



Gladstone Regional Council

Council Policy

Title	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Policy Number	P-2014/20
Responsible Directorate	CORPORATE & COMMUNITY SERVICES
Responsible Officer	COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING COORDINATOR
Date of Adoption	18 MARCH 2014
Resolution Number	G/14/1926
Date Review Due	18 MARCH 2017

1.0 PURPOSE:

This policy defines Council's commitment to engaging with its community and promotes best practice among Council employees and Councillors to ensure all organisational engagement practices align with the principles contained within the Queensland Local Government Act 2009.

2.0 SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Council employees and Councillors and defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Councillors and staff in engaging with the community; and the tools by which Council will maximise its engagement with the community.

3.0 RELATED LEGISLATION:

- Local Government Act 2009 S4(2)

4.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- Gladstone Regional Council Corporate Plan 2013-17 (4.1.1) 'Genuinely engage all stakeholders'

5.0 DEFINITIONS:

To assist in interpretation of this policy the following definitions apply:

"**Council**" - means Gladstone Regional Council.

"**Policy**" - means Gladstone Regional Council's Community Engagement Policy.

"Community engagement" - means any activity that enables Council to respond appropriately to community issues; inform the community about proposed policies and actions; provide opportunities for the community to voice opinion on Council matters; and invite the community to assist in the shaping of Council policies and the determination of priorities that may impact on their lives.

"Community" - means the people who live, or work in, or visit the Gladstone Region.

"Stakeholders" - means a person or group who has or feels they have an interest.

"Councillor" - means members elected to Council office.

"Employees" - means all staff including permanent, full-time, part-time, contract and casuals.

"Policy" - means Gladstone Regional Council's Community Engagement Policy.

"Community groups" - means groups, organisations and Council advisory bodies who have community-based members and who may share a common interest(s) of a location, cultural activity, language or value(s) nature. Individuals can be members of different communities of interest.

6.0 POLICY STATEMENT:

Council is committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement with its community to facilitate a dialogue between Council and the community on key decisions and projects.

6.1 Principles:

With reference to Section 4(2) of the Local Government Act 2009, Council supports the principles of "meaningful engagement". Engagement can be formal or informal and operates on the premise that the best decisions are made if those involved in the outcomes are considered.

This policy provides Gladstone Regional Council with a framework to guide the appropriate engagement of the community in projects, programs and initiatives affecting them.

6.2 IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Under this policy, Council's engagement activities will be carried out in accordance with the public participation goals set out by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2), which is endorsed by the Local Government of Queensland.

These levels are:

6.1.1 Information

To provide the community and key stakeholders with balanced and objective information on decisions, policies, plans and strategies;

6.1.2 Consultation

To obtain feedback from the community and key stakeholders on analysis and alternatives to inform decision-making;

6.1.3 Participation

Responsibility for the final decision rests with Council but may, in some instances, be shared with the community and key stakeholders. It is critical that the final decision maker is predetermined and agreed in the planning process and recognised in community engagement planning.

Participation is made up of several parts:

- 6.1.3(a) Involvement: To work directly with the community and key stakeholders so that their concerns/issues are consistently understood and considered.*
- 6.1.3(b) Collaboration: To partner with the community and key stakeholders in each aspect of the decision process - including the development of alternatives and identification of solutions.*
- 6.1.3(c) Empowerment: All final decisions rest with Council or a delegated officer of Council. Council may:
 - i. Adopt recommendations from the community, unchanged, if the circumstances warrant such an approach; or*
 - ii. Authorise a community entity to proceed with a task that requires the entity to exercise a degree of decision making with matters contained within the task.**

6.3 Statements of Value

Council's policy on community engagement is reflected in the following principles or "Statements of Value" that commit Council to:

- Provide regular information to its community regarding matters of interest using a mix of methods and utilising a variety of media;
- Be inclusive and connect with those in the community who can be difficult to reach;
- Actively seek community input into decision-making processes and, in so doing, foster collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders;
- Provide timely, appropriate and meaningful opportunities to engage with the community on matters affecting them;
- Be responsive and respectful to community members who raise issues or concerns. Council will listen, and seek to understand experiences that may be different from our own;
- Follow ethical principles of conduct, making engagement processes open and accountable, identifying together the rules of engagement and reporting on outcomes;
- Demonstrate good governance by ensuring accountable, robust and transparent processes through which individuals and groups can exchange views and influence

policy and/or decision making;

- Recognise the diverse range of values and interests in the community and actively pursue engagement opportunities that are tailored to intended audiences; and
- Meet its obligations under the Local Government Act 2009.

6.4 Policy Application

To facilitate this commitment, Gladstone Regional Council has developed community engagement guidelines designed to build capacity and performance within the organisation.

This policy will be implemented through the following activities:

- Community engagement induction process for new employees
- Biannual review of the GRC External Communications Strategy which includes continual development of tools, processes and techniques of engagement
- Community engagement awareness training for project managers or key identified staff
- Professional community engagement consultancy and support for internal clients

6.5 Roles & Responsibilities

Councillors and employees play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will decide the high level strategic issues on which it will engage the community. These issues will be linked to an identified corporate plan priority or a significant emerging regional issue.

Councillors have responsibility for engaging with their local communities and Council employees have responsibility for engaging the community in their day-to-day activities and projects.

Council employees are required to have an understanding of the term 'community engagement'; how it applies to their roles; knowledge of where to access information on the methodologies and engagement tools available to them when going about their business; and knowledge on the types of activities that require advice of expert professionals.

7.0 ATTACHMENTS:

Nil.

8.0 REVIEW TRIGGER:

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related legislation/documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council
3. Periodic Review – 3 years from date of adoption.

TABLE OF AMENDMENTS		
Originally Adopted	6 JULY 2010	10/223 (formerly Policy P-2.00.02)
Amendment 1	18 MARCH 2014	G/14/1926
Amendment 2	<INSERT DATE COUNCIL MEETING>	<INSERT RESOLUTION NUMBER>
Amendment 3	<INSERT DATE COUNCIL MEETING>	<INSERT RESOLUTION NUMBER>

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STUART RANDLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER