

Community Engagement Policy

Strategic Reference	Objective 4; collaborative & respectful relationships amongst community, Elected Members & Council staff. Strategy 4.4; implement innovative techniques for distribution of information & engaging with the community, but still respecting the communication needs of older people.
File reference	AR16/4723
Responsibility	Community & Corporate Department
Revision Number	6
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Next review date	Every two years, June 2018
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act 1999 s50
Related Policies	N/A
Related Documents	N/A

1. Introduction

Coorong District Council is strongly committed to genuine, effective and timely community engagement on a range of issues, often exceeding the minimum consultation requirements.

Under Section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999, Councils are required to adopt a public consultation policy that prescribes the minimum consultation standards. This Community Engagement Policy meets all requirements of Section 50 of the Local Government Act.

The process of consultation must encourage the community to actively engage in policy development, planning and programming, the management and evaluation of services and in identifying areas of concern.

Community engagement precedes action. It should commence at the beginning of the cycle which results in action. Consultation must serve and build trust within the community.

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2. Principles

- Members of the community have a right and a responsibility to be involved in and informed about decisions affecting their area and to influence decisions which affect their lives.
- Community involvement in Council decision making will result in greater confidence in the Council and responsive decision making.
- Council decision making will be open, transparent and accountable.
- It is the responsibility of the elected Council to balance community views and interests with other considerations such as budget constraints.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Council will:

- Listen to all voices within its communities,
- Commit to effective, ongoing and timely community engagement as an integral part of local governance and key decision making,
- Be proactive in seeking the views of its communities and use its input in a meaningful, genuine way,
- Commit adequate resources to facilitate effective community consultation and engagement,
- Communicate openly and honestly and be frank about the degree of influence communities are able to exercise in any engagement activity or key decision,
- Value diversity in communities and utilise inclusive, representative and accessible approaches,
- Build on the strengths and assets in communities to foster increased citizen participation and support community learning,
- Select the appropriate level of engagement and use a variety of techniques,
- Strive to exceed the Legislative Requirements as identified in the Act, and
- Commit to evaluation and continuous improvement.

The community will:

- Communicate openly and honestly to assist Council in understanding its views,
- Respect the diversity of local communities,
- Listen to fellow communities views &
- Receive feedback when they have participated in community engagement activities run by Council and be informed of how their collective contribution influenced the outcome.

4. Engagement methods

Generally, the strategic objective of a community engagement policy is to ensure that all affected residents:

- receive regular information about Council's achievements, objectives and performance,
- are advised of major issues affecting the community and
- are given the opportunity to comment on and be consulted about these

This process may include:

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- A regular newsletter
- Other direct mail publications or letterbox drops, as appropriate
- Advertising in media outlets as deemed appropriate
- Regular media releases to appropriate media outlets and community groups
- Community forums and stakeholder meetings
- Direct consultation with community representative groups
- Council's website
- Community email database
- Customer/community surveys
- General fixed displays, e.g. community notice boards
- Specific displays, as appropriate
- Community group representations to Council workshops
- Focus groups
- Social media

Regardless of the method or level of consultation staff will consider all responses and report to Council summarising the responses where a Council decision is required.

5. Statutory requirements

In a number of areas Council is required to comply with specific legislative requirements such as minimum periods, publication in the Gazette and the Development Act.

Engagement processes identified in this Policy should be seen as complementing any prescribed statutory requirements which may or not be exceeded.

6. Development approval

This Policy does not cover consultation in respect to planning and building applications. The Development Act establishes specific requirements for Development Approvals.

7. Public submissions

All forms and levels of community engagement will include an invitation for members of the public to provide a submission to Council. This invitation will include any minimum submission requirement (i.e. verbal, written only, website, social media etc) and provide a closing date for receipt of submissions by Council.

8. Engagement categories

The Community Engagement Policy specifies three levels of activity designed to suit all consultation requirements, ranging from the most basic public notification to a major project, or issue of council-wide significance.

Each level specifies the minimum statutory requirements relating to community engagement and exceeds them with a mixture of activities that may or may not be required.

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It is Council's prerogative to establish the level of engagement when considering a subject requiring community consultation. The level will need to reflect the minimum statutory requirements relating to that subject.

It will be applied to any matter where consultation is required by legislation, Council policy, or when Council considers this to be appropriate.

Any good engagement strategy requires a certain degree of flexibility to suit the specific situation. While setting out minimum standards, each activity level reflects this need by not being too prescriptive. The following tables indicate which level may apply for certain activities. (These are examples only and should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.)

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Hours (minor) - Office • Change of street and road names • Notice of minor works • Community events • Change of parking restrictions • Policy development and review deemed not to have a direct impact on the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Amendment Report (PAR) of a technical or non-strategic nature • Traffic management plans • Community Land Management Plans • Change of a service standard which is deemed to have low community impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan Amendment Report (PAR) • Major Projects • Council amalgamations • Community Land - Lease, redevelopment, sale or change in classification • Strategic Plans • Policy development and review which may directly impact on the community • Changes to service standards not otherwise subject to level 3 consultation (e.g. through the Annual Business Plan consultation) • New By-Laws

9. Choosing an engagement strategy

The actions required to gain community input will vary with each issue. The following table is to be used as a guide on suitable actions for changing conditions and circumstances.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
District Issues, Required		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with statutory Requirements, (if any) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with statutory requirements (if any) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with statutory requirements (if any)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Social media post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Social media post 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council set budget for consultation process
District Issues, Optional		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A letterbox drop may be done as well or instead of media advertising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release • Copies of major reports and plans being made available at Council offices • A letterbox drop may be done as well or instead of media advertising. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website feature • Media Releases • Allow minimum 6 weeks for responses • Organising of workshops, forums, displays or focus groups • Copies of major reports and plans being made available at Council offices and libraries • Specific publication to all affected residents via letterbox drop as decided by Council

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Local Issues		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct engagement with relevant community members & groups as deemed appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop to directly affected properties as appropriate. • Direct engagement with relevant community members & groups as deemed appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop as appropriate. • Direct engagement with relevant community members & groups as deemed appropriate • Forum/meeting with relevant community members & groups as deemed appropriate
Minimum Timelines		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Requirement • Optional 21 days* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Requirement • Optional 21 days* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Requirement • Optional 42 days*
<p>*NB: days are not working days and include weekends</p>		

10. The legislative requirements for public consultation

Legislation requires Council to undertake at least a specified minimum level of consultation in relation to the following:

- Determining the manner, places and times of its principal office (Section 45)
- Adoption or variation of a public consultation policy (Section 50)
- Altering the Code of Practice relating to the principles, policies, procedures and policies that Council will apply to Public Access to Council and Committee Meetings and their minutes and release of documents (Section 92)
- Adopting Strategic Management Plans (Section 122)
- Excluding land from classification as community land (Section 193)
- Revoking the classification as community land (Section 194)
- Adopting, amending or revoking a management plan for community land (section 197)
- Amending or revoking a management plan for community land (section 198)
- Alienating of community land where the management plan does not allow it (Section 202)
- Alienating roads (Section 223)
- Planting vegetation where it will have a significant impact on residents, the proprietors or nearby residents (Section 232)
- Proposed removal of trees and road construction projects
- Representation Reviews (section 12 (5))
- Status of Council or Name Change (Section 13)

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- Commercial Activities - Prudential Arrangements (Section 48)
- Making Bylaws (Section 249)
- Power to make Orders (Section 259)

11. Further information

Any future amendment or alteration to the policy (other than minor or legislated changes) will be subject to public consultation as described in this policy.

This policy will be available for inspection at the Council offices listed below during ordinary business hours and available to be downloaded, free of charge, from Council's internet site: www.coorong.sa.gov.au

Coorong Civic Centre

95-101 Railway Terrace
Tailem Bend
Phone: 1300 785 277
Fax: 8572 4399

Meningie Information Hub

49 Princes Highway

Tintinara Customer Service Centre

37 Becker Terrace

Copies will be provided to interested parties upon request. Email council@coorong.sa.gov.au

Any grievances in relation to this policy or its application should be forwarded in writing addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of Council.