




<b>Corporate Plan Reference:</b>	Theme 5: Excellence Enhance opportunities for the community to engage with the Council and ensure community engagement best practice is embedded in Council operations
<b>Endorsed by Council:</b>	
<b>Policy Author:</b>	Community Engagement Advisor

### POLICY BACKGROUND

This policy affirms Noosa Council's commitment to community engagement as reflected in our Sustainability Principles *"Good governance and policy is achieved through forward planning, effective, efficient and collaborative decision making, made in the interests of the community"*.

It provides a set of principles to guide community engagement practice that align with Council's Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

### POLICY SCOPE

- This policy applies to all facets of Council's operations where community engagement is undertaken.
- It defines the principles underpinning Council's external engagement activities, whether it is Councillors or staff members who are engaging with the community.
- This policy is focused on external engagement and does not include internal communication or engagement between council officers, nor between Councillors and council officers.

### COUNCIL POLICY

Noosa Council recognises that community engagement is a vital part of effective democracy. Quality engagement between Council and residents makes good business practice and it is critical to good governance. For this reason, Council is committed to engaging with the Noosa community.

The benefits of effective engagement include:

- Council and the community working together to address local issues and collectively achieving better outcomes.
- a higher level of community input into decisions made by Council.
- an improved level of community understanding about Council's processes and services.
- increased awareness across Council of community views and concerns.
- opportunities for Council to draw upon community expertise.
- the potential for time and cost savings due to better alignment between community needs and Council decisions.
- increased social capital due to greater trust and knowledge acquired while working collaboratively with the community,
- stronger relationships between councillors, council officers and residents, including stakeholder groups.

## ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Council recognises the full spectrum of community engagement from informing, consulting, involving and collaborating, to empowering.

Council uses different community engagement techniques and communication methods depending on the issue or project, its goals, its particular circumstance and the level of influence the community have on decision-making.

Council's community engagement approach is underpinned by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) and outlined in our Community Engagement Framework and Practice Guidelines. These documents are designed as internal documents to guide staff on how Council plan, design and manage community engagement.

## PRINCIPLES

Council has a commitment to community engagement that is governed by the principles outlined in the Community Engagement Framework, described below:

1. **Inclusive** - Council encourages involvement from a wide cross-section of the community, respecting diversity of opinion, using engagement processes that are accessible and inclusive.
2. **Transparent** – Quality engagement involves trust which can be fostered through transparency. The engagement processes and the levels of community influence will be clearly articulated. Council will reflect back to the community how they have influenced Council decisions.
3. **Appropriate** - Council will choose the most appropriate processes that best suit the audiences affected, and time the consultation to optimise the opportunity for engagement, wherever possible.
4. **Accountable** - Council undertakes community engagement to enhance its decision- making, however Council accepts that it is ultimately responsible and thus accountable for the decisions it makes.
5. **Timely** – Council will enable reasonable opportunity for community to contribute to engagement processes by well-timed engagement schedules and durations.
6. **Well resourced** - Council will ensure staff members have appropriate skill sets, training and resources in order to plan and implement meaningful and effective engagement.
7. **Informative** – Council will provide the information necessary to enable meaningful engagement including the reporting of engagement outcomes.
8. **Understanding our changing community** – Recognising when an issue or project will have an impact on stakeholders and engaging appropriately.

## STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

The *Queensland Local Government Act 2009* outlines the in principle need for local government to engage with the community and to encourage and assist participation, in particular, principle 2(c) Section 4 “democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement”.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

In developing the Community Engagement Policy, the subject matter has been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Queensland Human Rights Act 2019. It is considered that the subject matter does not conflict with any human rights, including the right to take part in public life, and supports a human rights approach to decision making by Council.

Council representatives will endeavour to act and make decisions under this policy in a manner that is compatible with human rights. In particular, representatives will endeavour to:

- identify relevant human rights which may be affected by the action or decision;
- give proper consideration to the impact of its actions and decisions on human rights; and
- ensure that any conduct or decision by Council which limits an individual's human rights is reasonable and justifiable.

The Community Engagement Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Human Rights Policy.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

### **Noosa Council Corporate Plan 2023- 2028**

Community engagement is identified as a priority in Council's Corporate Plan.

### **Noosa Council Community Engagement Framework 2023**

In order to provide information and the basis for in-house training for relevant council officers, the Community Engagement Framework is an internally facing document that defines community engagement in the local government context and Council's approach.

### **Noosa Council Community Engagement Practice Guideline 2023**

In order to provide operational guidance for council officers to implement the Community Engagement Framework in practices, the Community Engagement Practice Guideline assists Council officers to plan, design, manage and evaluate community engagement activities.

Both the Community Engagement Framework and the Practice Guideline are regularly updated to remain consistent with community engagement best practice.

### **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Framework**

Noosa Council has adopted the IAP2 Framework as part of its Community Engagement Framework in recognition of IAP2 as an international leader in best practice stakeholder engagement.

The IAP2 Spectrum articulates levels of public participation and Council's promise to the public for each level of participation.

### **Employee Code of Conduct**

The Employee Code of Conduct is a set of standards and behaviours related to the way council officers do their work. It puts a responsibility on each officer to use sound judgement while at work.

## **Councillor Code of Conduct Policy**

This Code of Conduct sets out, for both Councillors and the community, the standards of behaviour expected of Councillors of Noosa Shire Council.

## **Media Relations Guidelines**

The Media Relations Guidelines establish how Council's elected members and council officers will interact with the media. It is designed to ensure that in all dealings with the media, the Council acts in a professional, coordinated manner and that all statements made and information provided are accurate, appropriate and timely.

## **Governance Framework**

Council's Governance Framework recognises and outlines the importance of effective communication and engagement with our community as part of responsible decision-making practices. Council embraces consultation as a two-way process that creates opportunities for the community to participate in matters that interest and affect it and ensures transparency and accountability in Council's decision making. At its core, communication and engagement supports and encourages the community to participate in civic life.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Mayor and Councillors**

The Mayor and Councillors will support the active promotion of community engagement with the community through their understanding of and compliance with the Community Engagement Framework, Practice Guidelines and project engagement plans.

### **Executive Leadership Team**

The Executive Leadership Team will model exemplary community engagement and lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, the Community Engagement Framework and Practice Guidelines.

The Executive Leadership Team will also approve resources to develop, implement and review the Community Engagement Framework from time to time, with the advice of the Communications and Community Engagement Branch.

### **Communications and Community Engagement Branch**

The Communications and Community Engagement Branch is responsible for ensuring the Community Engagement Framework and related Practice Guidelines are widely understood and to provide guidance and skill development on its interpretation and implementation.

To oversee the scheduling and delivery of Council's community engagement projects.

### **All Branch Managers**

All Branch Managers are responsible for supporting the implementation of the Community Engagement Framework and related Practice Guidelines and to lead staff in their understanding of and compliance with this Framework.

### **People and Culture Branch**

The People and Culture Branch will facilitate the provision of regular training to all Council staff on

their role and responsibilities in relation to the Community Engagement Framework and related Practice Guidelines in collaboration with the Communications and Community Engagement Branch.

### **Project Leads**

Project leads are responsible for the design, plan, management and evaluation of community engagement projects in collaboration with the Communications and Community Engagement Branch.

### **Council Staff and Contractors**

Council staff and contractors must comply with the Community Engagement Framework and related Practice Guidelines.

### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

*Queensland Local Government Act 2009*

*Integrity Act 2009*

*Sustainable Planning Act 2009*

### **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed once per Council term (every four years) or as required from time to time.

#### **Version control:**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Reason/ Trigger</b>	<b>Change (Y/N)</b>	<b>Endorsed/ Reviewed by</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.0	New policy		Council	28/08/14
2.0	Amend policy	Y	Council	20/04/17
3.0	Amend policy	Y	Council	16/03/2023