

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

### **INTENT:**

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Provide direction for Council's community engagement activities and establish a consistent, coordinated approach to community participation in Council's decision making process.

### **SCOPE:**

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This policy applies to all Councillors and staff of Cook Shire Council across all areas of Council's operations.

The Community Engagement Policy defines the mechanisms which council uses to engage the community.

It provides Councillors and staff with processes to identify engagement opportunities and to maximize the benefits of community engagement, as outlined in the *International Association of Public Participation – IAP2 Spectrum*.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

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Council defines successful **community engagement** as:

*An effective two-way relationship between Cook Shire Council and the Cook Shire community, in which both sides are well informed and collaborate to improve Council services and ensure responsible decision making in the Shire.*

The core structure of community engagement is based on the following International Association of Public Participation – IAP<sup>2</sup> Spectrum:

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

**Consulting:** asking communities for ideas, testing support for a proposal or obtaining feedback on preferences when there are options available.

**Involving:** working directly with the public to ensure that public concerns and needs are consistently understood and considered.

**Collaborating:** partnering with the public in every aspect of the decision, including the development of alternative solutions and the identification of the preferred solution.

**Empowering:** placing final decision making in the hands of the public.

## ***PROVISIONS:***

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### **1. LEGISLATION**

This Policy has been prepared after consideration of the following (as amended) pieces of legislation:

#### **Cook Shire Community Plan 2011-2021**

The communities' needs and expectations are identified in the Cook Shire Community Plan 2011-2021. Cook Shire's Community Plan was developed after extensive consultation with the Cook Shire community and other key stakeholders. The information contained in the Plan outlines community goals, strategy and priorities upon which the Corporate Plan has been developed.

#### **Cook Shire Council Corporate plan 2012-2017**

The Corporate Plan is the link between our community's needs and expectations and the operational activities undertaken by Council. It identifies 'Cooperation' as one of the Council's core values, defined as the principles of 'social inclusion and meaningful community engagement'.

This is further specified under heading 4.3.1 'Active, Creative and Connected' to 'provide to a standard that ensures (at a minimum) legislative compliance and equitable access: e) Community Engagement across all relevant activities'.

#### **Local Government Act 2009**

4 (2) (c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement.

### **2. RESPONSIBILITIES**

All Councillors and operational staff will play key roles in engaging with the community. Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local and regional communities; and operational staff have responsibility for engaging the community in their day to day business activities and on agreed projects.

### **3. POLICY STATEMENT**

Cook Shire Council offers various ways for community members to participate in the decision making process and strives to increase the representation of views and opinions of our diverse community. Council believes that it can make better decisions by actively seeking input early in the decision making and policy development process. Council will use appropriate IAP<sup>2</sup> community engagement strategies and techniques depending upon the issue or project, its particular circumstances and the target audience.

Each principle seeks to clarify the purpose of why Council engages with the community and guide how that engagement occurs.

The Community Engagement Strategy 2015 will enable the implementation and ongoing use of community engagement activities throughout a range of Cook Shire Council activities.

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This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.

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Responsible Officer: Director Development, Environment and Community