

# 2215 Community Engagement and Consultation Policy

## Governance Policy



### PURPOSE

- 1) The purpose of this policy is to confirm council's commitment to engaging and communicating effectively with its diverse communities on matters that are likely to impact them.
- 2) This policy enables communities to be informed about actions of council and to participate in council planning and decision-making processes where the decision to be made includes negotiable factors or would benefit from external stakeholder input.

### SCOPE

- 3) This policy guides elected members, employees and contractors/consultants engaged by NBRC when engaging with the community.
- 4) Where the community engagement process is legislated, then that legislated process will take precedence over this Policy to the extent of any inconsistency.

### DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Council	Means North Burnett Regional Council.
NBRC	Means North Burnett Regional Council.
Community (Inc Communities)	Means the residents and/or ratepayers of the North Burnett Regional Council area and any other users of council services or assets.
IAP2	Means the International Association for Public Participation.
Community Engagement (Inc Engagement and Engage)	Means the process that involves channelling input or feedback form the community, back to council, to complement or contribute to the decision-making process, to better inform decisions and enhance outcomes.
Communication	For the purpose of this policy will mean the one way pushing of information to an intended target audience via a range of channels to get a message across. This may not facilitate the backchanneling of feedback, from the recipients to the communicator of the information.
Level	Means a level on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.
Community Engagement Framework	Means this policy as well as other supporting tools or templates developed to enact this policy.
Community Engagement Framework Document	A document developed, giving regard to all elements of the community engagement framework, to provide holistic guidance and further context around the framework, its tools and community engagement at council.

### POLICY

#### OBJECTIVES

- 5) To outline the responsibilities and expectations of council and community members around community engagement, including when engagement activities are likely to occur.
- 6) To encourage community engagement that leverages the skills and experience of community members and enhances decision-making, while emphasising that in the context of local government, the final decision-making responsibility rests with the elected members.

## PRINCIPLES

- 7) The following overarching principles provide guidance on how council will engage with the community. These principles are reflected in the community engagement framework document and associated tools.
- 8) As far as reasonably practicable, community engagement is to be:

a) Inclusive	Stakeholders and engagement activities are selected in an inclusive manner and consideration is given to the type of engagement activities to minimise potential barriers to participation for key stakeholders.
b) Informative	Information shared is clear, honest and provides a relevant overview of the proposal or matter as well as the potential outcomes. To avoid overwhelming participants, every effort should be made to keep extraneous material to a minimum. Information provided should be aligned with the intended audience, be free of technical jargon where possible and be in 'Plain English.'
c) Appropriate	Engagement activities are appropriately selected in line with the identified IAP2 engagement level having regard for the resources available for engagement. Additionally, engagement will not be undertaken where a decision has already been made.
d) Timely	Engagement activities should occur when community members and stakeholders have the best chance of influencing outcomes and not so late in the process that it simply confirms decisions already made. Sufficient time should be allocated for the community to consider all information and make an informed contribution to the decision-making process.
e) Transparent	The final decision about the project or proposal is made in an open and transparent way and is appropriately communicated to the community and individual submitters where appropriate. Communication should include details as to how the groups collective input contributed to the final outcome.

## POLICY STATEMENT

- 9) Council acknowledges its requirements under the Local Government Act 2009 to uphold the principles of “democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement” as well as other various acts and regulations applicable to local government, setting out community engagement requirements.
- 10) Council is committed to inclusive, transparent and value adding community engagement activities, in circumstances where it can influence a decision.
- 11) Council is committed to embedding community engagement into council’s regular business practices.
- 12) Where possible, council will seek to engage the community when a decision to be made is community facing, a decision has not already been made and when the engagement exercise can value add.
- 13) When assessing the need for community engagement, NBRC will also consider:
- if there is a statutory requirement to consult.
  - if engaging the community will provide information/feedback that has the potential to influence or enhance the decision that is to be made, and
  - if the community will directly or indirectly benefit from being involved in the project/program. e.g. education, information.
- 14) In some instances, community engagement may not be possible or appropriate and, in these situations, council may inform the community of our decisions and actions without seeking community feedback into decision making. Examples include (but are not limited to) situations where:
- public health and safety are at risk
  - council is responding to an emergency
  - council must make an immediate decision or time constraints render engagement inappropriate
  - a matter contains confidential or commercial in confidence information
  - council makes operational decisions that do not directly impact the community

- f) council makes decisions relating to the development of internal operational policies, procedures or strategies
- g) there are statutory limitations relevant to the matter, or
- h) decisions relate to everyday council business operations or legislative matters and there is no scope for formal engagement.

15) Council acknowledges that the community engagement framework is underpinned by the IAP2 Community Engagement Model and the IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation. Council commits to striving towards this internationally recognised standard.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

16) Council will:

- a) offer opportunities to the community to engage on matters assessed to an “involve” level or higher, where engagement is deemed necessary and/or beneficial
- b) advertise these engagement opportunities via available channels as appropriate
- c) communicate the outcomes of engagement exercises and/or the final decision made via appropriate channels.

17) Where engagement is not possible or is deemed to be an “inform” level only, council will communicate public facing decisions made via appropriate channels and, as a minimum, via council’s website.

18) Community members are encouraged (but not obligated) to participate in community engagement activities as they arise.

19) Council officers will conduct engagement activities in accordance with the NBRC Code of Conduct.

20) Council reserves the right to not engage with any individual who does not participate in engagement activities in a constructive and/or respectful manner.

## APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

21) Applicable legislation and regulation:

- a) *Local Government Act 2009*
- b) *Local Government Regulation 2012*

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

22) Related documents are:

- a) North Burnett Regional Council – Community Engagement Framework
- b) North Burnett Regional Council – Code of Conduct
- c) North Burnett Regional Council – Project Decisioning Policy
- d) North Burnett Regional Council – Project Management Framework

## RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

General Manager Corporate and Community

## REVIEW DATE

March 2027 (Standard four year term)

## REVISION HISTORY

Version	Meeting	Approval Date	History
0.01	General	25/01/2023	Not brought into effect - Initial draft endorsed for community consultation.
1.00	General	22/03/2023	Community consultation revisions incorporated and endorsed by Council