



JUNEE SHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022

Adopted: 15 March 2022
Minute No: 12.03.22





FOREWORD

‘Effective and meaningful engagement is at the heart of local government and the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. It helps communities shape their own futures and informs the vision and direction of council.’

Councils operate in a complex environment, with responsibilities under approximately 67 different Acts and direct relationships with more than 20 state and commonwealth agencies. The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework recognises most communities share similar needs and aspirations. The IP&R framework allows councils to draw their various plans together, to understand how they interact and inform each other, and to get the maximum benefit from their efforts by planning comprehensively for the future.

Junee Council’s Community Engagement Strategy (CES) relates to the development of all plans, policies, programs, and activities, of council. This includes those relating to IP&R, together with strategic plans and programs required under other legislation. The CES ensures the community and council recognise and establish their role in decision making and planning when it comes to their community.

Effective community engagement does not replace the decision-making powers of elected Councillors or the General Manager, however it does importantly enhance the capacity of councils to make well-informed, sustainable decisions that clearly demonstrate community buy-in and support.

¹ Office of Local Government; Integrated Planning & Reporting Handbook for Local Councils in NSW, September 2021



INTRODUCTION

Background

The Community Engagement Strategy provides and outlines the planned effective, accessible, and inclusive community engagement within Junee Shire Council. This document was developed to introduce and ensure practices and principles throughout the engagement with the local community is consistent and functional.

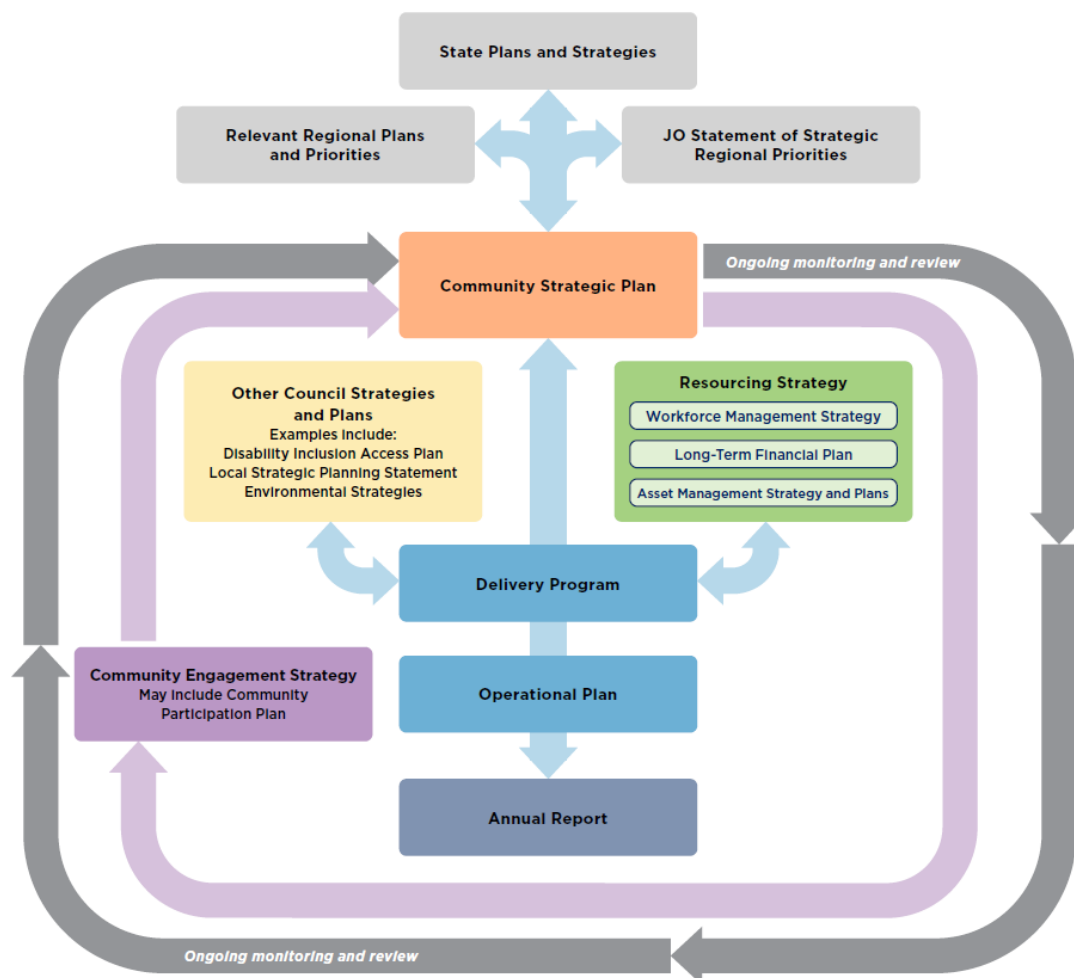
The Community Engagement Strategy is a method of ensuring organisation and co-ordination in the Council's approach to involving and consulting the community in decisions regarding the local community. The Junee Shire Council covers the town of Junee and the villages surrounding it including Illabo, Eurongilly, Wantabadgery, Bethungra and Old Junee. This vast geographical area requires Junee Shire Council to generate various forms of communication and consultation to ensure involvement from all the localities within the area.

An effective Community Engagement Strategy can ensure the utmost efficiency of community consultation and involvement, by providing a framework to adhere to.

All councils within NSW are required to work within the IP&R framework. Community Engagement encompasses the entire IP&R process.



Business as Un/usual 2020 – Community Covid- 19 Business Forum



Above: Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework



Volunteers Summit 2018

The **Community Engagement Strategy** defines what is meant by 'Community Engagement', identifies stakeholders, and outlines the methods of engagement which will be used.

This plan will give the Junee Shire community a clear understanding of:

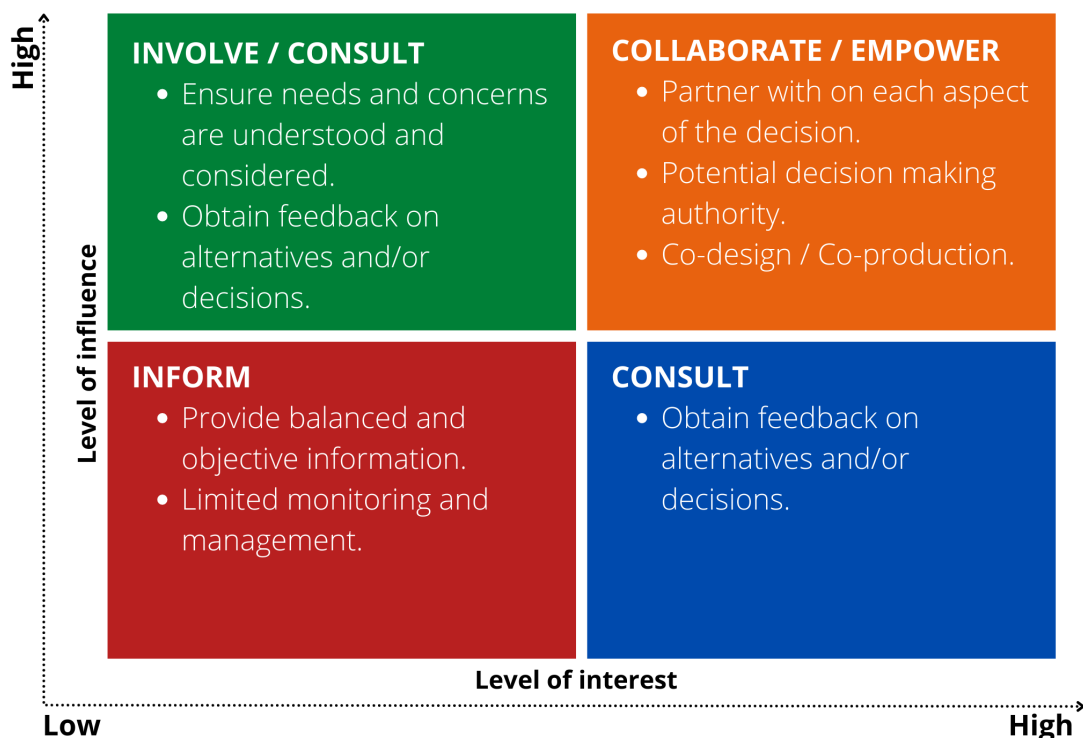
- Council's commitment to Community Engagement,
- Strategy objectives and standards,
- Key stakeholders and engagement methods,
- What level of engagement will occur,
- How the Community Engagement process will be managed, including feedback and evaluation of the Community Engagement process.

Community engagement is a way of including the views of the Junee Shire community in the Council's planning and decision-making processes. In other words, the Council will use the framework of the document to engage with the community to identify, understand, and develop strategies to address and consider issues set against any legislation requirements and Council's available resources, now and into the future.




WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement and community consultation are fundamentally different in their method and outcome. Community consultation comprises one-way processes where Council may provide information or in other instances obtain feedback on a particular proposition. As level of interest grow or there is significant change in strategic direction, we move from informing to consulting and as the level of influence increases, we move from informing to involving. When both the level of interest and level of influence are high collaborate and empower tools are used in the decision making process.



Looking at the concept of community engagement more closely, the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) considers community engagement to be a planned process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions. A variety of methods for engagement exist along a spectrum with increasing public participation and impact as depicted in the following diagram (reproduced from IAP2):

Increasing level of public impact 					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis and/or decision.	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 provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct 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.
Example Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web sites • Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberate polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

This Community Engagement Strategy aims to at least engage with the community at the “involve” level described above and therefore further along the spectrum than the one-way communication style previously seen in a consultative rather than engagement environment. Whilst we might strive towards the “empower” level wherever appropriate it can be noted that within local government only the elected body is empowered to make decisions and implement actions.



STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS

Objectives

The following objectives should be observed when planning and implementing community engagement activities:

- *Efficacy* - ensure Council Officers understand and effectively implement the Community Engagement Strategy
- *Participation* - provide the Junee Shire community with opportunities to participate in decision making on both present and future issues
- *Representation* - ensure participants and stakeholders represent a cross section of the community
- *Methods* - incorporate a range of community engagement methods that:
 - Facilitate community awareness of the engagement topic
 - Gives the community opportunities to provide feedback
- *Feedback* - proactively and regularly inform the community about the outcomes from the community engagement activities
- *Transparency and involvement* - Provide Council with a range of ideas, suggestions and general comments gathered from the engagement activities. Ensure that Council, in exercising its power of decision making, is informed of and able to respond to the community needs and interest.

Standards

Junee Shire Council will measure the quality of each community engagement activity against the following standards:

- All communication should meet the needs of the targeted community while respecting the views of other stakeholders if they apply
- All Council Officers and external consultants employed by Council, involved in implementing engagement activities, will have appropriate skills and experience to undertake engagement tasks
- An adequate period of notice will be given for each community engagement activity - the period of notice generally not be less than two weeks for activity including public meetings, a shorter notice period for specifically targeted stakeholder groups and community organisations.



STAKEHOLDERS & ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Council will make every effort to ensure all community perspectives are considered in the implementation plans, policies, programs, and activities, of council. The stakeholder list is designed to attract and reach representatives of all perspectives and the engagement methods will be empathetic to a variety of needs and situations.

Target groups will include:

- Young people
- Older people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Families
- Volunteer groups and committees
- Sport and recreation clubs and committees
- Arts and cultural clubs and committees
- Village and rural communities
- Industry and commerce

Methods of engagement will cover the spectrum from **informing** to **collaborating** (refer to the earlier section 'What is Community Engagement?'). For example, at the 'inform' end of the spectrum the current weekly Junee newspaper will provide regular information to all residents in the Shire as Council has a weekly contribution to the newspaper. At the 'collaborate' end of the spectrum, Council's Committees can provide advice and/or recommend to the Council on aspects aligned to their area of focus.

Junee Council seeks to ensure any barriers or challenges that may prevent community members from taking part in a planning or development stage is resolved. Several different strategies have been implemented to ensure various methods of communication and engagement are accessible to every member of the public, understanding that some members may not have complete access to all methods or resources. The community members that live in outlying areas or villages can source Council material through the website or social media pages, community or village meetings can be held in these areas. The Junee Council also understands meetings or documents may not be suitable for everyone, therefore including accessible online surveys and articles is available.

For some stakeholders the type of engagement will vary depending on the circumstances. For example, participation at meetings may at times be an informing role but at other times a consultative process may occur.

The following table summarises several of the varying engagement styles and expected outcomes as they apply to different stakeholders.

Engagement Type	Stakeholders	Expected outcomes
Inform Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Community Newspaper • Advertised changes to Council services • Council web sites • Direct mailing of information • Welcome to New Residents • Council Meetings 	• Whole of community	• More informed community
	• Target groups within the community	• Invitation for community to request more information
	• New Residents	• Invitation for community to contribute
Consult Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public exhibition of annual planning documents • Public exhibition seeking comment on new and amended policy • Public exhibition seeking comment on proposed development • Participation in Town/Village meetings • Surveys 	• Whole of community	• Feedback and comments
	• Potentially impacted community	○ Validation of proposals
		○ Alternatives to consider
		• Data to inform decision making
Involve Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in formal meetings • Participation in workshops 	• Business stakeholder groups	• Feedback and comments
	• Individual businesses	○ Validation of proposals
	• Community & Targeted Groups	○ Alternatives to consider
		• Data to inform decision making
Collaborate Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist advice sought through the Council Committees 	• Committee members	• Advice
	• Target groups within the community	• Recommendations



Village Improvement Plans Community Engagement 2021 – Wantabadgery

Junee Shire Council also ensures the consideration of NSW government stakeholders through the Community Participation Plan, that outlines and recognises the rights of the community on the planning and development of the local area. The Community Participation Plan is a requirement of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and is in place.

Junee Shire Council wholeheartedly supports the social justice principles of equity, access, participation, and rights. Council will make every effort to ensure that all perspectives are considered in order to:

- Involve a cross section of the community by using a variety of communication methods
- Identify specific community groups for particular projects
- Accommodate groups with diversified needs (including but not limited to language, cultural, minority groups or those with special needs)
- Attract community groups or individuals who can often be difficult to reach (such as young people, socially disadvantaged, people from diverse backgrounds etc).



IMPLEMENTATION

The Junee Shire Council has identified several activities that clearly have a community engagement function associated with it. These include:

- The local Junee newspaper, which is published weekly and has Council issued information weekly,
- Council's half-year progress report and annual reports that are published by the Council,
- Continual exhibition of planning documents.
- The Council also is a partner in hosting a 'Welcome to New Residents' annually, which introduces and welcomes new community members who have moved into the council area aimed at providing introductions, knowledge and roles available for involvement in community life.
- Youth Council meetings are regularly held, which allows the young community to influence and discuss decisions regarding the youth.
- Every year, both the Junee Junction and Aquatic Centre and Junee Library release surveys to their patrons, to develop a consensus of opinions and improvements that could be made to improve customer satisfaction.
- Community members can also contact elected representatives to discuss relevant issues for the community.
- Community Surveys
- Correspondence to the council via e-mail or telephone



Senior Citizens Week

There are also several committees which hold scheduled or regular meetings and to which the Council has nominated delegates. Whilst these may have a community engagement aspect to them, they are not included in the table above because they are already scheduled and are administered by others. They include but are not limited to:

- Goldenfields Water County Council
- Junee Health Advisory Committee
- Riverina Joint Organisation
- Riverina Eastern Organisation of Councils
- Riverina Murray Regional Emergency Management Committee
- Riverina Regional Library
- Rural Fire Service Liaison Committee, Riverina Zone
- Rural Fire Service Bushfire Management Committee, Riverina Zone
- Senior Citizens Week Committee
- Traffic Committee
- Weeds Committee
- Junee/Coolamon Community Safety Precinct Committee

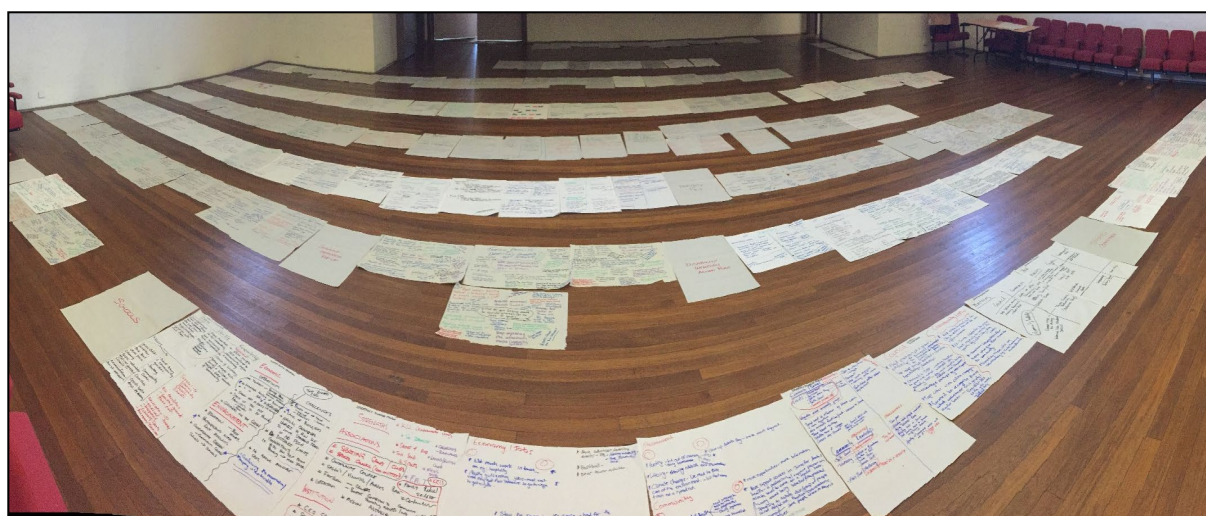
Other's activity including public exhibitions, project specific engagement and business/industry meetings will occur as required.



MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

The Junee Shire Council also wants to ensure feedback of the engagement approaches is captured to ensure any improvements or adjustments are made to enhance community outcomes. The Council may conduct exit surveys once an event has finished or questions within surveys evaluating the method of communication – for example a questionnaire or satisfaction poll may be requested of a group after a meeting, allowing citizens to have an opinion on what worked for them and what could be altered. This feedback can therefore assist Council in producing more appropriate means of engagement, overall improving community satisfaction and involvement.

Council is committed to ensuring ongoing community engagement evolves to meet the needs of the community. The review and update of methods of engagement for relevant will continue.



Community Strategic Plan community responses.