



# NAMBUCCA VALLEY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**POLICY NO: CS 01**

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## Our Vision

Nambucca Valley ~ Living at its best

## Our Mission Statement

‘The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people.’

### History

New Policy 2018

Revised Policy Feb 2022

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## OVERVIEW

Nambucca Valley Council (Council) understands the importance of having informed stakeholders, who are engaged with Council and what it's trying to achieve. These stakeholders include our staff, our community and all other parties that are affected by Council decisions. Having informed stakeholders ensures we create a common understanding of our goals, how and why decisions are made and the benefits that will flow to our stakeholders.

Council will create this informed community through building relationships with its stakeholders, and developing channels for ongoing dialogue to aid in the decision making processes. Council recognises receiving diverse perspectives and potential solutions enable Council to make more informed decisions and strengthen delivery of our services to our stakeholders.

Council is committed to:

- Informing stakeholders of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives
- Promoting transparency and accountability in Council's decision making processes
- Promoting opportunities for public and employee consultation, feedback and participation in Council activities
- Representing the views of the local community and acting as an advocate to the State and Federal Governments and in all appropriate forums.

The impact of COVID-19 has caused Council to rethink how it communicates with its community members with on-line surveys, webcasts, Microsoft Team meetings, social media and independent telephone surveys now being preferred to the traditional face to face group meetings with community members. The traditional newspaper is also seeing a reduction in circulation due to Facebook and electronic news on smartphones and this method of communication is now not as effective as it once was.

## Objectives

Council's goal is to provide effective communication in a timely manner, through a variety of communication channels to ensure that information is received by its community, employees and other relevant stakeholders to enable them to contribute their views and opinions, which can then be reflected in Council's decision making.

Council is committed to providing effective and timely communications by:

- Regularly engaging and communicating with its stakeholders
- Undertaking community consultation on key issues affecting its community
- Being open and transparent in its business processes and decision making
- Developing internal communication channels and engagement processes to ensure its staff are fully informed and have input into delivering high quality customer services
- Seeking a range of views on particular issues and if required, develop consultation plans that are tailored to the particular issue
- Actively listening to feedback received from its stakeholders.

This strategy sets out how Council proposes to engage with its stakeholders to achieve these objectives.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement is an important process of fostering relationships between Council and its key stakeholders, whereby Council shares information, consults, involves, collaborates, and actively encourages constructive feedback to help shape the planning and delivery of services and Council decisions. It is not a single activity but a way of building a stronger understanding of what our community and other key stakeholders want from Council so that we are able to optimise the delivery of services.

### Levels of Stakeholder Participation

Council recognises different levels of engagement are required with its stakeholders depending on the purpose of the engagement and the likely impact of the matter(s) to be discussed. Four levels of stakeholder participation have been identified.

Level of Participation	Examples of Participation Level
Informing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising stakeholders of a situation, a proposal or a decision made in response to a situation</li> <li>• Providing advice on an issue</li> <li>• Notification of opportunities to participate further in Council decision making; upcoming events; things happening at Council</li> </ul>
Seeking Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking market research to identify needs or issues</li> <li>• Seeking feedback on a service proposal, action or issue</li> <li>• Seeking comment on planning proposals</li> </ul>
Involving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community forums to encourage discussion or debate on issues</li> <li>• Personal contact and meetings that encourage participation</li> <li>• Negotiations relating to the planning process; acquisition of goods and services</li> <li>• Employee engagement on workplace reforms that optimises service delivery</li> </ul>
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a structure for involvement in decision making, eg working party</li> <li>• Enabling ongoing involvement/collaborating to achieve an outcome</li> <li>• Assuming share responsibility for achieving outcomes</li> </ul>

### Level of Impact on Stakeholders

Level of Impact	Type of Impact
Level 1	High impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 2	Lower impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 3	High Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community
Level 4	Lower Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community
Level 5	Impacting on internal stakeholders (staff) only

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A toolkit to help staff determine the appropriate level of engagement has been prepared and is included at [Attachment A](#).

## Communication with Stakeholders

There are a variety of communication methods that Council will use depending on the purpose of the communication and the intended audience. Often, to ensure a representative response, a number of different methods may be used. Below is an overview of the methods Council may use to communicate with its stakeholders.

Communication Objective and Method				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Fact Sheets Community Newsletters Websites/Social Media Flyers Emails Volunteer networks Staff consultative committee and networks Community exhibitions and displays Community notice board Media releases Council notices Presentations	Public comment and submissions Focus groups Surveys Workshops and meetings Feedback forms Interviews Suggestion boxes Social Media	Open meetings and workshops (subject to COVID restrictions) Competitions Youth and other targeted reference groups Social media/internet discussion and feedback (if possible)	Consensus building Participatory decision making interagency networks and working groups Reference groups	Delegated decisions through Council Committees and Council affiliated volunteers

## COMMUNICATION WITH COMMUNITY AND OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and timely communication and consultation with the wider community. Council receives feedback from its community, either verbally, electronically and in written format. This feedback provides Council with an opportunity to understand what its community wants from it and also to help inform its decision making.

The major formats where Council receives feedback from, and communicates with, its community and other external stakeholders include:

### Correspondence

Council defines correspondence as including letters and e-mail messages. In both of these cases Council will provide a clear, concise and prompt response to all customer enquiries in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter. Council captures this information into its electronic records management system (CM9) to ensure that it is accessible and searchable.

Council's commitment is:

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- a) To provide a definitive response in clear and unambiguous language within 15 working days, or acknowledge receipt of correspondence and an approximate timeline for a response within five working days from date of receipt of correspondence.
- b) If the information cannot be provided in a timely manner, the responsible officer is required to update the author of the correspondence regularly.
- c) Responses may be made by formal letter or by email which must subsequently be saved in Council's record management system.
- d) All verbal interactions with the correspondent must be recorded by way of file note or email and saved to Council's record management system.

## Telephone Calls

Council staff will answer all calls promptly and will make every effort to resolve the inquiry at first point of contact or quickly refer unresolved calls to the appropriate officer whilst providing clear and concise information in response to caller inquiries.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Answer calls as promptly as possible.
- b) Advise the caller on answering of the name and department of the officer answering.
- c) Deal with the call, redirect the call or take a clear message as appropriate.
- d) Always return calls within two business days and ensure any follow-up activities are carried out promptly.
- e) Record all significant telephone calls in the form of a file note in Council's record keeping system and regularly review these records to identify issues and ensure this commitment is being met.

## Face to Face Communications

Council staff engage with members of the community to impart information and gather feedback through face to face contact from over the counter enquiries at its offices and also through attendance at external meetings.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Enter into dialogue in a meaningful and respectful manner
- b) Provide the community with informed and accurate information
- c) Actively listen and respond to verbal feedback in a courteous manner
- d) To follow up in a timely manner any enquiries that cannot be resolved at the time
- e) Record all interactions by way of file note or confirmatory email and save to Council's record management system.

## Social Media

Council is committed to keeping its community informed of relevant events on its website and on its Facebook page to assist in the dissemination of information.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Post a minimum of three Facebook posts regarding Council activities per week

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- b) Use its Facebook presence to promulgate and promote community events as it becomes aware of these
- c) Regularly review feedback received through its Facebook page and provide responses, as appropriate, to posts on this
- d) Facebook posts are to be approved by the General Manager and Assistant General Managers
- e) Actively maintain its website presence to ensure information provided is current, is relevant to reflect the activities of the Valley and continues to be a source of information for its community
- f) Work to develop its website to encourage feedback from its community
- g) Records all information received through its social media presence in Council's record management system to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

## **Print Media**

Council uses local newspapers and community newsletters such as the Valla Views to ensure its community is aware of things happening at Council through advertising of job opportunities, tenders and other items of public interest.

Council's commitment is to:

- a) Keep its community informed through the use of print media for those in its community that do not have access to other means of communication
- b) Advertise items of potential interest to its community including employment opportunities, tenders, planning activities and other relevant matters.

## **Open Council Meetings**

Council holds its meetings on a twice a month basis to discuss matters of interest to its community and progress against achieving the objectives outlined in its Community Strategic Plan. These meetings are webcast and are generally open to members of the public to attend (subject to COVID-19 restrictions) and view Council deliberations. Subject to providing written notice in the prescribed format and within the prescribed timeframes members of the public may address Council on relevant matters. These meetings are usually held across the Valley (depending on natural disasters and pandemics) on a rotational basis to allow members of the community increased opportunities to attend.

## **Legislative Compliance**

Council also keeps its community and other stakeholders informed through its legislated reporting requirements. Council through its annual integrated planning and reporting processes seeks stakeholder input on key deliverables and the financial impacts of these deliverables. These proposed outputs are then reported to stakeholders through the 10 year Community Strategic Plan, the 4 year Delivery Program and annual Operating Plan.

Council then reports annually, through its annual report, on progress towards achieving these deliverables; and through its financial statements on how it has applied monies received towards achieving these. There is also an End of Term Report outlining what Council achieved and didn't achieve through the Council Term.

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These reports are formally adopted by Council and provide opportunity for the community to express its views on Council activities.

## Public Consultation

From time to time Council will undertake additional consultation with its community on specific items where it requires additional feedback that could be obtained through the means outlined above. In these instances Council will advertise widely for submissions and dependent on need, hold public meetings, focus groups and community forums to discuss the relevant issues. Council may also undertake independent community surveys of its residents to obtain additional feedback.

## Authority for Communication with External Stakeholders

The General Manager and Mayor are authorised by Council to handle all media enquiries and/or to authorise release of information to the media.

All other communication with external stakeholders should be reviewed and/or approved by the relevant Manager or Assistant General Manager(s) prior to release.

## DEFINITIONS

- **Community Engagement:** is a term that covers all the ways that Council and its community come together to improve decision making, build relationships and partnerships, raise awareness and complement representative government. It is a way of working side by side and building support for the shared goal of making the community a better place to live.
- **Consultation:** is the process of developing understanding of the issues and boundaries around a particular topic or issues before decisions are made. We consult with one another when the boundaries around a decision are not understood.
- **Communication:** the exchange of information. We communicate with each other when the boundaries around an issue or decision are understood.
- **Communication of Interest:** all those who have an interest in a particular proposed project, program, issue or action.
- **Capacity Building:** the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve a purpose.



## ATTACHMENT A – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT FOR APPROVED PROJECTS

In undertaking communications with stakeholders, following the approval of a project, it is important to treat this work as a project in its own right and plan the work you need to do to ensure success. This toolkit is designed to help you think about what you need to consider when planning your communication project.

### **STEP 1: KNOW AND UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS YOU ARE TRYING TO COMMUNICATE**

You will need to have a clear understanding of what it is you want to convey in your message and who you want to convey the information to.

Questions to ask include:

- What is the purpose of the message
- What is the proposal or event, when and why is it occurring
- Who will be impacted by the proposal and what are the likely impacts going to be
- Do other areas of Council need to be included in the communication
- Is there sufficient budget to undertake the communication or consultation process?

### **STEP 2: DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION SUITABLE FOR THE COMMUNICATION PROJECT**

Think about who are the key stakeholders for this project, what do you want from these stakeholders – for example do you want feedback, do you want to inform them?

Things to consider:

- Are the stakeholders internal to Council or part of the broader community, or both?
- What is the level of involvement you want from the stakeholders?
- How do you want to receive stakeholder feedback – does it need to be formal or will an informal response suffice?
- How will the feedback from stakeholders be used in the project you are undertaking?

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## STEP 3: IDENTIFY THE LEVEL OF IMPACT YOUR PROJECT WILL HAVE ON THE STAKEHOLDERS

Level of Impact	Criteria for determining the level of impact	Examples of projects/initiatives
<p><b>Level 1</b></p>	<p>A project that impacts a substantial and significant range of stakeholders (area or people).</p> <p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Valley.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk or significant impact and/or conflict across the Valley</p> <p>Likely high level of interest from the community</p> <p>Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions.</p> <p>Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of the broader community.</p>	<p>Community Strategic Plan and its components (Operational Plan, Delivery program, Asset Plans, etc).</p> <p>A Major development application impacting on a significant number of stakeholders or on a significant geographic area of Council.</p> <p>Significant policies / plans / strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Action Plan</li> <li>• Capital Works Program</li> <li>• Social Plans</li> <li>• Environmental Plan</li> </ul> <p>Proposed new projects either from Council or external parties .that may be of high risk eg Hydrogen plant construction,</p> <p>Removal or changes to a district or regional facility/service; changes to Valley wide services such as waste removal</p> <p>Provision of a district or regional facility/service, eg new library; planning for a regional/district wide facility/activity such as a regional waste facility that includes waste from neighbouring councils</p> <p>New industries to the Valley such as mining and renewable energy projects.</p> <p>For example a proposed nuclear waste storage facility, high temperature incinerator</p>
<p><b>Level 2</b></p>	<p>Some lower level real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Valley</p> <p>Potential for some controversy or conflict across the Valley.</p> <p>Potential lower level impact on state or regional strategies or directions</p>	<p>Revising the Capital Works Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor modifications to fees and charges</li> <li>• Minor changes to service delivery</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Level 3</b></p>	<p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk on a local area, specific community or user group/s of a facility or service</p> <p>Significant change or loss to any facility or service to a specific community / target group.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk controversy and/or conflict in a localised area.</p>	<p>Removal or changes for a local facility/service, for example changes of equipment in a playground; Local road closures</p> <p>Review of community facilities; major works on local facilities.</p> <p>For example, dog free beach areas, 4WD areas on beaches</p>
<p><b>Level 4</b></p>	<p>Lower level of real or perceived impact (positive or negative) impacting on a specific target group or activity at a local level.</p> <p>Low or no risk controversy or conflict in the local community.</p>	
<p><b>Level 5</b></p>	<p>Impacting on internal stakeholders, eg staff only. No direct impact on the community.</p>	<p>Change to work conditions, changes in internal procedures, matters affecting staff in determining how Council delivers its services to the broader community.</p>

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## External Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

Legend: **E** - Essential    **D** – Desirable    **O** – Optional    **N/A** – Not applicable

Type of Consultation	Level 1 High Impact Valley	Level 2 Lower Impact Valley	Level 3 High Impact Local	Level 4 Lower Impact Local
<b>INFORMING</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>
Personal Telephone Contact	O	D	O	O
In Person Meeting	O	D	O	D
Written Correspondence	D	D	D	N/A
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	D	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Pamphlet	O	N/A	O	O
Letter Box Drop	O	D	O	O
Notice in Local Paper	E	O	D	O
Notice in Regional Paper	D	O	O	O
Media Release	E	N/A	O	N/A
Site Display	O	O	O	O
Displays in Other Locations (e.g. library)	O	O	O	N/A
<b>SEEKING INFORMATION</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>
Suggestion Box	N/A	N/A	O	O
Telephone Survey	D	O	O	O
Electronic Survey	O	O	O	N/A
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	O	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Hotline/Phone-in	O	O	O	N/A
Letter or Media Promotion Inviting Submissions	E	O	O	N/A
Public Exhibition	E	O	O	N/A
Interview	O	D	O	O
Focus Group Session	D	D	D	D
<b>INVOLVING</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>
Meetings with User or Stakeholder Groups	E	E	D	D
Website/Internet/Facebook	E	E	O	O
Workshop Session	D	D	D	D
Meeting by Invite	D	D	D	O
Site Tour/Meeting	D	D	O	O
Public Meeting	O	O	O	N/A
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>O</b>
Taskforce or Working Party	D	O	O	N/A
Joint Venture	O	O	O	O

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## Checklist For Calling Public Meetings

### 1. AUTHORISATION

Attached is a Council resolution (Minute) authorising the calling of a public meeting OR forum authorisation from the General Manager OR Assistant General Manager(s) approving the selected consultation process.

.....

### 2. CONSULTATION STRATEGY

Have you established the appropriate level and category of community consultation in accordance with this document? If so, what type and level has been selected?

.....

### 3. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING/ KEY ISSUES

(a) The purpose of the meeting has been separately identified and is attached .....

(b) An agenda for the conduct of the meeting has been completed and is attached

(c) The Key Issues have been separately identified and are attached .....

### 4. VENUE HIRE

A venue for the public meeting has been arranged which satisfies all of the following:

(a) Access for people with disabilities .....

(b) Venue is of sufficient size with available chairs to seat all persons likely to attend .....

(c) All necessary equipment is available for the meeting and working (e.g. lighting, projector / screen, laptop, microphones, air con, PA equipment, etc) .....

(d) Budget allocation for equipment and venue hire has been identified .....

(e) Cabling and connections available for technological presentations ie internet .....

(f) Arrangements have been made to collect keys and obtain security access .....

### 5. COUNCILLOR INVITATION

All Councillors have been notified of the public meeting and given all necessary details in writing of the matters noted in this checklist.

.....

### 6. INVITEES

A list of persons invited to attend the public meeting has been finalised and is documented and attached hereto.

.....

### 7. CHAIR OF THE MEETING

The Chairperson of the public meeting is ..... and this person has agreed to chair the public meeting.

.....

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## 8. RECORDING DECISIONS

The officer nominated to record the necessary decisions taken at the meeting is ..... and this person has been advised of this requirement. ....

## 9. NOTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

All forms of public notification have been considered and the following forms of public notification have been taken (please tick as appropriate)

- a. Internet/Website.....
- b. Facebook .....
- c. Nambucca Valley News.....
- d. Mid Coast Observer.....
- e. Letter Drop.....

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## External Stakeholder Groups – How Should They Be Consulted?

It is important to identify the appropriate sections of the community, “key stakeholders” to be involved in the consultation process. Examples of community segments to be considered are as follows:

<b>Owners of adjoining or affected land</b>	<p>Primarily in development matters, rate and property matters or health matters.</p> <p>In general, an owner or occupier should receive personal notification of any service or activity that will have a specific and direct effect upon them. It is noted, however that in relation to the statutory notification process for development applications, a public meeting would not be warranted.</p>
<b>Streets or Neighbourhoods</b>	For traffic matters, dealings on Council land, garbage collections or for larger scale development matters.
<b>Valley wide</b>	For community-wide issues, providing general information e.g. recycling, Council functions, community land activities, community strategic plans.
<b>Other Government Agencies</b>	Council has a large advocacy role to play in advising other levels of Government of the needs and expectations of the community.
<b>Mid Coast Councils</b>	Council will consult with other councils on issues which cross the boundaries of the Valley e.g. waste management, resource sharing, transport infrastructure.
<b>Elected Representatives</b>	Local, State and Federal representatives act as advocates for the people in a wide variety of matters.
<b>Police</b>	In a community liaison capacity for traffic, vandalism and criminal matters or development matters such as amusement centres and alcohol free zones.
<b>Specific Target Groups (Older People, Cultural and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Youth, Women, Children &amp; People with Disabilities)</b>	<p>To ensure that affected target groups are consulted on relevant Council policies and services. Refer the Nambucca Community Directory for relevant organisations.</p> <p><a href="https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/New_South_Wales/Nambucca">https://www.mycommunitydirectory.com.au/New_South_Wales/Nambucca</a></p>
<b>Sporting Groups</b>	In making decisions about sporting, recreational and leisure facilities in the Valley area.
<b>Environmental Groups</b>	In relation to environmental issues.
<b>Chambers of Commerce</b>	In matters where a Chamber of Commerce (or other organisation representing local business) is active and can provide information regarding the needs of the business community.

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<b>Community/Social Groups S.355 committees</b>	Community/social groups comprising local residents should be consulted in relation to their particular interest areas and needs as well as activities and functions conducted by Council. (social, artistic or cultural interest).
<b>Religious Groups</b>	In matters of religious significance and social values.

## ATTACHMENT B - Checklist for Internal Stakeholder Consultation

- a. Have you identified the key areas and purpose for the meeting? Yes  No
  
- b. Have you determined which areas of Council's operations will be impacted by the subject matter..... Yes  No
  
- c. Have you conveyed details of the subject matter to the relevant Assistant General Manager(s)/General Manager prior to consulting with staff? Yes  No
  
- d. Do you need to prepare a presentation to illustrate the information you are proposing to relay to staff? Yes  No
  
- e. Do you need to prepare notes/speaking points regarding the information you are proposing to relay to staff? Yes  No
  
- f. Have you considered if the consultation will be with indoor or outdoor staff or both. If so have you taken into account workloads to ensure maximum attendance? Yes  No
  
- g. Have you booked a venue that is of sufficient size and has sufficient seating for expected staff numbers? Yes  No
  
- h. Have you advised staff of venue and time of meeting? (please provide details of how, eg Outlook, flyers) ..... Yes  No
  
- i. Have you created an attendance sheet for staff to sign in at meeting? Yes  No
  
- j. Ensure you have nominated an employee to record the necessary information given/decisions taken and has been advised of the requirement