scheduled utility bill or Council rates notice	High probability that target recipients will be informed.	Should contain a single simple message. Use very large text size.

	It is an economical use of existing mailing activities. Can only be used at specific times as rate notices are distributed periodically. May be taken as junk mail and disregarded.	Use graphics and / or images to re-enforce the message – i.e., water restriction levels. QR Codes can be incorporated for mobile users

Reports		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Official document reporting research, policy findings or providing an account of actions that have taken place. It is useful for providing detailed information to the community.	Able to provide thorough information on issues or decisions. People with literacy or language difficulty may find it challenging. Suitable for engaging at the closing stages.	Use plain English. Format document to be reader-friendly, e.g. use appropriate font type and size, page the document, etc. Use graphs and charts where appropriate. Report should have a brief introduction, body and conclusion

Public Display		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Display of information or drafts in public spaces like libraries, community halls and local markets. Useful for providing information to the public with the opportunity to provide feedback and build relationships when display is manned by Council staff.	Takes the information to the people and can generate immediate response from interested people. Can reach a large number of people in the local area. Information booth can be moved from one location to another.	Set up in high traffic locations with space for people to wait and engage. If unstaffed, make sure writing materials (comment forms, pens, etc.) are provided. Check the stand regularly.

	Information needs to be kept up to date.	If staffed, anticipate and prepare to answer questions from the public. If possible, provide take away promotional materials, e.g. FAQs. Consider locations such as Council's Chambers, libraries, local Halls and local markets/events. Use graphics in written materials to generate interest. Make prior booking arrangements with relevant authorities, event organisers and facilities. Make sure you have booked/access to marquees, tables, chairs, water

Level of Engagement: CONSULT

Focus Group		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A form of structured interview in which a small group of stakeholders are asked questions about their views, opinions or attitudes towards an issue or project. The facilitator allows for an open discussion guided by the questions but may follow the flow of participants' discussions. It is useful for gaining in-depth understanding of a target population's opinion of issues and for testing ideas before implementation.	It is effective for reaching target audience or particular segments of the community. Less formal and intimidating than public meetings. It is useful for exploring issues before broader consultation takes place. Selection of participants may be biased and some may request incentives before they participate. Usually needs to be combined with other engagement methods before making an informed decision.	A skilled focus group facilitator is required. Record the discussion by having someone take notes. It is more effective when a group is not more than 15 individuals. Explain the purpose and the process to participants at the beginning. Participants must be representative of the target population. Provide refreshments. Use location that is convenient to participants.

Forum/Briefing/Information Session		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Presentations and discussions with community or stakeholder groups to provide information and gather feedback, ideas or opinions. It is useful in identifying the needs of stakeholders and getting them involved in the decision-making process.	It works well with existing stakeholder groups and can be held during their usual meeting time. Effective for small and large groups, including hard to reach audiences. Provides opportunity to increase stakeholders' awareness, build capacity and relationships. It is suitable for issues that are highly emotional, highly political or where there is a need to understand the	Requires good facilitator and presenter that understand the issue and the stakeholders/audience. Consider the transport needs of participants. PowerPoint is a good tool to use. Keep presentation short and simple. Allow for question and answer time. Take records of attendance.

	impact of Council's actions or decision on specific issues. May leave out people who are not part of or active in the existing group. Can be formal or semi-formal, depending on the audience. Some people find face-to-face public engagement intimidating	Use of other methods, e.g. suggestion box, comment form, works well with this method. Advertise widely. Request people to RSVP and provide other relevant information, e.g. meal, language, access requirements, etc. so you can prepare ahead. Provide refreshments. Timing and date of the event is important to encourage attendance and depending on the needs of the stakeholder group. Provide publications to take away as necessary. Give opportunity for one-on-one chats after the session.

Interview		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
One-on-one conversation with stakeholders to gain information for developing or refining community participation and to build consensus. Key informant interviews collect information from a wide range of people, e.g. community leaders, professionals, residents, who have firsthand knowledge about the community. It is useful in building relationships, trust and exploring issues in-depth.	Very useful at the early stages of engagement to build trust. It can provide deeper insight into community issues and an opportunity for Council to test ideas. It can be time consuming for the interviewer. Suitable for hard to reach audiences and can be effective in dealing with complex issues.	Carefully select interviewees who are knowledgeable about the issue and/or are representative of interested or affected stakeholders. Recognised community leaders are often suitable as key informants. Interview discussion should be documented. Ask probing questions, e.g. "why?", not just clarifying questions.

		Requires active listening skills. Consider the interview location – make it convenient for both parties. It is important that the atmosphere is cordial. Use this method alongside other methods.

Door Knocking		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Door-to-door house visits to engage with affected residents. It is used to identify stakeholders' position on issues and encourage engagement participation. Council staff conducting road works and/or resilience and community education activities may choose this method to target directly affected/interested residents.	Personalised contact with individuals in their comfort zone helps build relationships. It is useful when there is low trust, low interest and community feedback or action is important. It is staff intensive and takes time. An effective method for engaging hard to reach audiences, discussing issues of high emotions and mobilising the community to take action. May be suitable for high impact issues within local communities	Conversation takes place at the door of the house, not inside. It is better to go in pairs. It is helpful to have a set of questions (5 or less is advisable) prepared to ask at each house visited. Provide published information to leave behind. Keep record of houses visited and the response received immediately. Doorknocker must be easily identified, e.g. carry an ID, uniform, PPE etc. Be friendly and aware not everyone will be friendly towards you. Stay on message; don't get side-tracked into endless or irrelevant discussions. Arrange briefing for doorknockers before the activity incorporating WHS, cultural awareness, etc.

Fairs and Events		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Events incorporating fun activities such as entertainment and food with activities to provide information and raise awareness of specific or a variety of community issues. It is used in making engagement more appealing and to reach audiences who would not normally attend formal meetings.	Provides opportunities for relationship building and information sharing in a cordial environment. Effective for reaching families with children, young people and hard to reach groups. Engagement can be incorporated into existing community fairs or events. It can be costly and staff intensive to run if the event was organised specifically for the purpose of engagement.	Use location close to public transport and accessible facilities. Choose a date and period that works for families, e.g. school holidays. Be intentional and creative about how to incorporate engagement activities. Provide motivations to participate, e.g. prizes. Make the engagement activity simple and short, e.g. brief interview, comment form, etc.

Open House		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A public information session incorporating a series of displays or stations staffed by resource persons who guide participants through the exhibits. The displays/stations address different issues and participants tour the house at their own pace. It is useful in providing information to the community and receiving feedback in a more informal setting.	It can be effective for engaging on complex or multiple issues within a short timeframe. It can facilitate the identification of problems and opportunities, understanding of public reactions and build relationships. It is staff intensive and can exclude hard to reach audiences. It can foster small group or one-on-one conversation. It can be challenging documenting the conversation	Advertise widely. Explain proceedings to participants at the door, including emergency exit, toilet location, etc. House should be accessible for persons with disability. Participants need to fill out attendance sheet. Provide comment forms. Consider available space. Each station should be able to take 6-10 participants at a time. The pace of the activity can change very quickly, e.g. many people coming at the

		same time or leaving at the same time. Put a plan in place to manage crowds. Consider asking for RSVP but be prepared for anyone to turn up. Make information sheets available to take away. Consider participants' access to parking and public transport. Provide refreshments.

Suggestion Box		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
On-site box that allows members of the community to provide feedback or share their ideas on specific issues or for general purpose. It can be adapted to an online format where participants type in their comments into a form. It is useful for participants to provide feedback that enables services to be improved.	It is appealing to those who may not wish to speak up in group settings. Often complements engagement activities that require a public gathering. Respondents may choose to be anonymous. It often requires participants to go to where the box is located.	The location of the box should be accessible. Use a bright coloured box to attract attention. Keep the box securely fastened. Advertise the suggestion box. Where possible, contact the person making the suggestion to acknowledge receipt and provide assurance their issue will be considered. Provide writing pen and paper with spaces for comment near the box. If the suggestion box is for a specific issue, be clear about it in the advertising and labelling

Polls		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Community members indicate their preference (vote) from one or more options. It is usually informal and non-binding. It is useful in understanding public reactions, opinions, and preferences. Polls can be conducted via a variety of methods including online forms, Survey Monkey and printed materials.	It is suitable for small groups, large groups or the general public. If done online, it is easy to set up, convenient to participate and result can be determined almost immediately. Lacks the ability to provide in-depth feedback and may exclude those who don't feel very strongly on the issue or limited by the options provided. Effective in raising awareness of issues. It can be divisive, especially for highly emotional issues. It can also be fun and used for simple things. It is often a game of numbers but results can be misleading if the question is not appropriately framed. Anonymity of the process encourages people to speak their mind.	Be very clear about the procedure, voting period, eligibility, etc. Ask carefully considered direct questions. Communicate clearly the purpose of the poll, e.g. will it form a decision, recommendation or provide insight? It might be necessary to provide sufficient information to enable informed voting. Make sure poll is statistically valid.

Survey		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A series of questions provided to a sample of people which are representative of the stakeholders to collect information on their views, opinions or concerns on an issue or a range of issues. The information collected is	Antenno, social media and Council's website can all be used as portals through which to engage in the survey. It is effective for hard to reach audiences and people who	Ensure sufficient sample size and representativeness of the survey community is achieved. The officer designing the survey should be knowledgeable about the

analysed to understand stakeholder's perspective on the issue/s. Types of surveys include online surveys or written surveys. They could be mailed out via email or surface mail. They are useful in understanding the community better, identifying issues and generating ideas.	are unlikely to attend engagement events. The confidentiality results in more candid responses. It can be used in small groups, large groups or the general public. It takes time to plan and develop an effective survey. It is possible and sometimes advisable to use different types of surveys (online and written) to gather feedback as this can facilitate greater participation. People with literacy or language difficulties may find it challenging.	issue/s and every question must have a clear purpose. Before the questions, provide brief overview of the purpose of the survey, how the information gathered will be used and estimate time to answer the questions. Assure respondents of confidentiality. Request some demographic information. Make the survey as anonymous as possible. Provide incentive for participation, e.g. prize draw. Keep it short and simple. For easier collation, provide tick box options or provide space for comments where necessary. Always test the survey in a pilot to identify possible pitfalls and make amends before making it public. Allow time for participation (2-3 weeks is considered sufficient). If grant-funded project, understand what sort of evaluation information funders will require and tailor survey to collect that info.

Level of Engagement – INVOLVE

Deliberative Engagement		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Brings together broadly representative groups of citizens to 'deliberate' on key initiatives and provide advice and options for the way forward. A deliberative panel generally runs for a whole day or longer; and involves comprehensive briefings and access to subject matter experts to help participants provide informed, quality, and meaningful input. Panellists do not require specific knowledge or interest in the topic to be discussed to participate as panel members should demonstrate a broad range of views and interests from across the community.	Gives decision makers insight into what the community would think if they had more time and information about the issue. Can produce a wide array of arguments and views. It is useful in identifying problems and opportunities, understanding community reactions and could involve between 10 to 30 people. Requires the commitment of participants and can be resource intensive. Effective for engaging when the community is likely to have little information on the issue or when the decision to be made depends on trade-offs	Hire a skilled facilitator. Do not expect or encourage participants to develop a shared view. Hire a third party to certify background reading materials are unbiased.

Community Leaders		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Leaders of various communities or interest groups are briefed, and they disseminate the information to their groups to elicit their views and opinions.	It is able to reach larger numbers of community members than would direct communication by Council. It is low cost, facilitates the development of relationships and may be effective for some hard to reach audiences. Depends on the availability of leaders, their skills and standing with our community.	Engage leaders who are affirmed by our community. Consider providing take away published materials, e.g. fact sheets. Be cautious when engaging with communities where factions exist. May be necessary to brief community leaders one-on-one.

Committee		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A structured small group of community or stakeholder representatives that meet regularly and operate under a term of reference. May also have members from Council (elected or employee). Can vary from members providing their own feedback or ideas to planning processes, to members acting as conduit between the broader community and Council. The committee offers expert and community advice on policies, plans, issues, and initiatives. Committees are statutory requirements in some circumstances. The Local Government Act 1993 empowers Councils to establish special committees on such terms and for such purposes as it thinks fit. Council has numerous S.355 Committees encompassing local halls and sporting facilities, as well as a number of Advisory Committees, such as the Disability Access and Inclusion Committee.	It is a ready audience formed around common theme, suitable for long term engagement and addressing complex issues, highly political or high emotion issues. Can be effective for understanding the broader community better, improving quality of policy, strategy, and plans, building community capacity for engagement, and developing relationship. Committee members gain understanding of other perspectives, leading towards compromise. It is time and labour intensive and members may not achieve consensus. Valuable for checking views before going out to the wider audience. Committee's recommendations may not be embraced by the general public and it can be dominated by a few individuals.	Define roles and responsibility up front. Be forthcoming with information. Use a consistently credible process. Interview potential committee members in person before selection. Council must accept need for give-and-take. Record of all meetings should be properly documented. Representativeness is vital. Consider the expertise that is required in the committee.

Workshops and Co-Author Consultations		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A structured method where a small group meet to explore specific complex issues and develop solutions. It is typically interactive and involves a facilitator, invited	Can provide a more open exchange of ideas and facilitate mutual understanding.	Small (12-20) to medium (21-40) size workshop works better. Workshop with more than 40 participants may be difficult to manage and create challenges for participants to

stakeholders, information sharing in a plenary session and small group exercises/breakout sessions to consider different aspects of the issue under consideration. It is useful for in-depth consideration of issues, problem identification and generating solutions.	Useful for dealing with complex, technical issues and allowing for in-depth consideration. Can be targeted at particular stakeholder group. It is most effective for a small number of participants and therefore other interests may not be represented. Effective in improving the quality of policy, strategy, or plan. It fosters stakeholders' ownership of problems and solutions, fosters communication, and builds credibility. Can run for between an hour and a full day. May be resource intensive depending on size of the workshop.	actively engage in workshop activities and exercises. Requires skilled facilitator to manage the workshop and may require extra facilitators for small workshop activities or breakout sessions. Focus on a single theme with identified sub-topics. Use a venue that is convenient for open interaction and breakout sessions. Provide morning tea and lunch as may be necessary. Start and end the workshop in a plenary session, with the breakout session in between.

Working Group or Working Party		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A small ad hoc group of individuals with diverse and complementing expertise collaborating to achieve specified goals. The goal may be to study and report on a particular question and make recommendations based on its findings, develop a policy or implement a program. It might involve council staff from different departments, representatives of community	Good for drawing on the expertise of a range of people to help develop policy or solve a problem. Useful for exploring issues before broader engagement takes place. Effective for internal consultation and the development of proposals. May be time consuming to set up.	Ensure all the required expertise is represented. Identify and directly invite persons with the required skills for the assignment. Keep meetings brief. Allow enough notice for members to plan ahead. Be forthcoming with information. Requires strong leadership.

groups, government officials or citizens.		

Public Meeting		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A formal meeting where Council can share information or make a presentation to the general public and respond to questions asked by members of the public. It is usually a large group and is open to all interested members of the community to attend and ask questions. It has legislative requirements in some circumstances. See Local Government Act 1993.	It is transparent and enables addressing immediately and directly any misconception and concerns. It may be helpful in understanding community reactions, implications of propositions and building relationships. The depth of the discussion is sometimes limited. Those attending may not be representative, meeting can be hijacked or dominated by individuals or groups and can quickly escalate out of control because emotions are high. Some people find public meetings intimidating. It can result in low turnout and can lead to bad public image if things go wrong. Suitable for engaging within a tight timeframe.	Ensure compliance with legislation where required. It is better to have a single issue up for consideration. Advertise widely, including details of date, time, venue, and subject of discussion. Give enough notice for people to prepare ahead, e.g. organise childcare. Use accessible venue that will be big enough for the meeting. Consider day and time of the meeting. Arrange for knowledgeable guest speakers where necessary. Review all materials and presentation ahead of time. Set up the venue to allow for interaction between Council and the public. Set the rules that will guide the meeting from the very beginning. It is helpful to hire an external community engagement professional to facilitate the meeting. This will help avoid the perception of bias. People have different commitments, and it may be

		appropriate to hold the same meeting twice, at different times. Take meeting minutes to record meeting outcomes. Allow enough time for questions and answers.

Site Tour		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Community and stakeholders are invited to an organised site tour incorporating information sharing and the opportunity for conversation between Council and the community/stakeholders. It is used to inform participants of the details of a proposed site or development, and gain understanding of participants' concerns, gain new ideas, observe progress, or change perspectives.	It can build relationships, increase awareness, and help to identify problems and opportunities. Suitable for small or large groups. It is more productive at the early stages of the development of a project. Could result in low turnout, attendance may not be representative and particular group/s may dominate the conversation.	Conduct site assessment to identify risks and put plan in place to mitigate them. Provide necessary personal protective equipment (PPE). Consider inviting key stakeholders, influencers, community leaders, etc. Plan question and answer session. Prepare an itinerary. Provide refreshments.

Conversation Cafe		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
Open, hosted conversations set in cafes or other places where community members would ordinarily gather. It is used to understand issues and identify opportunities and solutions.	It is effective in small groups (not more than 10) and helps build relationships. It is semi-formal and therefore not intimidating. The conversation can be dominated by an individual or persons	Invite interested stakeholders and keep the size small. Use a familiar venue where conversation can be had while sharing a meal or drink. Consider using a venue with disability access and close to public transport. Keep it short (not more than 2 hours).

		The host does not facilitate, but rather simply sets the tone for the conversation.

Level of Engagement – COLLABORATE

Deliberative Engagement		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
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Symposium		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A formal meeting for the public discussion of a particular topic in which a panel of experts share their knowledge on the topic or experts give presentations to the audience.	People learn new information on different sides of the topic. It provides a foundation for informed engagement by the people. Commonly used for issues of high complexity or highly political topics. Can build community capacity but may convey very	Needs strong publicity. Requires upfront planning to identify appropriate speakers. Seek out experts with different views on the topic. Allow for questions and answer session from members of the public. Provide for professional fees for speakers.

	technical information difficult to understand by non-experts. Depending on the complexity of the issue, may occur in half a day or over a few days	It may be necessary to issue a communiqué at the end of the symposium.

Round Table		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A facilitated discussion where participants freely share their views on an issue, reflect on the views of other participants and seek to reach a shared understanding of the issue. Every participant gets to say something and contribute to broader thinking of the issue. Typically, the discussion is held with participants seated at a round table. As the name suggests, it has no head, implying that everyone who sits there has equal status. It is useful in building trust, understanding stakeholders' needs, achieving a balance between needs and expectations, and improving the quality of a proposed action.	Can provide stakeholders with a better understanding of each other's position and result in more realistic expectations and willingness to work in partnership. To have credibility, all key stakeholders should be present. Potential to resolve conflicts and build relationships. Works well for small groups and could exclude important stakeholders. Effective for long-term engagement. Some participants may want to be domineering.	Requires a professional facilitator and must be carefully designed to avoid any perception of bias. Ensure participants have the trust of their constituencies. Make written notes of discussions and shared understanding. Consider another opportunity for further discussions on issues that require better mutual understanding. Emphasise the need for mutual respect. A group of not more than 12 will be efficient.

Appreciative Enquiry		
Description and Use	Think it through	Best Practice Note
A structured process for engaging stakeholders that focuses on building on strengths (what works well) rather than deficiencies (what are the problems). Appreciative inquiry attempts to use ways of asking	Connects the community by celebrating stories that reflect the best of what is and has been. Fosters positive, grassroots level action.	Participants should be representative of the potentially affected public. Requires high level of engagement by all parties involved.

questions and envisioning the future in order to foster positive relationships and build on the present potential of a given situation. Stakeholders follow four stage process of Discover (identifying processes that works well), Dream (envisioning of processes that would work well in the future), Design (planning and prioritizing processes that would work well), and Destiny (implementation of the proposed design).	Creates commitment to long term engagement. Council needs to be truly committed to the outcome. Given the high level of engagement, people expect to see changes as a result of the process. Participants need to own and co-create the process. It is suitable for engaging small or large groups on issues of high complexity or high emotions.	Allow enough time as the process may take days, weeks, or months.

Nambucca Valley Council

Community Engagement Plan

1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

Title of project	

Brief Description of Project: (What is the purpose and timeline)?

Key issues: (Identify any current and historical issues that may have an impact on this project, especially if there are continuous issues)

Community Engagement Objective/s: (What information do you need? What will you do with it? What outcome are you seeking from this engagement?)

Authorisation of Community Engagement

☐ Council resolution: _____

☐ Delivery Program (provide reference): _____

☐ Legislative requirement (identify Act/Regulation): _____

☐ Not required. Management approval signature: _____

2. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF IMPACT?

- ☐ Level 1 – High Impact across the LGA
- ☐ Level 2 – High impact in localised area
- ☐ Level 3 – Lower impact across the LGA
- ☐ Level 4 – Lower impact on localised area

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT?

☐ Inform ☐ Consult ☐ Involve ☐ Collaborate

4. IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS TO BE ENGAGED

Council stakeholders:

- ☐ Office of General Manager
- ☐ Mayor and Councillors
- ☐ Council Committees (list, if applicable):
- ☐ Others (list, if applicable):

Community Stakeholders

- ☐ Nambucca Valley wide
- ☐ Local areas/s (list)
- ☐ Business community
- ☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- ☐ Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community
- ☐ Families and children
- ☐ Service networks
- ☐ Young people
- ☐ People with disability and their carers
- ☐ Other government agencies
- ☐ Community associations/clubs/ organisations
- ☐ Older people
- ☐ Other (list):

5. ENGAGEMENT METHOD AND COMMUNICATION PLAN				
Phase	**Stakeholder**	**Engagement Method**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible person/s**
Pre-Engagement phase (What needs to occur prior to engaging with stakeholders?)				
Phase	**Stakeholder**	**Engagement Method**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible person/s**
Engagement phase (How are you going to engage stakeholders?)				
Phase	**Stakeholder**	**Engagement Method**	**Timeframe**	**Responsible person/s**
Post-Engagement phase (How will you report back to stakeholders?)				

6. EVALUATION	
Identify measures to evaluate engagement(e.g., attendance numbers, number of responses, diversity, etc). Consider the tool for evaluation	

7. REVIEWED AND APPROVED MANAGER		
	Name:	Section/Department:
	Position:	Signature:
	Manager:	Signature:
	Director/GM:	Signature: