

**General Policy****COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY****Intent**

This policy forms part of a comprehensive framework that will assist Council and the community to connect and engage regarding decisions made and directions taken. Council and the community will work together to set priorities in planning, programs and major projects achieving common goals and agreed outcomes across the region. The policy was developed from extensive research of best practice consultation, informed by the outcomes of the LGAQ Community Consultation Group and based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) community engagement spectrum.

The intent of this policy is to broadly define Council's approach to the engagement of our community and has application across the full range of policy, planning, programs and services delivered by local government **including preparation of council's long term Community Plan and establishing and reviewing performance of its systems of financial management.**

Council's Community Engagement approach is aligned to the Corporate Plan Goals 2009 – 2014:  
***Our Future, Your Say!***

**Scope**

This policy applies to elected members of Council, members of the community, all employees and to all consultants engaged by Council.

**PROVISIONS****Background**

This policy recognises that there are obligations under a number of state and federal Acts and Regulations for public notification to be undertaken. This legislation includes, but is not limited to, the *Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulations 2010*, the *Sustainable Planning Act 1997* and *Land Act 1994*.

Council encourages its employees, as residents of the Cairns region, to participate in community engagement processes in line with the employees' Code of Conduct, Document #278255.

**Definition of Community Engagement**

Community engagement refers to connections between governments, citizens and communities on a wide range of policy, program and service issues. It can be formal or informal. Cairns Regional Council understands community engagement to contain the following three elements:

1. Information: To provide the community and key stakeholders with balanced and objective information on decisions, policies, plans and strategies.
2. Consultation: To obtain feedback from the community and key stakeholders on analysis and alternatives to inform a decision.
3. Participation: Responsibility for the final decision rests with Council but may, in some instances be shared with the community and key stakeholders.

Community engagement is about the way things are done. It operates on a premise that the best decisions will be made if those involved in the outcome have every opportunity to participate in the decision making process.

It must be recognised that the 'community' consists of diverse sub groups, each group holds a unique perspective on issues and each has its own needs and wants within the broader community.

### **Principles**

The Cairns Regional Council encourages individuals, groups and communities to be involved in the business of local government. It recognises that residents of the Cairns region have diverse opinions, innovative ideas and a wealth of life experience - and this information allows Council to better understand issues and provide services that are tailored to community needs.

Council will have regard to the following engagement principles:

1. Council will be inclusive and connect with those in the community who are hardest to reach
2. Council will endeavour to find new ways to improve the ways in which Council and the community work together, focusing on solutions and making a difference
3. Council will listen, understand and act on experiences that may be different from our own
4. Council will follow ethical principles of conduct, making engagement processes open and accountable, identifying together the rules of engagement and reporting on the outcomes
5. Council processes will recognise the diverse range of values and interests present in the community

**Council is committed to the development in consultation with the community of Cairns Regional Council's longterm Community Plan. Council is committed to adoption of this plan in accordance with legislative requirements and to the regular monitoring and review of performance (including financial management) against the Plan. In addition, once adopted Council is committed to ensuring that the Corporate Plan 2009 – 2014 and the annual operational plans will reflect Council's commitment to delivery of the Community Plan and ongoing consultation and review.**

**A key communication link with the community is the publication of Council Reports and Minutes on Council's website.**

### **Application**

Council has an expanding engagement framework for use by the organisation consisting of:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Strategy based upon the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation
- Community Engagement Plans for specialised projects and programs
- Community Engagement Toolkit
- Use of online technologies including council Website @ [www.cairns.qld.gov.au](http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au)
- Web2 technology

### **Implementation of this Policy**

This policy will be implemented via the above framework, other council policies, administrative instructions, process flowcharts, guidelines, toolkits, training resources and ongoing programs developed for:

1. Specific community engagement events
2. Ongoing community engagement programs / processes
3. Specific community engagement methodologies

It is acknowledged that Council must take responsibility for ensuring that staff assigned responsibility for carrying out community engagement activities possess the necessary competencies to be able to carry out the tasks assigned to them to a high level of proficiency.

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

**General Manager Responsible for Review:**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 28/07/2005**

**CURRENT ADOPTION: 28/07/2010**

**DUE FOR REVISION:28/07/2014**

**REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:**