



LOWER EYRE
COUNCIL

Policy – Community Engagement Strategy



“Working with our Rural & Coastal Communities”



CR-POL-03 - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Version No:	1.5
Issued:	January 2024
Next Review:	January 2026

Responsible Department	Corporate Services
Policy Adopted	17/01/2024
Minutes reference:	OCM/23/006
Related Policies/Procedures/Codes:	Code of Conduct – Elected Members Code of Conduct – Employees CR-POL-01 – Media CR-POL-02 – Public consultation CR-PRO-01.01 – Facebook Administration Guidelines
Review Frequency:	24 Months

1. INTRODUCTION

The Lower Eyre Council seeks to specialise in all aspects of managing a diverse Rural and Coastal Council, and the involvement of the community in Council decision making is seen as critical in achieving this goal. Effective communication with local communities in decision making maximises the knowledge and experience upon which decisions are made and leads to better outcomes for all.

Feedback gained from engaging with the community helps Council to understand varied points of view, gather comprehensive information, consider a range of options and identify common ground with stakeholders.

Community engagement does not replace the final decision making power of Council, but is considered invaluable in the way it enhances Council’s capacity to make well informed, acceptable and sustainable decisions.

This Community Engagement Strategy supports Council’s Public Consultation Policy (CR-POL-02) which has been adopted in accordance with Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999. The Public Consultation policy sets out the steps that Council will follow in cases where the Act specifically requires the Council to follow its public consultation policy, and sets out steps that Council will follow in other cases of Council decision making.

The Public Consultation Policy also sets out potential stakeholders with whom Council will seek to engage and identifies a range of options to be used by Council to communicate information and invite community feedback.

The Community Engagement Strategy goes beyond the intent of the Public Consultation Policy, and reflects numerous goals and objectives within Councils Strategic Plan 2020 – 2030 to increase the liveability of our district and increase the engagement of our communities in decision making.

(continued):

1. INTRODUCTION cont'd:

Council will seek to engage with either the entire Council district on Council wide issues (e.g. public consultation on the Annual Business Plan) or with individual community groups in relation to local issues (e.g. in relation to a planned local project or where seeking to understand the views and needs of a local community).

Community Reference Groups have been established across the Council District, with relevant information and discussion undertaken with the reference groups as detailed in the Annual Community Engagement Program as set out in clause 3 of this strategy document.

2. LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is undertaken on four levels dependent on the circumstances, with each having a particular purpose dependent on the circumstances:

(1) Provision of Information

Council provide information to assist community understanding in relation to something which is either about to happen or has already occurred.

(2) Project Consultation

Council undertakes two-way discussion designed to obtain feedback on Council initiated projects or proposals to inform final decision making.

(3) Community Involvement / Collaboration

Council initiates forums or meetings designed to help Council identify and understand issues and views from within the various communities to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to Council decision making.

(4) Community Group Assistance

The Economic Community Development Officer is available to meet with sporting and community groups to assist with the development of proposals for facility upgrades, in particular to assist with the development of funding applications.

3. ANNUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Council will undertake the following as a minimum level of community engagement in relation to specific issues, or to engender co-operation and partnership with stakeholders:-

3.1 Annual Business Plan

- Interactive feedback via Council website;
- A minimum of one hour will be allowed at an ordinary meeting of Council at which members of the public may ask questions and make submissions in relation to the plan

3.2 Strategic Plan

The Lower Eyre Council Strategic Plan must be reviewed within two years after each general election of Council.

- In any year that the Strategic Management Plan is reviewed the Council will undertake the following minimum level of consultation in relation to the review utilising the following techniques:
 - Interactive feedback via Council website;
 - Meetings in which community reference groups are invited to attend;
 - Written submissions from the public will be presented to Council;
 - Persons making written submissions will be invited to speak to their submission at a formal meeting of Council.

3.3 Government Agencies and Authorities

- A minimum of one face to face meeting annually between relevant Council staff and the following government agencies:
 - Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula
 - Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board
 - Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association;
- Regional Development Australia Eyre Peninsula and the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board will be invited to address Council annually in relation to relevant issues;
- Face to face meetings with other government agencies on an as needs basis.

3.4 Council Projects

The following community engagement approach may be taken in relation to significant or unusual capital works projects or where other Council initiatives are proposed to be undertaken in a particular location: -

- A presentation may be made to relevant community reference group/s; and/or
- A public meeting and/or an invitation extended to provide feedback will be issued where the views of the wider local community are being sought.

3. ANNUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

cont'd:

3.5 Local Issues

- Community Reference Groups to be amalgamated into particular focus groups across the Council district for the purpose of periodic Community Reference Group meetings or invitations to attend remote Council meetings as follows:
 - Community Focus Group 1
 - Coffin Bay Progress Association
 - Coffin Bay Tourist Association
 - Marble Range Community & Sports Centre
 - Mount Dutton Bay Progress Association
 - Couлта Hall Committee
 - Community Focus Group 2
 - Cummins & District Enterprise Committee
 - Yeelanna Memorial Association
 - Karkoo Hall Committee
 - Mount Hope Soldiers Memorial Hall Committee
 - Youth Advisory Committee
 - Edillilie Memorial Progress Association
 - Community Focus Group 3
 - White Flat Hall Committee
 - Wanilla Progress Association
 - Big Swamp Community Group
 - Tulka Progress Association
 - North Shields Soldiers Memorial & Progress Association
 - Boston / Tiatukia Rural Living Area
 - Louth Bay Community Club
 - Sleaford Bay Progress Association

3. ANNUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM cont'd:

3.6 Council News

Council news may be distributed amongst the community by the following means:

- Council 'Fortnightly Focus' publication shared on Council web site and Facebook page and included in community newsletters outlining important decisions taken at each Council meeting and sharing community activities;
- A bi-annual focus page on Council activities in a local newspaper;
- Provision of Council information to media outlets, including official media releases;
- Regular radio segment;
- Council operated Facebook page, LinkedIn and other social media platforms.

3.7 External Information

Council will on-forward information provided to Council from external organisations (such as Federal or State Government agencies, special interest groups) that may be of interest or benefit to a particular area of the community (i.e. grant opportunities, notifications from an agency of works proposed in an area, consultation opportunities) via letter or email to all relevant community groups, for their consideration and/or action.

3.8 Website

Council will utilise the corporate website to provide the community with information that is timely, accurate and relevant. The latest news section of the website will be used to highlight upcoming events, public notices and a summation of the most recent Council meeting.

Staff will undertake a biennial review of the layout and functionality of the website to ensure that the information contained on the website is presented in the most succinct and user friendly way.

3.9 Social Media

Social media (such as Facebook, twitter, applications etc) may be utilised by Council to engage with the community as deemed appropriate. The media policy (CR-POL-01) ensures appropriate guidelines and procedures are in place to enable staff and the public to responsibly utilise social media platforms.

4. EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Evaluation of the community engagement process is recognised as being essential towards ensuring that feedback received is given due consideration by Council in its planning and decision making.

In particular Council staff will prepare a summary of meetings which are held with government agencies and authorities as well as with Community Reference Groups as part of the community engagement process. These meeting summaries will be formally presented to and considered by Council as a record to ensure that issues raised are appropriately considered by Council.

DOCUMENT HISTORY		
Version:	Issue Date:	Description of Change:
V1.2	18/04/2019	Adopted by Council (following Council Election) for release for public consultation
V1.3	19/07/2019	Adopted following public consultation
V1.4	19/03/2021	Inclusion of additional reference groups, amendments to policy throughout
1.5	17/01/2024	15/3/23 - Endorsed for community consultation 17/1/24 - Adopted