



Community Engagement Strategy for the Community Strategic Plan

May 2011

BACKGROUND

Under the Local Government Act 1993, Council is required to change its current Strategic Planning Process by June 2012. Currently, Council has a three tiered framework which includes our Strategic Directions, Management Plans and Business Plans. Under the new Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines, Council will develop a Community Strategic Plan in consultation with Council's partners and the community. This Plan will be supported by a Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines how Council is going to engage individuals, community groups, Government agencies and non-Government organisations in the formation of the Wollongong Community Strategic Plan.

The Strategy:

- Outlines how Council will listen, involve and seek feedback from the community.
- Is based on feedback from the Community Reference Panel, Neighbourhood Forums and lessons learnt from previous engagement undertaken by Council.
- Involves collaboration with Government agencies and non-Government organisations.
- Follows social justice principles to ensure that a broad range of community members are engaged to reflect the City's demographics.
- Follows good practice for engagement in alignment with Council's Community Consultation Policy and the principles of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).
- Ensures Council delivers a variety of engagement activities across the City to maximise access.
- Includes input from internal staff from across the organisation.
- Meets Council's requirements under the Local Government Act 1993, the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Manual.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Community Engagement is any process that involves the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to assist in making decisions (International Association for Public Participation, 2006). Community Engagement does not necessarily mean consensus, however; it does involve seeking broad agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community. Council's Community Consultation Policy 2010 defines the benefits of engagement as follows:

'As the community contributes funds to Council's services and facilities, Council needs to be responsive to the needs of the community that it serves. Through community engagement the community can:

- *learn about what the Council does or plans to do;*
- *express views on decisions that affect them;*
- *suggest how the Council may improve the way it plans for and provides services and facilities; and*
- *make Wollongong a better place to live'.*

Council has based this Community Engagement Strategy on the engagement spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2): Inform; Consult; Involve; and Collaborate; as recommended by the Department of Local Government.

This Community Engagement Strategy relates to the development of a Community Strategic Plan and does not override Council's Community Consultation Policy or related documents.

Social Justice Principles

Social Justice Principles include rights, equity, access and participation. The Strategy is designed to ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to actively participate. The Strategy includes:

- A wide range of engagement methods which will allow us to reach a range of target groups.
- Engagement activities delivered in various locations across the City to maximise access.
- Promotion of engagement activities through community media and local networks.
- Engagement information prepared in plain English with key information translated into the relevant community languages and interpreters provided at relevant engagement sessions.
- The delivery of additional engagement activities which directly target particular communities if there has been insufficient representation of a community group.
- Educating Council staff on the Social Justice Principles and the relevance to the planning process.
- The involvement of specialist staff with a comprehensive understanding of the Principles of Social Justice and experience in engaging with diverse communities.

WHO ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders include all individuals and groups based in and outside the Wollongong Local Government Area who have an interest in the future of Wollongong City. Council has conducted a comprehensive stakeholder analysis to ensure that all stakeholder groups will be provided with an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Community Strategic Plan. These stakeholder groups are outlined below:

Residents

Wollongong is a diverse city with a population of approximately 183,632. One in 6 people (16.2%) speak a language other than English at home. In addition 1.7% of the population is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Wollongong's population continues to age with 15.5% of the population aged 65 years and over, and 23% aged 17 years and under. Approximately 20% of the population has a disability with this percentage expected to increase as our population ages. Family and household structure is also changing; in 2006, 17% of total families were one-parent families, 45% were couple families with child(ren) and 37% were couple families without children.

Visitors

The Wollongong community includes visitors to the city from neighbouring Council areas, from throughout Australia and overseas. Many of these people visit Wollongong regularly and express a strong affinity to the area as demonstrated through Tourism Wollongong's We Love the Gong campaign. The IRIS Wollongong Image Study (2004) found that the majority of tourists came to the city for day trips rather than extended holidays, with a large proportion visiting the region to see family or friends.

Community groups

There are more than 1500 community groups operating in Wollongong. These include activist, environmental, welfare, recreation and social groups. The Community Information Database maintained by Wollongong City Library provides a comprehensive list allowing targeted searches by name, interest or suburb.

Business

Wollongong LGA features a wide variety of business types including major industries, developers, retail and corporate services. Key Industry sectors include: manufacturing, retail, health and community services, property and business services and education. Retail and wholesale equates to 17.8% of all business locations in the area, with manufacturing 5.7% of all business locations in the area. (Information source: IRIS – Wollongong Profile). There are a number of chambers of commerce and professional organisations linking these business networks.

Advisory groups

Council works with the community through a number of advisory, reference groups and committees.

Government

Federal and state government departments and agencies have a strong stake in the future of the Wollongong community in the areas of education, health, policing, environment and industry.

It is intended that all stakeholders will be provided with the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the development of the Community Strategic Plan. A range of methods will be employed to maximise involvement. Consideration will also be given the diversity of the Wollongong community and those whose voices may not normally be heard in community discussions. This includes:

- § people with disabilities
- § Aboriginal communities
- § people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- § children and young people
- § people in geographically isolated areas
- § single parents, and
- § the elderly.

The following Table 1 highlights key demographic features of the Wollongong community and the strategies Council will carry out to ensure wide engagement of our diverse community.

Table 1: Methods for Engaging Our Diverse Wollongong Community

Demographic Feature	Key Statistics The 2006 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data shows that:	Strategies for Engagement
Total Population	183, 632 people The Local Government Area extends from Helensburgh in the north to Windang and Hayward's Bay in the south and has a diverse resident base.	To ensure all people across the Local Government Area are provided with an opportunity to participate, Council will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist with access for people experiencing disadvantage to attend the workshops and activities. • carry out targeted engagement methods to enable the best opportunity for community involvement.
Age Structure	0 to 4 years - 6.2% 5 to 17 years - 17.3% 18 to 64 years - 61% 65 to 84 years - 13.8% 85 years and over - 1.7%	To reach people from across all age groups, a variety of strategies will be used during each stage of the community engagement process, Council will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of both electronic and non electronic media. • provide access for people experiencing disadvantage to attend the workshops and activities. • schedule engagement activities at various times. • seek advice from the Children's and Family Services and Youth Services staff on engaging with children and young people.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	16.2 % of the population speaks a language other than English at home. Our 3 most common languages other than English are Macedonian (2.9%), Italian (2.5%), and Greek (1.1%). The fastest growing language is Mandarin (1462 in 2006 compared to 707 in 2001).	Key information will be translated into the most widely used community languages and interpreters will be provided as required. Engagement activities will be promoted through community radio and local networks. Engagement will be carried out with advice and information from Council's Multicultural Community Development Workers and using existing networks to maximize involvement.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	1.7% of the population is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.	All engagement will be promoted through existing local Aboriginal groups and networks including Councils existing Aboriginal Reference Group. The Aboriginal Community Development worker will provide advice and information to ensure strategies are culturally appropriate and that all key groups have the opportunity to participate.
People with a Disability	20% of the population has a disability and this percentage is expected to increase as our population continues to age.	Engagement activities will be held in accessible venues. Additional devices such as Audio Loops will be used, and Auslan interpreters provided as required. Accessible print will be used as appropriate. Engagement activities will be taken to existing groups and networks to maximise involvement.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

A comprehensive Communication Strategy has been developed for the Community Strategic Plan and this will be revised and updated regularly throughout the life of this project. Council will encourage broad awareness and participation by providing information through diverse and easily accessible channels such as the internet, social media, local media, libraries and other community meeting places, and face to face engagements. Information and feedback will be gathered through workshops, online engagement techniques and community surveys.

Below is a summary of key communications methods which will be used to communicate with our community and partners about the Community Strategic Plan.

Media

Council will work with local print, television, radio and internet based media agencies to promote each stage of consultation to the community. Council will include messages in its columns in both the Illawarra Mercury and The Advertiser.

Council Website and Newsletter

Council will use its website and community newsletter to provide information on the Community Strategic Plan. As well as providing timely and detailed information, opportunities exist for using online media to generate discussion and accept feedback.

Networks

Council maintains a comprehensive Community Information Directory containing the details of more than 1500 local groups and organisations. Stakeholders can be targeted with relevant information to their area of interest and expertise.

Council works with a number of Reference Groups and Committees and eight Neighbourhood Forums. Key messages will be shared with these groups. Council will promote information about this engagement process through libraries and community centres and work with schools and other community organisations to include messages in their newsletters.

KEY STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

In developing a Community Strategic Plan, Wollongong City Council identifies four stages which are summarised in Attachment 1.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

During each stage of the development of the Community Strategic Plan evaluation and review will be undertaken to ensure:

- § Engagement methods and techniques have reach all relevant stakeholders.
- § Data and information gathered through engagement activities is of high quality and integrity and informs the development of the Community Strategic Plan.
- § The views, visions, aspirations and priorities of the community are heard and accurately recorded.
- § Council's Legislative requirements are met.

Journey to Create the Community Strategic Plan

Phases and Methods of Engagement

<p>Our Community Journey...</p> <p>We want to talk to you and listen to your ideas</p> <p>How can we reach you and work with you in planning our long term vision and goals?</p>	Phase 1: Research and Review			
	Timeframe	Method	Purpose	Stakeholders
	March	Community Reference Panel	Help to establish communication and engagement methods	ê Diverse group of community members
	April	Communication & Engagement Survey	Clarify current and preferred communication and engagement methods	ê Community
		Staff workshop	Test Community Engagement Strategy writing style and methodology	ê Staff
May	Consultation	Awareness of Community Engagement Strategy	ê Neighbourhood Forum Convenors	
	Neighbourhood Forum Convenors Meeting			
	Community Reference Panel	Presentation of Results and Outcomes of panel	ê Diverse group of community members	
	Council meeting	Endorse Community Engagement Strategy	ê Council	

Our Community Journey...	Phase 2: Visioning and Creating			
	Timeframe	Method	Purpose	Stakeholders
<p>Take photos, write messages, quotes and poetry, create artworks and images, paint, play, sing, dance!</p> <p>Let's celebrate who we are as a community and as a city</p> <p>What is our story? What do we love about Wollongong? How are we in the present, past and future?</p>	June	<p>Draw, write, snap, share promotion</p> <p>Community are invited to submit short stories or poems, art, photographs and short films.</p>	<p>To answer the question: What do we love about Wollongong?</p> <p>To start our journey and to frame future conversations about our aspirations and visions for the future of the City and our community.</p> <p>As well as generating interest and awareness, the promotion will provide a source of images and words to be used in promotions and consultations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community ê Schools ê Tafe ê University ê Young people ê Children
	June	<p>Survey</p> <p>A survey will be carried out to support data gathering at workshops and Summit.</p>	<p>To gather data from community members on preferred service levels and future aspirations for our community and our City.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community
	July - September	<p>Community Conversations</p> <p>Held in different geographical locations (north, central and south)</p>	<p>To gather information for input into the Summit and encourage community participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community ê Potential Council candidates ê Business ê Agencies

<p>Our Community Journey...</p> <p>We will bring your ideas to a community Summit and have conversations about visioning, priorities, needs, aspirations, services and resourcing.</p> <p>We will take your visions and aspirations and transform them into goals, actions and allocate resourcing.</p>	October	<p>Community Summit Bring all interested persons together to share ideas and aspirations</p> <p>Community development to hold additional workshops with specific target groups if needed.</p>	<p>To answer the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where are we now? - Where do we want to be in 10 yrs time? - How will we get there? - How will we know when we are there? <p>We will discuss progress against past Strategic Plans, including Council's former Strategic Plan (Focus on the Future) and Wollongong Futures, and begin discussions around priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community ê Business ê Agencies ê Young people ê Councillors
	Phase 3: Goal and Priority Setting			
	Timeframe	Method	Purpose	Stakeholders
November 2011	Community and Stakeholder Workshops	<p>Clarify priorities and information on vision, goals, challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>Continue discussions about levels of service and resourcing.</p> <p>Test vision and priorities.</p> <p>Collaborate with community and agencies' representatives on service levels and budget to agree what the plan should deliver.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community Agencies ê Business ê Representative sample of community ê Councillors 	

Our Community Journey...	Phase 4: Development and Exhibition of Draft Plans			
	Timeframe	Method	Purpose	Stakeholders
A final opportunity for our community and partners to review the draft Community Strategic Plan which will include your words, artworks and vision for the long term future of the City.	February to June 2012	Formal Exhibition of Plans	<p>Provide opportunity for the community and partners to comment on the draft Plans.</p> <p>Finalisation and endorsement of the Plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community Strategic Plan ê Resource Strategy ê Delivery Program ê Operational Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ê Community ê Agencies ê Neighbourhood Forums ê Business ê Council's community networks ê Partners ê Visitors