



# WOLLONDILLY

COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2022







# Acknowledgement<sup>\*</sup>

Wollondilly Shire Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land in Wollondilly, the Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples.

We acknowledge the living culture and spiritual connections to the land for the Dharawal and Gundungurra people and all Aboriginal Nation Groups that may have connections to the area; and that Wollondilly is remarkably placed as the intersection of many tribal lands.

We recognise the traditional Custodians who have occupied and cared for this Country over countless generations and celebrate their continuing contributions to the Shire.

We also acknowledge and remember the Dharawal and Gundungurra peoples who were killed in the Appin Massacre on 17 April 1816.

*\*We acknowledge our continuing collaboration with the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council*



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# MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Here at Wollondilly Shire Council we are committed to engaging with our community in a meaningful way. We want to have conversations that help build consensus and provide opportunities for community members to contribute their perspectives, insights, expertise and lived experience to a variety of projects, policies, programs and plans.

I am pleased to see the Community Engagement Strategy come to life; streamlining our approach and clarifying the process around community engagement and participation.

Decision-making can be complex; with factors such as regulations, available resources, costs, deadlines and often competing community opinions in the mix. It is important that we get as much feedback from the community as possible to make sure we are meeting the community's needs.

This strategy provides a framework that will strengthen our approach and take us to the next level of community participation in Wollondilly.

**Matt Gould - Mayor**







# INTROD

# UCTION

Community engagement is a broad term used to describe how we communicate with the community to understand their views, and work together to influence and shape the decisions Council makes about projects, plans, policies and programs. Community engagement is about having meaningful conversations with the community to help inform the decision-making process and strategic directions.

While there is a strong interrelationship between communications and engagement, this Community Engagement Strategy solely focuses on community engagement and consultation. Even though effective communication is an essential part of the community engagement process, Council's approach to communications on a broader scale is not addressed within this Strategy.

Council undertakes a rigorous planning process when looking to engage with the community and develops specific plans to guide the engagement process. This Community Engagement Strategy will provide an overarching direction for how we develop specific Community Engagement Plans for each project we are seeking community feedback on.



# OUR COMMITMENT

Council is committed to ensuring community engagement activities are customer focused, flexible, accessible, responsive, empathic and inclusive to the community's needs. We are committed to making sure community engagement is adequately planned in line with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum to ensure we continuously improve the services we provide, and we will provide you with feedback on how your views have been heard and make sure we are closing the loop in a timely manner.

While we strive for it, community engagement doesn't always mean reaching consensus, and it doesn't mean everyone will be happy with the outcome.

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*Community input is important, and at the same time, decision-making can be complex.*

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While we are committed to taking on board community feedback to inform decision-making; decisions also need to be informed by legislation, regulations, policies, safety, funding requirements, expert advice, relevant data, deadlines, budget, available resources, and other factors. These factors can sometimes shape what aspects of a project or issue can be influenced and informed by community feedback. Council is working in good faith on behalf of the community, and in instances where there is little opportunity for community influence – including the times when a decision has already been made – we will share information to keep the community informed. Additionally, there are some instances where Council is not the final decision-maker and as such is committed to working with the community to advocate for the community's needs.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

In addition to the Community Engagement Strategy, Council has a Community Participation Plan which outlines Council's specific consultation process related to land use planning.

The overarching aim of the Community Participation Plan is to guide how Council gathers feedback from the community on key strategic planning documents, planning proposals and development applications to inform Council's relevant planning panel's decision-making process.

The Community Engagement Strategy provides an overarching framework to add value to the process outlined in the Community Participation Plan to ensure best practice approaches are being implemented.





## WHY WE ENGAGE

Engaging with the community keeps the community informed about important issues. It enables Council to better understand the community's views, and can enable a conversation that helps build consensus. This means Council makes decisions that are informed by community aspirations, needs, knowledge, and lived experience.

There are many reasons for engaging with the community, including, but not limited to:

- Understanding community views, priorities, issues, and needs
- Enhancing a project with the community's expertise, experience and insight
- Generating options and solutions
- Refining plans
- Developing community connections; maintaining positive relationships
- Ensuring the community is well-informed about an issue or project; clarifying or explaining
- Encouraging a specific action or a change in behaviour
- Guiding services and programs to ensure they meet the needs of the community
- Meeting legislative and funding requirements
- Checking in with the community

## WHY THE COMMUNITY SHOULD ENGAGE WITH COUNCIL

Greater active community participation in the engagement process enables Council to gain a greater diversity of opinions that is more representative of the broader community's views and contributes to more robust decision-making.

Council values the contribution of all community members in the community engagement process and is committed to ensuring we effectively close the loop and acknowledge those that have participated to give a greater awareness to how their feedback has informed the decision-making process.





# COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS & KEY CHALLENGES

Council is committed to community engagement and having robust conversations with the community, and it is important to note the challenges that can influence the engagement process and outcomes:

- Consensus cannot always be achieved
- Council's decision-making options and powers can at times be limited by a range of factors e.g. legislation, regulations, policy, budgets, data, resources, the views of the quiet majority, etc
- The community can at times have high expectations on how their comments and views will determine outcomes and decisions

*It is important to note the challenges that can influence the engagement process.*

- Encouraging a broad cross-section of the community to actively engage with Council and be interested in Council matters to ensure diversity of views and opinions to inform the decision-making process can be difficult
- When the numbers of residents who engage on a particular matter are very low it raises questions about whether those few voices are representative of broader community opinion
- Some matters we engage on can involve high levels of complexity and technical detail, which can pose challenges for community understanding
- The diversity of our community requires varied communication and engagement methodologies/ approaches to maximise reach
- It is important to note that while the final decision might not always reflect individual views, any decisions made are influenced and informed by broader stakeholder feedback.

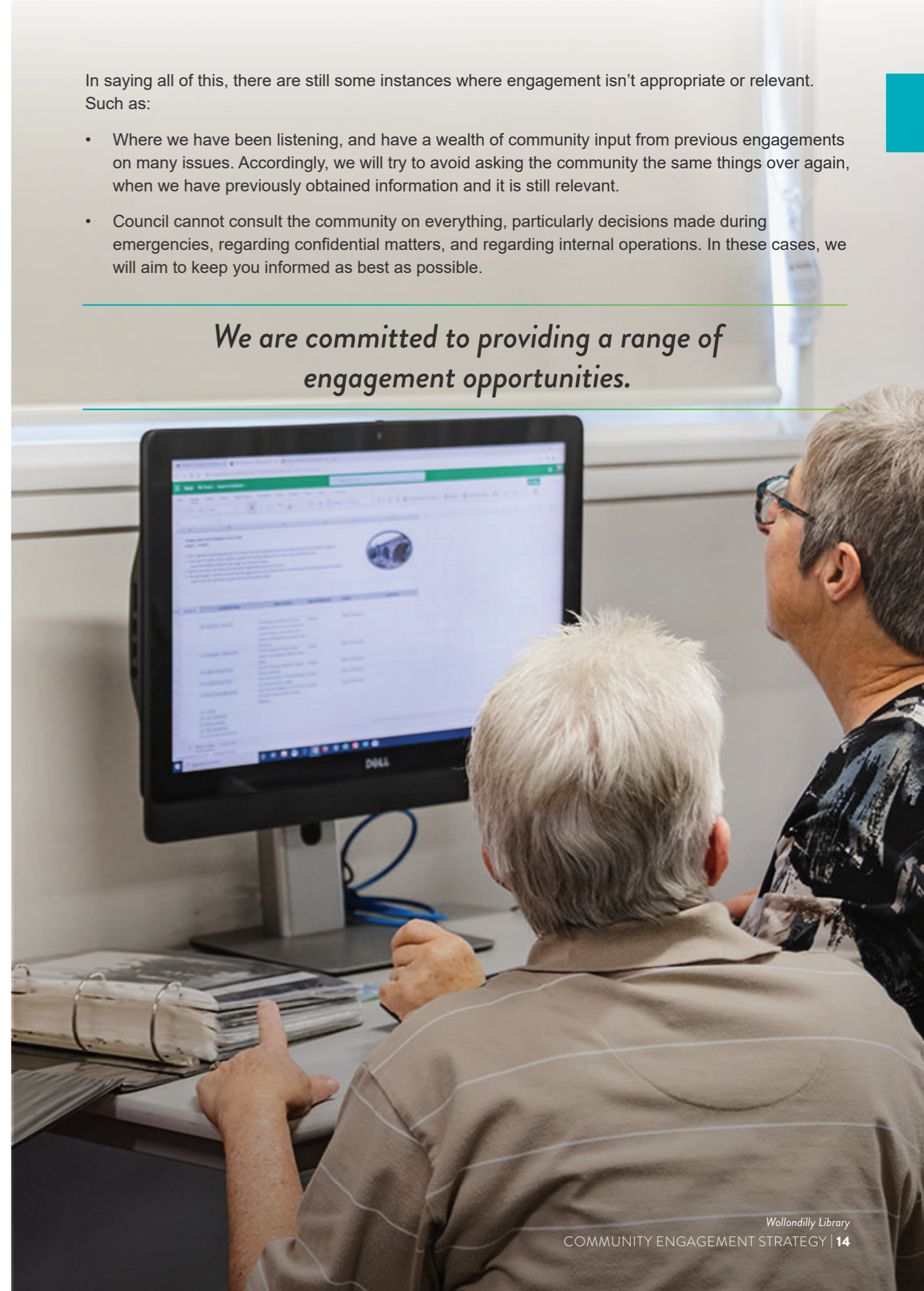
**To help address these challenges, we are committed to:**

- Providing greater clarity regarding the level of influence that community input can realistically have on a given issue or project
- Providing greater clarity in 'closing the loop' and explaining how input has been incorporated, or reasons why it hasn't been
- Encouraging community members to be proactive in engaging with Council
- Providing a range of engagement opportunities to enable participation in both a digital and non-digital format where appropriate
- Simplifying complex subject matters to ensure everyone understands what, how and when to participate in the engagement process.

In saying all of this, there are still some instances where engagement isn't appropriate or relevant. Such as:

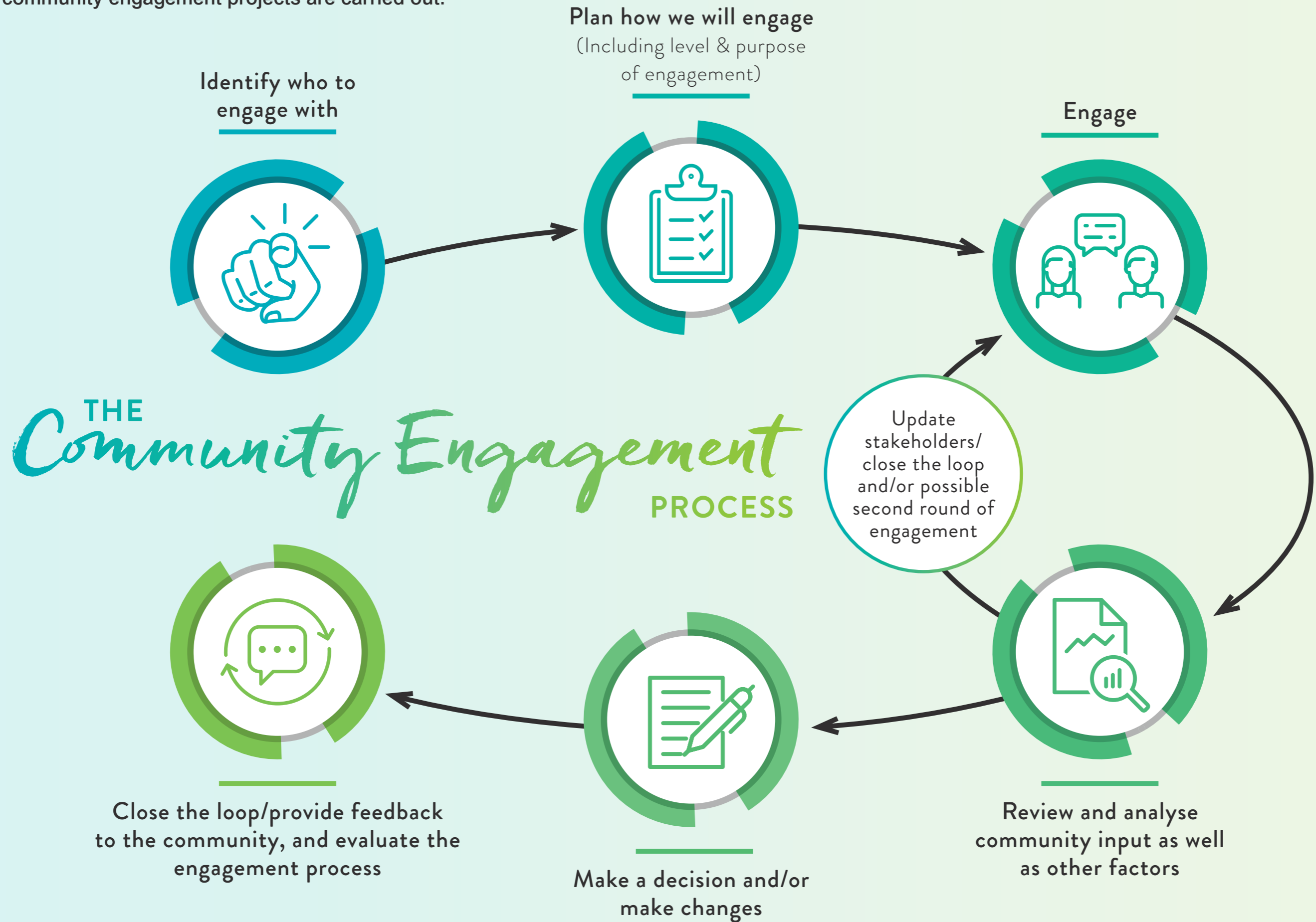
- Where we have been listening, and have a wealth of community input from previous engagements on many issues. Accordingly, we will try to avoid asking the community the same things over again, when we have previously obtained information and it is still relevant.
- Council cannot consult the community on everything, particularly decisions made during emergencies, regarding confidential matters, and regarding internal operations. In these cases, we will aim to keep you informed as best as possible.

*We are committed to providing a range of engagement opportunities.*





In order to ensure Council's community engagement is robust, the following community engagement process is used to guide how community engagement projects are carried out:





# THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation is an important cornerstone of community engagement. It helps Council keep track of performance and ensures we are reviewing our approaches on a regular basis.

Council will regularly monitor and report on progress regarding the implementation of this Strategy through our Integrated Planning and Reporting framework. We will also undertake regular reviews of this Strategy in line with local government elections and any other Integrated Planning and Reporting requirements to ensure the Strategy continues to meet the needs of the community and takes into consideration any new and emerging trends.

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*Council is committed to ensuring measures of success are identified and outlined for each project.*

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In addition to this, during the development of each engagement plan, Council is committed to ensuring measures of success are identified and outlined for each project within an evaluation framework and where possible will look to benchmark engagement activities against other local government organisations. This will enable Council to evaluate the effectiveness of each community engagement process on a project-by-project basis.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

There are risks associated with any community engagement project and they can range from confusion and mistrust within the community, dissemination of misinformation, over-engagement, apathy and low engagement numbers. In order to mitigate potential risks, Council will undertake a risk assessment during the planning phase of any community engagement process to identify any possible risks, the level of risk it poses to the project and steps that can be taken to minimise/remove those risks.





# ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone has a role to play in the community engagement process in order to contribute to robust and diverse outcomes.

## COUNCILLORS

Councillors are elected officials who have been voted in by the community to make decisions and represent the community's views on Council. They are responsible for making decisions to positively influence and change the local community and are often the ultimate decision-makers in many engagement projects.

All Councillors have a commitment to champion the principles set out in the Community Engagement Strategy through their leadership, decision-making and overseeing the implementation of the Strategy.

## COUNCIL STAFF

Council Staff are responsible for fostering and supporting good engagement practices in line with the Community Engagement Strategy. As well as implement and monitor the Community Engagement Strategy, and ensure Council is designing and delivering best practice community engagement activities in line with the Strategy.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Key stakeholders and the community are responsible for being open to Council information, being aware of, interested in and actively participating in Council's community engagement processes to make sure they are providing a diversity of opinions.





# OUR VISIONS & ASPIRATIONS

Our Community Strategic Plan outlines the long-term vision and aspirations of the Wollondilly community and Council. The long-term vision and aspirations have been informed by the ongoing conversations Council has been having with the community over the years as well as more recently when we spoke directly with the community to understand their vision for the Shire.

Council will continue to engage and check-in with the community to make sure we are on track to deliver on this vision and aspirations that the community have identified as important to them and the future of Wollondilly.



## OUR VISION

MAKING  
*Wollondilly*  
EVEN BETTER TOGETHER

## OUR ASPIRATIONS



### PEOPLE

A safe, inclusive and resilient community, with access to services that support good health and well being.



### ENVIRONMENT

Our pristine and beautiful natural environment is protected, responsibly managed and enhanced as we grow and play our part for the future.



### PLACE & LANDSCAPE

Wollondilly's unique towns and villages sitting within our beautiful natural landscape. We are shaping growth to ensure change respects what we have and where we want to be. Our communities have functional infrastructure and safe roads they need.



### ECONOMY

We are an emerging and dynamic Shire with a thriving and diverse economy. We seek to attract new viable business to support the region while also supporting our towns, villages and rural lifestyle



### PERFORMANCE

The community recognises we are striving to be a leading local government. We listen and respond to community needs, delivering excellent customer experiences.



# OUR community

## PROFILE SNAPSHOT

BASED ON 2021 CENSUS INFORMATION  
WOLLONDILLY SHIRE IS:

HOME TO  
APPROXIMATELY

**54,000**  
PEOPLE



LIVING IN ABOUT

**19,000**

DWELLINGS



IN **33** TOWNS, VILLAGES  
& RURAL LOCALITIES

THE AVERAGE  
HOUSEHOLD IS

**2.95**  
PEOPLE



*Our population*

IS FORECAST TO  
GROW TO NEARLY

**100,000**  
BY 2041



COUPLES  
WITH  
CHILDREN  
MAKE UP

**41.3%**  
OF HOUSEHOLDS



FOLLOWED BY  
COUPLES WITHOUT  
CHILDREN AT

**26.6%**

AND  
LONE-PERSON  
HOUSEHOLDS AT

**16.2%**  
PEOPLE



**50.1%**  
MALES



**49.9%**  
FEMALES



**78.2%** AGED OVER  
15 YRS



**63.7%** OF THE RESIDENT WORKERS  
travel outside of the area to work



**37** MEDIAN  
AGE

**47%** of households  
HAVE A  
MORTGAGE



**11%**  
OVERSEAS  
BORN  
RESIDENTS



**MOSTLY  
UNILINGUAL  
ENGLISH  
SPEAKERS**

(only 6% identify as speaking a language other than English at home, and most of those people report proficiency speaking English as well)



**16%** of households  
ARE RENTING

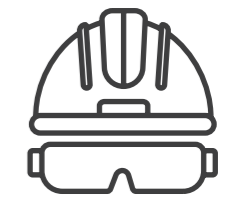


**4.4%** ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER POPULATION



**50%**  
OF THE  
POPULATION

aged 15 & over  
held educational  
qualifications &  
39.1% had no  
qualifications



**14%**  
*Construction  
Industry*  
IS THE BIGGEST  
EMPLOYER IN  
WOLLONDILLY

followed by  
healthcare & social  
assistance (9.9%),  
retail trade (9.4%),  
& education and  
training (9.0%)\*





# WHO WE ENGAGE WITH

Various factors will affect who Council engages with on a given project or issue, including the focus, scope and location of the project or issue (e.g. Shire-wide vs town/village specific); the levels of interest and impact in the community, the purpose of engaging, and which aspects are negotiable and non-negotiable.

In Wollondilly, community and stakeholders may include:

## Local People

- Ratepayers
- Current residents
- New and future residents
- Families
- Adults without families/children
- Retirees and seniors
- Teenagers and young adults
- Children
- Carers
- People who work in the area
- People with disability

## Groups and Organisations

- Chambers of Commerce
- Not-for-Profit organisations
- Interest groups and networks
- Sporting groups
- Artists, performers, musicians

## Council-related

- Wollondilly Councillors
- Wollondilly Council staff
- Reference Groups and Advisory Groups
- Volunteers

## Communities Within Local Communities

- Local schools
- Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Local businesses
- Community drivers and leaders
- Community associations
- Employers
- Students
- CALD communities, vulnerable people and refugee community

## Government-related

- State and Federal Governments
- Government agencies
- Local Members of Parliament
- Neighbouring Councils

## Other

- Visitors and tourists

The specific ways of reaching and engaging different groups will vary according to the project or issue, and can include a combination of direct methods and broad public methods; printed material, online channels, and face-to-face conversations and activities. According to the project or issue, engagement may be open to the whole community, or it may be targeted using existing connections.





# SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

Social justice principles help ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.



## ACCESS

Everyone has the ability to access the information and any barriers to access are removed (e.g. physical accessibility, readability, etc).



## EQUITY

All voices are considered.



## PARTICIPATION

Members of the community are invited to participate and we actively seek their involvement.



## RIGHTS

Everyone is entitled to accurate, timely and transparent information and the ability to participate.





## HOW WE

# encourage CONVERSATIONS

To ensure the opportunity to participate meaningfully, we will engage adhering to the social justice principles.

In addition to this, we have identified some groups that may require additional considerations to ensure they can actively participate in community engagement activities.

### Working Families

- Consider time of day and child care options
- Ensure venues are accessible and appropriate for children
- Provide access to engagement opportunities that allow working families to engage in the comfort of their own homes



### Children (0-12 years)

- Use simple and clear language
- Tailor engagement activities to them
- Take engagement activities to them



### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

- Use clear language
- Provide face to face engagement opportunities
- Encourage involvement from Aboriginal Elders
- Utilise existing relationships e.g. Indigenous Culture and Heritage Advisory Group, Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council

### Young People (12-24 years)

- Use clear language
- Tailor engagement activities to them
- Take engagement activities to them e.g. attending youth-focused events and activities
- Consider incentives
- Utilise existing relationships e.g. schools, community services, Youth Advisory Group



### People with Disability

- Use clear language
- Ensure venues are accessible
- Consider format of engagement activities and information provided
- Ensure online accessibility
- Consider Auslan Interpreter Service



### Older People

- Make sure printed documents are reader friendly
- Provide access to engagement opportunities that don't rely on technology
- Ensure venues are accessible
- Utilise existing relationships e.g. community services, community groups
- Consider time of day



### Digitally Challenged

There are many legitimate reasons for not being online, including unreliable digital connectivity, financial constraints, accessibility concerns, unfamiliarity, and preference.

- Promote engagement opportunities through non-digital means
- Provide face to face engagement opportunities
- Provide hardcopy options to provide feedback



## WHERE WE ARE NOW

Council currently has a robust and active program of community engagement that employs a range of different methods to seek community feedback. While Council currently engages with stakeholders and listens to the community, opportunities can sometimes be missed, and the community can sometimes feel like the process is unclear.

The COVID-19 pandemic required Council to diversify its approach to community engagement, however, Council needs to continue to remain flexible and adaptable moving forward to meet the needs of the community when it comes to engagement in a post-COVID world.

## WHERE WE WANT TO BE

We will streamline, clarify and improve our approach to community engagement, to raise community awareness and involvement in local decisions and activities, and deliver best practice engagement opportunities.

Council will actively work to close the loop on engagement projects and acknowledge the contribution of the community to value add to the engagement process.

The community will have a greater understanding of the role of community engagement, how Council plans, manages and carries out community engagement activities and their role/level of influence within the community engagement process.

We will implement creative and innovative engagement practices using a variety of approaches and channels to ensure the community – including the ‘quiet majority’ – is connected and involved. The community feels involved and valued, with a greater sense of trust in Council.



**To strengthen Council's relationship with the community by engaging effectively;** providing opportunities for meaningful dialogue and more clarity around closing the loop with the community.

**To continually improve our engagement** by evaluating our processes, being flexible, adapting to change, and embracing innovation.

# OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

**To bring our community with us as we grow** by communicating and engaging about Council's vision, strategic direction, and transformative projects.

**To ensure the voice of the customer is at the forefront of Council's planning and decision-making processes** by developing a holistic framework that captures customer feedback from a range of different sources and allows Council to actively monitor and evaluate our performance.

**To broaden the perspectives we hear** by ensuring our community engagement activities are accessible and inclusive so we increase the diversity of people who participate.

**To embed a culture of community engagement across Council** that ensures staff are proficient and skilled in community engagement to deliver best practice engagement opportunities.



# OUR FRAMEWORK

Council is committed to delivering community engagement activities in line with the International Association for Public Participation – Public Participation Spectrum.

The table below, adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, sets out the levels of engagement and influence for different decisions. The level of engagement we undertake for each project, plan, policy, or program will depend on several things including the scale of the project, stage of the process, the level of stakeholder/community interest and influence, and what aspects are negotiable or non-negotiable.

Engagement for a single project may require different levels of engagement for different stakeholders and communities, or at different stages of the project. In each of these levels, Council is the ultimate decision-maker.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>GOAL</b>	Provide the community with information to assist them with understanding issues, projects, plans, options, opportunities, solutions, and decisions.	Obtain feedback from the community about draft plans, projects, policies, proposals, and options.	Work with the community throughout the process to understand and consider aspirations, suggestions, issues and concerns.	Build consensus with the community in developing options and preferred solutions regarding projects, plans, issues and concerns.	Place decision-making power in the hands of the community.
<b>OUR COMMITMENT</b>	We will keep you informed	We will listen to you and acknowledge aspirations and concerns, and consider community feedback when making decisions.  We will provide feedback on what we heard and how community feedback influenced the outcome.	We will work with you to ensure your ideas and concerns are reflected in the alternatives and solutions being developed.  We will provide feedback on what we heard and how community input influenced the outcome.	We will seek advice and innovation from the community and work together to develop options and solutions.	We will implement what you decide; you are delegated to make decisions.
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	Resident notices about delivery of projects which have been decided e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of works to build a shareway between Picton &amp; Tahmoor</li> <li>• Gross Pollutant Trap, Argyle Street, Picton</li> <li>• Tahmoor Sporting Complex – construction: new sewer line for multi-purpose building</li> </ul> Emergency road closures Bush fire alerts Sportsground closures	Teloepa Park Youth Zone design Disability Inclusion Action Plan (Round 2 - feedback about draft plan) Water Play Facilities Feedback on draft Council policies and strategies e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance Policy</li> <li>• Assisted Communications Policy</li> <li>• Community Forum Guidelines</li> <li>• Code of Meeting Practice</li> <li>• Gas Scare Gun Policy</li> </ul> Feedback on draft Planning Proposals e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mount Taurus Planning Proposal</li> <li>• Developing the Visitor Economy &amp; Employment Land Uses</li> </ul>	Working with stakeholders and the community to develop Activate Wollondilly – Long Term Community Recovery and Resilience Plan  Working with stakeholders and the community to develop initial concept design for the Wollondilly Cultural Precinct	Working with young people to design and deliver Youth Week events e.g. Youth Summit, organised by Wollondilly Youth Advisory Committee in collaboration with Wollondilly Anglican College, Picton High School, Reframe and Community Links  Working with children to design public art in the Shire e.g. handmade clay tiles at Warragamba all-abilities playground 'Livvi's Place'	Section 355 Management Committees (certain sports facilities)



# LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

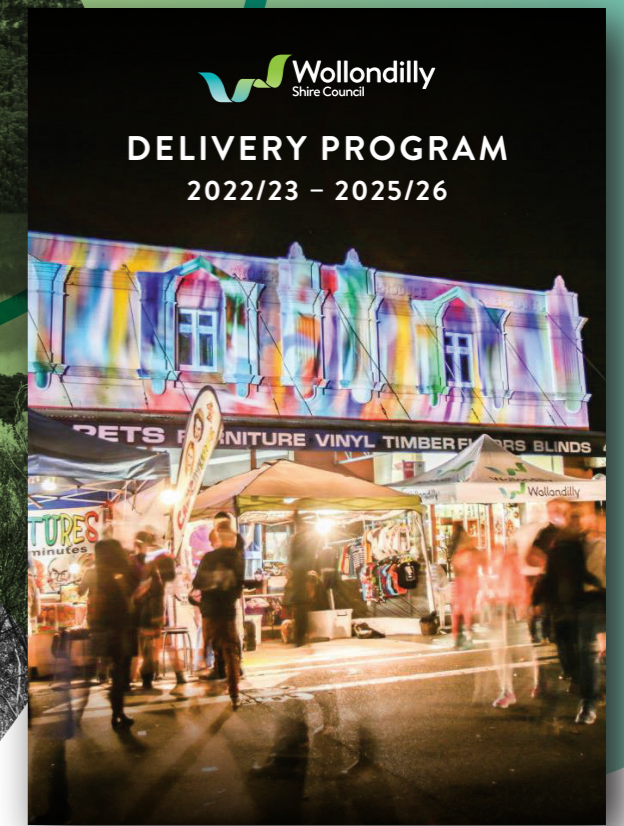
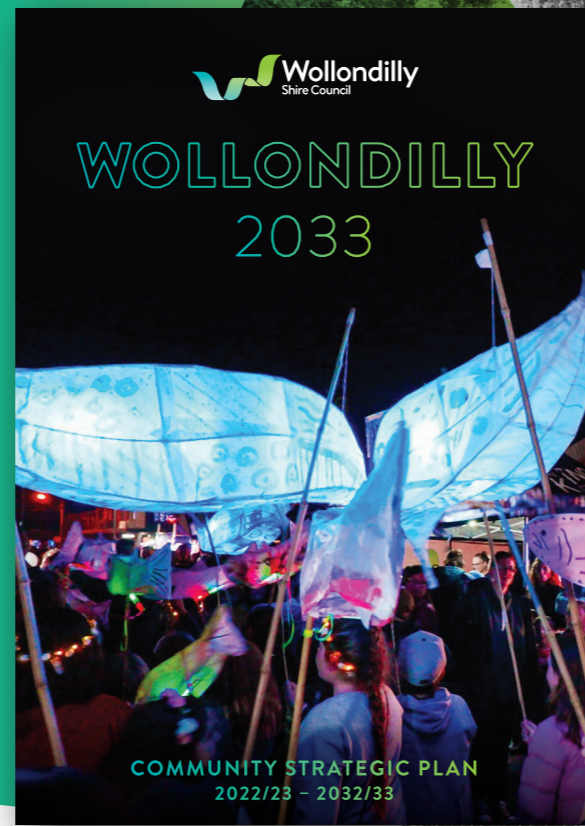
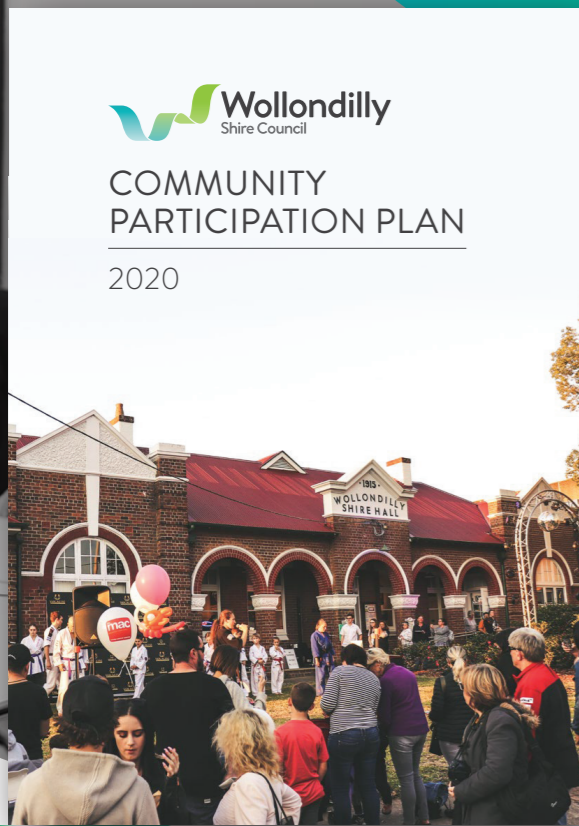
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<b>EXAMPLES</b>		<p>Feedback on the draft Wollondilly Cultural Precinct Concept Design</p> <p>Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan</p> <p>Wilton Growth Area Commercial Centres Study</p> <p>North Wilton Neighbourhood Plan</p>	<p>Community input into master plans for local parks and open space e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warragamba Open Space Master Plan</li> <li>• Picton Parklands Master Plan</li> <li>• Tahmoor Sporting Complex</li> <li>• Telopea Park Master Plan</li> <li>• Menangle Old School Site Master Plan</li> </ul> <p>Stakeholder input into draft design of Performing Arts Centre and Children's Services Centre</p> <p>Disability Inclusion Action Plan (Round 1 - initial engagement)</p>		
<b>TOOLS &amp; TECHNIQUES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper / Radio Advertising</li> <li>• Updates on Council's Website</li> <li>• On-site Signage</li> <li>• Social Media</li> <li>• Community Newsletters</li> <li>• Media Releases</li> <li>• Letters and letter-box drops</li> <li>• Flyers and postcards</li> <li>• FAQs and Fact Sheets</li> <li>• Emails and e-newsletters</li> <li>• VMBs (Variable Message Boards)</li> <li>• SMS messaging</li> <li>• Phone calls</li> <li>• Rates notices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your Say Wollondilly</li> <li>• Interactive Online Tools</li> <li>• Surveys, Polls, Questionnaires</li> <li>• Formal Public Exhibitions</li> <li>• Drop-in Sessions</li> <li>• Community Forums</li> <li>• Pop-up Kiosks</li> <li>• Focus Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your Say Wollondilly</li> <li>• Strategic Reference Groups and Advisory Groups</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Engagement activities such as World Café, Focused Conversations etc.</li> <li>• Competitions e.g. for designs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participatory Decision Making</li> <li>• Partnering with External Organisations</li> <li>• Strategic Reference Groups and Advisory Groups</li> <li>• Human centred design and co-design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committees that are empowered to make decisions</li> <li>• Citizens' Jury</li> <li>• Human centred design and co-design</li> </ul>





# RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Community Strategic Plan
- Delivery Program and Operational Plan
- Business Enhancement Plan (internal document)
- Community Participation Plan
- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Community Forum Guidelines
- Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policy
- Social Media Management Procedure (internal document)
- Brand Guide (internal document)
- Customer Charter
- NSW Local Government Act 1993
- NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- NSW Office of Local Government Guidelines
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum





# DOCUMENT REVIEW

STAGE	DATE
Initial Adoption Date	22 November 2022
Current Adoption Date	22 November 2022
Review Cycle	Within three months of local government elections as per Integrated Planning & Reporting guidelines from the Office of Local Government
Next Review Date	November 2023 as per Council resolution for a 12 month review
Responsible Manager	Manager Engagement and Performance
Responsible Teams	Strategic Communications Team Public Relations and Engagement Team







**Wollondilly**  
Shire Council

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*Dilly Wanderer*