

Community Engagement Strategy for Bankstown Community Plan 2010



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GLOSSARY

ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
BCP	Bankstown Community Plan
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CES	Community Engagement Strategy
DCP	Development Control Plan
IPR	Integrated Planning and Reporting
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	Local Government Area

Introduction

Council is in the early stages of developing a suite of plans to implement the new Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework, which is now required due to changes to the *Local Government Act* gazetted on 9 October 2009.

Specifically, Council will be working with the local community in the preparation of a 10 year Community Strategic Plan to be known as the Bankstown Community Plan (BCP). The BCP will be supported by:

- a 10 year Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Plan
- a 10 year Long Term Financial Plan
- a four year Workforce Plan
- a four year Delivery Program
- a one year Operational Plan.

These documents will be cross referenced to each other and will be integrated with other council planning mechanisms, including LEPs, DCPs and Local Area Plans.

This IPR framework is designed to:

- strengthen the strategic focus of councils
- ensure that council services, programs and actions are aligned to high level strategy
- improve the integration of planning and reporting processes (in particular, across the 'quadruple bottom line' of social, environmental, economic and governance issues)
- streamline reporting processes and thus reduce duplication.

The IPR Framework will enable Bankstown Council to undertake a broad based consultation process that can help develop an integrated, long term vision for Bankstown. Council can then develop clear directions — and key strategies and actions to achieve these directions.

This community engagement strategy will assist the strategic planning process and allow community and interest groups to have an understanding of and input into actions that Council will undertake in order to achieve its strategic objectives.

Legislative Requirements

The legislation and guidelines associated with the IPR framework require that councils prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy (CES) as part of the development of their Community Strategic Plan. This CES, however, covers consultation relating not only to the preparation of the Community Strategic Plan, but also to the Asset Management Plans, Long Term Financial Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The Workforce Plan does not form part of this Engagement Strategy. Internal consultation will, however, be undertaken as part of the preparation of the Workforce Plan.

The legislation also requires that the CES identifies relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outlines the methods which will be used to engage those groups. Councils must also place the draft Community Strategic Plan on exhibition for a period of at least 28 days, prior to it being adopted. There is no legislative requirement for consultation on Asset Management Policies, Strategies and Plans, nor for Long Term Financial Plans. As with Management Plans, councils are required to publically exhibit their Delivery Programs and Operational Plans for at least 28 days, prior to their adoption.

Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- develop the vision, key directions and strategies
- determine high level and more detailed actions for Bankstown Council over both the short to medium term and the longer timeframe
- develop indicators and targets
- identify high level strategies for other stakeholders in Bankstown

Principles of Engagement

Bankstown City Council will be guided by core principles of public participation and community engagement when developing the Community Strategic Plan. The principles are taken directly from Council's *Community Engagement Policy* and are listed below:

- Fair, transparent and inclusive
- Honesty, integrity and respect
- Informed and effective.

Stakeholders to be Engaged

As well as engaging community in general, it will be important to ensure that the wide range of interests represented in the Bankstown community are included in planning for the future of the area. The following stakeholder groups and individuals have been identified as requiring (some level of) engagement as part of the preparation of the Community Strategic Plan:

- residents
- specific target groups such as older people, young people, unemployed people
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- business and industry
- government agencies
- local members of parliament
- property owners
- community based organisations
- sporting organisations
- neighbouring Councils
- environmental groups.

Methodology

The CES will be closely linked with the development stages of the BCP. This will ensure that stakeholders are clear about how their input is influencing the development of relevant plans. The CES will utilise a range of methods to engage experts, groups and individuals. At various points in the project plan, stakeholders will be engaged around place-based topics and theme-based topics.

Residents Panel

The Residents Panel will be asked to examine and preferably resolve any differences of opinion on each stage of the engagement strategy (i.e. vision; strategies and actions; indicators and targets). The Residents Panel will be used as the key reference point for collecting data and verifying conclusions.

Panel members will be used as the primary target group for recruiting community members to planned workshops. This will balance the perspectives of the different interest groups represented in the Bankstown community. The workshops will be organised by Council and moderated by independent facilitators.

Web Forum

An information and discussion forum will be established on a standalone website to provide a 'one stop shop' for news, information and research about the BCP process. The forum will be an engagement tool in its own right, as it will incorporate a series of moderated online discussions. The website forum will have a place-based structure, with separate sub forums created for neighbourhood groupings within the LGA.

The web forum will allow a broad and ongoing conversation with community about their immediate neighbourhood and the wider LGA. Community members will be invited to consider vision and strategy on the website at a time which is convenient to them. The forum will be carefully designed and extensively advertised.

Community Events

Bankstown community has an extensive array of community events and these can be used to inform the community about the process and to consult on relevant aspects of the plans. The activities planned for these events will be engaging and interactive, in order to encourage people to participate and to maintain the vibrancy of the host event. Where appropriate, a community cultural development approach may be used in these activities.

A series of fact sheets will be produced to inform community members about the planning process and invite them to participate. This information will be distributed at community events in early 2010 including: International Women's Day, Bankstown Recreation Expo, Youth Week, Harmony Day and Seniors Week.

Agency and Partners Focus Group

A focus group to gather information on the directions and priorities of Council's agency partners including State and Local Government, non-governmental organisations and development partners.

The group will provide input on:

- what they know from and about the community and any data they can provide
- each organisation's strategic direction for the LGA
- developing and prioritising mechanisms to achieve these aims
- opportunities to work together with Council to achieve common goals
- best practice in their field of expertise
- how best to proceed with the development of the BCP.

Community Survey

A community survey will be undertaken by telephone and administered by specialist consultants. Approximately 500-600 residents will be surveyed, in order to provide a statistically valid sample of the Bankstown community. This survey will be conducted in the later stages of the BCP development. It will be designed to confirm the plan's priorities with the wider community.

Existing Mechanisms

Bankstown has a number of established advisory and consultative committees, which provide specialist advice to Council on a range of areas. These are well established groups that will have an interest and expectation that they are involved in Council decision making. They also have the ability to contribute from a well informed perspective. The advisory and consultative committees that will be targeted include:

- Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Youth Advisory Committee
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee
- Disability Advisory Committee

- Heritage Committee
- Community Safety Committee
- Business Advisory Service Board

It is suggested that the committee convenors be trained to facilitate sessions and they lead the discussion around the BCP. This will harness existing Council relationships with leading community members.

It is also proposed that community engagement be held with businesses through regularly networking events such as a business breakfast. Other organisations that use the Bankstown Business Advisory Service will also be tapped into.

Hard to Reach Individuals and Groups

The core team will work with the Community Planning and Development team to engage hard to reach groups and individuals. They have the specialised skills and professional networks to engage effectively with youth, disabled, ATSI and CALD communities. Furthermore, the project team will work with the appropriate advisory committees as they have been established in line with social planning target groups.

Timeline

The community engagement process will be phased over time. This will ensure that people are given multiple opportunities to contribute to the future vision. Stakeholders will contribute to the plan's development between February 2010 and November 2010. Stakeholders will be asked to consider various research questions aimed at establishing goals, strategies and targets.

Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback will be provided on the outcomes of all engagement activities, both to participants and to the wider community. Some of the feedback mechanisms will include:

- the posting of minutes, meeting notes, reports and other summary information on the web forum, which will act as a comprehensive library for the outcomes of all engagement processes
- verbal and written updates to advisory and consultative committees
- meeting notes and update emails sent to directly to participants, Residents Panel members and the Asset Management Focus Group
- existing Council communications mechanisms, including community newsletters and the quarterly rates newsletter.

It is important to note that this Strategy will be subject to ongoing evaluation and review, to ensure that the approaches being used are successful in engaging community and interest groups. Minor adjustments to the approach are thus likely throughout the process.