

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

## *INTENT*

To ensure Council's community engagement activities establish a consistent and coordinated approach to community participation in Council's decision making process.

## *SCOPE*

This policy applies to all Elected Members, Cook Shire Council employees, consultants contracted by Council and any other person/s who undertakes work for Council.

This policy articulates the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Councillors and employees engaging with the community and the tools used by Council to maximise the effectiveness of its engagement with these communities to strengthen local democracy.

## *DEFINITIONS*

TERM	DEFINITION
Community	The community includes ratepayers, residents and all the people who live, work, study, conduct business or use the services, facilities and public places in the Cook Shire Local Government Area.
Community Engagement	Any planned process that involves the community in problem solving, planning or decision-making and uses community input to assist in making decisions. Community Engagement can include communicating with the community about decisions made; consulting on specific ideas or proposals; involving the community in planning processes; and collaborating with the community to make decisions.
Contractor	An independent entity which is engaged to provide goods, material, equipment, personnel, and/or services.
Council	Cook Shire Council
Employees	Means any person undertaking work on behalf of Council and includes permanent, temporary, full time, part time and/or casual employees,

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TERM	DEFINITION
	volunteers, contractors (and their employees), consultants, vacation employment students and work experience students of Cook Shire Council
International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)	An international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and affect the public interest.
Policy	Cook Shire Community Engagement Policy
Stakeholders	A person or organisation that can affect, be affected by or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activities, products and services and associated performance. Organisations will have many stakeholders, each with distinct types and levels of involvement and often diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and concerns.

## *POLICY STATEMENT*

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Council recognises that engagement with the community and other stakeholders is a vital part of the democratic process. Community and stakeholder engagement enables Councillors and staff to be confident that all views are considered when making a decision, along with technical requirements, research and any other policy or legislative requirements. Stakeholder engagement complements the decision-making role of Council.

Council is committed to engaging effectively with the community to strengthen relationships, build community capacity and facilitate transparent decision making. Effective community engagement activities should be planned, coordinated, consistent, accessible and inclusive.

The level and method of engagement will vary according to the stakeholders, topics, solutions, issues or project requirements.

## *IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM*

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Under this Policy, Council's engagement activities will be carried out in accordance with the public participation spectrum as developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). IAP2 is recognised as one of the world's leading authorities on community engagement and its engagement spectrum has been adopted by many local governments across Australia. The levels within the published spectrum are:

Informing: Providing the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding problems/opportunities, solutions/alternatives and decisions.

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- Consulting: Asking communities for ideas, testing support for a proposal or obtaining feedback on preferences when there are options available.
- Promise: Council undertakes to keep the community informed
- Promise: Council will keep the community informed, by listening and acknowledging concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback about how community input influenced the decision
- Involving: Working directly with the public to ensure that public concerns and needs are consistently understood and considered.
- Promise: Council will work with the community to ensure their concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision
- Collaborating: Partnering with the public in every aspect of the decision, including the development of alternative solutions and the identification of the preferred solution.
- Promise: Council will look to the community for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate their advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible
- Empowering: Placing final decision making in the hands of the public.
- Promise: Council will implement what the community decides.

## *POLICY APPLICATION*

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To facilitate a commitment to engagement, Councillors, employees and staff involved in community engagement will use this Policy as a guide, considering the unique needs of Shire communities and the people during each community engagement activity, applying learning and continuous improvement after each engagement activity. This policy will be implemented through the following activities:

- Community engagement awareness included in induction process for new employees
- Community engagement training related to IAP2 methodologies for key identified staff
- Internal promotion of Council's Community Engagement Policy
- Support for staff via the Community, Economy and Innovation Team

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## PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENT

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As required under Section 4(2) of the *Local Government Act 2009*, Council supports the principle of "meaningful engagement" with the community. Council's Corporate Plan 2017 - 2022 demonstrates a commitment to community engagement from its strategic vision of 'Building Sustainable Communities with Respect for Our Unique Natural Environment, Celebrating Our Diverse Cultures and Sharing Our Pride in Cape York'.

This is further supported by Council's Mission to "Understand Our Communities' Needs and Provide Consistent Service to enable them to flourish in a safe, sustainable manner". Cook Shire Council is committed to the IAP2's Core Values of public participation and where possible will use these principles to guide engagement activities by:

1. Recognising that those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process;
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision;
3. Recognising and communicating the needs of all participants including the decision makers;
4. Seeking out and facilitating the participation of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision;
5. Providing participants with an opportunity to offer input into the way they contribute;
6. Participation provides contributors with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
7. Communicating to participants how their input affected the decision.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

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Councillors and staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will ensure that sufficient engagement has taken place to inform strategic decisions that may have a high level of impact on the whole or large parts of Cook Shire Council's Local Government Area, or on a specific suburb, area, community, user or interest group.

Employees will ensure that the need for meaningful community engagement in accordance with this Policy and the IAP2 Spectrum is considered during the planning phase for all relevant projects, activities and strategy development. Employees are required to have an understanding of the term 'community engagement'; how it applies to their roles; knowledge of where to access information on the methodologies and engagement tools available to them when going about their business; and knowledge on the types of activities that require advice of expert professionals.

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## RELATED LEGISLATION

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Local Government Act 2009

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

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- Cook Shire Corporate Plan 2022-2027
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Assurance Standards
- Ten Year Community Plan 2021-2031

## APPROVED BY

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Council Resolution 2023/138

## REVIEW

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SPONSOR:	Director Community, Economy and Innovation
OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW:	Director Community , Economy and Innovation
ADOPTION DATE:	27 June 2023
REVIEW DATE:	June 2026

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*THIS POLICY IS TO REMAIN IN FORCE UNTIL OTHERWISE DETERMINED BY COUNCIL*

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## AMENDMENT HISTORY

VERSION	AMENDMENT DETAILS	AMENDMENT DATE	APPROVAL
1.0	New Policy	September 2010	Council
2.0	Minor Amendments	September 2012	Council
3.0	Minor Amendments	January 2014	Council
4.0	Minor Amendments	June 2016	Council
5.0	Minor Amendments	June 2020	Council
6.0	Review – minor amendments to related documents	June 2023	Council Resolution 2023/138

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