

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY (Draft)

1.0 PURPOSE

The Community Engagement Policy formalises the commitment of Canterbury- Bankstown Council (Council) to timely, appropriate and effective engagement with the community. This is reflected in Council's principles of Community Engagement which are integrated into Council project planning and decision making. This policy outlines when and how community engagement should occur, who should be engaged, and how outcomes should be reported on issues or decisions for which Council is responsible for.

2.0 SCOPE

The Community Engagement Policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff including contractors, consultants and volunteers undertaking engagement on behalf of Council.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

Canterbury-Bankstown Council is committed to better decision making through an engagement program that is values-based and goal-driven.

Council acknowledges the significant demographic and geographic diversity of its community, and is committed to ensuring residents and business owners are informed and have opportunities to contribute to shaping Council projects, plans and decisions. Community engagement that is transparent, representative and that builds capacity is fundamental to developing an ongoing community-Council relationship based on trust and accountability.

3.1 Principles guiding Community Engagement

Our approach to engagement is underpinned by a set of principles that define what members of the community should reasonably expect from Council when it is engaging on its plans, policies or projects. These principles are integrated into the planning, design and delivery of our engagement processes.

- Flexible – our engagement provides members of the community with multiple opportunities to get involved, in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate. Engagement is also designed and delivered by a range of teams within Council, drawing on their existing networks and relationships. There is no “one size fits all” approach.
- Respectful – our engagement is respectful of the diverse views in our community and the many ways people like to be engaged. We acknowledge people’s input by reporting back on how their views have informed our decisions and, if they haven’t, why. We will protect the safety of our stakeholder and staff at all times.
- Credible – we are open, honest and transparent in engaging with our stakeholders. Our engagement is based on a foundation of authenticity and an evidence-based understanding of our community’s needs and preferences.

- Collaborative – our engagement is a joint effort across Council teams and between Council and community, which means building relationships with stakeholders, including hard-to-reach groups, and keeping them involved in our activities.
- Consistent – engagement is the business of everyone in Council and is delivered by many people across our organisation. Engagement should be delivered in a planned and consistent way, in line with our Engagement Framework. Our stakeholders know what to expect when engaging with us.
- Educational – our engagement is supported by tools, processes and expertise that enhance the skills of Council staff and build the capacity of community members and other stakeholders to engage.
- Embedded – engagement underpins all of Council’s strategic and operational work that is likely to impact on our stakeholders and communities (whether positively or negatively), from its overarching annual Operational Plan to specific plans, projects and policies.
- Evaluated – our engagement processes will be reviewed, measured and refined in response to feedback from our communities.

Our Community Engagement principles are consistent with international best practice, most notably the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Core Values. IAP2 core values identify those aspects of public participation which cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries.

3.2 When to undertake Community Engagement

Council will undertake or contribute to community engagement at any time an upcoming decision or project is likely to have a direct or indirect impact on either whole or part of the community. The extent of engagement will be guided by the:

- Level of impact, be it positive or adverse
- How much present data exists to convey community views on the topic
- Community appetite for engagement (with consideration for ‘consultation fatigue’).

The Canterbury- Bankstown Council Community Engagement Framework provides guidelines for Council to determine the appropriate timing for the implementation of engagement activities.

A number of situations will trigger engagement by Council, including:

1. In response to issues raised and/or engagement initiated by the community
2. Where proposed changes are likely to impact on the community, including service and program planning, development, project delivery or policy change
3. In planning the strategic direction of Council, and/or
4. When required by law, policy or agreement with a government agency or statutory body.

3.3 How to undertake Community Engagement

Following the identification of the primary purpose and potential for community impact, the relevant engagement team within Council will determine the most appropriate engagement tools and activities. The methodology will be based on IAP2 practices and will put the specific cultural, economic, and social needs of the community at the centre. It will also be evidence-based so that Council can demonstrate effective engagement of a true cross-section of the community.

Engagement can take many forms and range from informing stakeholders about a plan, project or policy, to obtaining input and feedback, or including stakeholders in decision-making.

Council will undertake engagement with consideration to the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, which is represented in the table below. Levels of participation run from inform to empower and are determined by:

- An analysis of the objectives of the engagement process
- The level of impact the decisions being made are likely to have on members of the community
- The levels of interest and influence on the decision to be made
- The resources, budget and timeframes dedicated to engagement.

Increasing level of public impact					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced, objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process, to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

3.4 Requirements for Reporting and Evaluation

Council will inform the community on how its feedback has influenced a decision or project throughout the decision making process, including reporting on community engagement outcomes. The community will have access to a summary of engagement, including:

- The engagement methodology
- The cross-section of the community engaged
- The key issues raised
- An explanation of how Council has addressed community concerns or, in cases where items were not directly addressed in the final decisions, explanations for why.

All outcomes reports will be written in plain language and available on multiple platforms (online, in print) and in the main languages spoken at home of the affected community.

Council will also evaluate the effectiveness of its engagement processes and continuously improve its activities by using this evaluation data.

3.5 Legislative Compliance

Council is committed to acting in accordance with its legislative obligations and will ensure accurate records are maintained and managed according to Council's Records Management Policy. Additionally, Council will take all reasonable steps to protect the privacy of those partaking in community engagement activities in line with Council's Access to Information Policy and Privacy Management Plan.

4.0 RELATED RESOURCES

4.1 Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Bill 2016*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act 1979*
- *State Records Act 1998*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

4.2 Associated Documents

- Community Engagement Framework
- Access to Information Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Privacy Management Plan

4.3 Definitions

Community

Community refers to the people who have a stake and interest in the Canterbury-Bankstown Local Government Area (LGA) and includes people who:

- live, work, study or conduct business in the LGA.
- visit, use or enjoy the services, facilities and public places located within the LGA.

Community Engagement

The involvement of the community in the decision making process of Council, where the community is encouraged to provide feedback on a range of issues that effect them.

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

IAP2 is an international association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest throughout the world.

Stakeholder

Individuals or groups who have an interest or are impacted by the decisions of Council, these may include business representatives, professional associations, local community groups, or other levels of Government and Government agencies.

5.0 POLICY OWNER

Manager City Prosperity and Engagement.

6.0 AUTHORISATION

Adopted by Canterbury-Bankstown Council on [INSERT DATE].