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## 2.5 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Community Development</b>
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Manager of Community and Customer Services</b>
<b>Date of Adoption</b>	<b>24 June 2020 – Resolution 030620</b>
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	<b>25 February 2026 - Resolution 070226</b>
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	<b>(3 years / or earlier if required)</b>

### **OBJECTIVE**

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide a clear statement of Council’s commitment to best-practice community and stakeholder engagement in decision making.
- Define the guiding principles that ensure appropriate, effective and inclusive engagement is undertaken consistently across the Shire.
- Outline the mechanisms required to embed and continually review best-practice engagement within strategic and operational planning.

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Shire of Wongan-Ballidu (“**the Shire**”) staff, contractors and consultants responsible for managing projects, plans or initiatives that impact stakeholders or the wider community. It applies to engagement delivered through traditional methods and through online platforms as these continue to develop. This policy does not replace legal or statutory obligations; however, it should guide business-unit-specific practices and procedures.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Shire is committed to open, inclusive and transparent communication and engagement to ensure our community has meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them. This commitment supports better decision making that reflects both the needs of the Shire and the interests of the people we serve.

While the Shire must consider technical, financial and legislative requirements, every effort will be made to involve affected stakeholders at the appropriate stage of the decision-making process. The Shire has adapted the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values to shape our approach. Our engagement practices will be consistent with recognised international best practice.

## **PRINCIPLES**

1. Those affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. We will be transparent about how participants' contributions will influence the final decision.
3. Good decisions balance the needs and interests of both the Shire and stakeholders.
4. Those affected or interested will be actively identified, and we will make every reasonable effort to support their participation.
5. We are committed to access and inclusion for all members of our diverse community and will select engagement methods that best enable participation.
6. We will provide clear, timely and appropriate information that supports meaningful engagement.
7. We will keep participants informed about progress and clearly communicate how their input influenced the final outcome.

The Shire recognises the importance of integrating best-practice engagement into strategic and operational planning, business case development and project management, and will work towards continuous improvement in this area.

## **WHEN THE SHIRE MAY ENGAGE**

Engagement may occur when:

- Council resolves to formally engage.
- A decision or plan that will substantially impact the community and there is some part of the decision or plan that is negotiable.
- Developments or changes that have potential to impact residents and ratepayers.
- There is legislation, policy or an agreement requiring community engagement or consultation.
- Seeking input into strategic or long-term planning.
- Delivering major projects or addressing strategic issues.
- Stakeholders or the community have expressed an interest or could be interested in a decision or plan where there is a range of outcomes.

## **HOW THE SHIRE MAY ENGAGE**

The Shire's approach to engagement is planned, purposeful, and proportionate. Engagement is guided by the Shire's community engagement principles and considers factors such as community and stakeholder interest, political sensitivity, potential for partnerships, level of impact, legislative requirements, time, resource, and budget constraints.

**Engagement may occur when:**

- Council formally resolves to engage.
- A decision, plan, or project will substantially impact the community, and there is some aspect that is negotiable.
- Stakeholders or the community have expressed, or are likely to have, an interest in a decision or plan with multiple potential outcomes.
- Community input can enhance decision-making, project outcomes, or future opportunities.
- Legislation, policy, or agreements require engagement or consultation.

The Shire will use tools such as the IAP2 Spectrum (Appendix 1) and internal guidelines to determine the appropriate method and level of engagement. The level of engagement will vary depending on the nature, complexity, and potential impact of the project or decision.

### **Levels of Engagement:**

- **Inform** – Keeping the community and stakeholders informed about decisions, actions, or for educational purposes.
- **Consult** – Seeking community opinions and feedback, providing an opportunity for stakeholders to share knowledge before decisions are made.
- **Involve** – Working with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are reflected in alternatives and providing feedback on how input influenced decisions.
- **Collaborate** – Partnering with the community to develop solutions, with input reflected in decisions to the maximum extent possible.

Engagement may involve multiple levels over the life of a project, as matters evolve and different levels of input become appropriate. Quality engagement is inclusive, accessible, and well planned, and follows a four-stage approach: Planning (developing an engagement plan), Doing (preparing and conducting engagement), Reporting (analysing input and providing updates), and Evaluating (reviewing the process and outcomes). Both qualitative and quantitative input are considered when planning engagement and reporting outcomes.

### **WHEN IT IS NOT EFFECTIVE OR APPROPRIATE TO ENGAGE**

Engagement may be neither effective or appropriate when:

- Legal or confidentiality constraints exist.
- There is insufficient time due to the urgency of the matter and consultation would be impractical.
- The matter concerns a policy-driven decision where previous engagement has occurred.
- A decision has already been made.
- The Shire is not the decision-maker and cannot influence the outcome.
- The matter relates to public safety or an emergency.

In these circumstances, the Shire will still inform stakeholders why the decision has been made (if the Shire is the decision-making authority).

### **ENGAGEMENT ADVERTISING PERIODS**

The Shire recognises that community participation may be limited during certain holiday periods and seasonal events. As such, engagement processes will generally not be initiated between the final Council meeting of the calendar year and the first meeting of the following year, except where required by legislation, directed by Council, or deemed unavoidable.

Where engagement activities do occur during these periods an additional 14 days will be added to the consultation period to allow adequate time for community input.

The Shire will also consider cultural, seasonal, and community-specific factors when scheduling engagement, ensuring that primary stakeholders and communities have a genuine opportunity to participate and provide feedback.

## **ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**

The Shire acknowledges that government agencies (e.g. schools, hospitals, police) are core responsibilities of State and Federal Governments. However, the Shire recognises its social and community responsibility to support and engage with these agencies, where doing so facilitates delivery of services aligned with the Shire's legislated responsibilities. Government departments will be engaged as key stakeholders where relevant and at the appropriate level of the engagement spectrum.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS UNITS**

Business units are responsible for embedding the principles of this policy into their day-to-day planning, project development and service delivery. This includes ensuring that community and stakeholder engagement is planned, implemented and reviewed in a clear, consistent and effective manner.

Engagement will be required for a range of Shire activities, which may include, but not limited to:

- Strategic plans and frameworks (e.g. the Strategic Community Plan)
- Scheduled roadworks and right-of-way construction
- Road closures and traffic-calming proposals
- Local Laws
- Changes to service delivery and/or levels of service
- Reactive building maintenance and minor capital works
- Public or other building demolitions
- Building upgrades and refurbishments
- Playground and park upgrades, replacements or renewals
- Major projects and new facility development
- Projects or community initiatives which directly impact community or residents

When planning engagement activities, business units must ensure the following elements are considered and appropriately addressed:

- Legislative requirements
- The point in the process when engagement is required
- Situations where engagement or feedback may not be appropriate
- Engagement methods suitable to the scale and impact of the initiative
- Minimum expectations for inclusivity and accessibility
- How community input will be considered and used to inform decision-making
- Who the responsible decision-maker is
- Communication and feedback processes, including timing and methods
- Reporting requirements
- How engagement activities will be evaluated to support ongoing improvement

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

This policy supports the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu's vision, mission and values by ensuring that community and stakeholder engagement is integrated into all relevant planning and decision-making processes. Engagement activities will contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives, including sustainable service delivery, inclusive community participation, and informed decision-making that reflects the needs and aspirations of our community.

## DEFINITIONS

**Community and stakeholder engagement:** A planned process, which aims to ensure those affected by a decision are given an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. It includes a range of activities and strategies to encourage the participation and involvement of all stakeholders.

**Community consultation:** A subset of community engagement, as defined within the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, it is a level of engagement in which the purpose is to obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

**IAP2:** International Association for Public Participation. The leading professional organisation advancing the practice of public participation globally by promoting the right of those affected by a decision to have a say in the decision-making process, highlighting the benefits of this to organisations, governments and individuals, and providing training programs.

**IAP2 Spectrum:** Developed by IAP2, the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum helps to define the community's role in any public participation or engagement process. The spectrum identifies five levels of engagement based on the engagement purpose or goal and the organisation's promise to the public during the process. The spectrum also includes examples of methods or tools suitable for each level.

**Public Participation:** Is another term used to describe the process of 'community engagement'. Other terms include 'civic engagement', 'citizen engagement', 'public engagement' and 'public involvement'.

**Stakeholder:** Individuals, groups or organisations interested in, impacted by or in a position to influence the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu's activities or objectives.

**Statutory:** A legal requirement the Shire must adhere to.

**Sustainability Principles:** Long-term decision making; fairness for all generations; improving lives and human rights; environmentally and socially responsible development; acting with precaution; conserving the natural environment and biodiversity; minimising the impact of operations, goods and services; accountability, transparency and engagement.

## REVIEW

Reviews of this policy are to be undertaken every 3 years or earlier if required.

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation of this policy.

## APPENDIX 1



### IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ADAPTED FOR USE BY SHIRE OF WONGAN-BALLIDU

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
<b>Public participation goal</b>	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them understand the problems, alternatives and/or solutions to enable them to provide meaningful feedback and make informed decisions. <b>NB.</b> Informing happens throughout the process – not only after the final decision has been made	To obtain feedback from stakeholders on options, analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that stakeholder issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution
<b>Our promise to stakeholders</b>	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
<b>Role of stakeholders</b>	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner
<b>Examples of tools and methods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate website</li> <li>• Social media – Facebook</li> <li>• Wongan-Balli Boomer</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Advertising</li> <li>• Email, mail out</li> <li>• Corporate publications</li> <li>• Displays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Ballot</li> <li>• Pop up events</li> <li>• Listening posts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vox pops</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen advisory/ reference committees</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> <li>• Meetings</li> </ul>

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