



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

P3.0128.1

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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

**DIVISION:** CUSTOMER & CORPORATE SERVICES

**BRANCH:** COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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## PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Camden Council is committed to effective engagement with its community. Council recognises that by engaging with the community, decision making is enhanced, services are more effectively delivered and that strategies and policies are likely to result in better outcomes for the community.
- 1.2 This policy is guided by Council's Communications and Community Engagement Strategy, which aims to provide clear direction and guidance for Council's communication and engagement processes.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of this policy are:
  - to identify Camden Council's community engagement activities.
  - to confirm Council's commitment to inclusive, extensive and well-evaluated community engagement across the entire organisation.
  - to provide a framework for a coordinated approach to effective community engagement.
  - to support Camden Council's 2040 Community Strategic Plan.
  - to reinforce Council's commitment to regular continued engagement with the community to assess and reassess the community's priorities and concerns as outlined in the Strategic Plan - Camden 2040.

### 3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to Council representatives, including but not limited to, staff and representatives at forums, steering groups and advisory committees, in the process of engaging with the community and stakeholders within the Camden Local Government Area.

### 4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Community** - refers to all stakeholders including: residents, businesses, individuals, interest groups, community organisations, ratepayers and others with an interest in the Camden Local Government Area and its future direction.

- 4.2 **Community engagement** - the process of actively sharing information and involving the community on issues, plans and decisions that impact the local area to build stronger relationships and enhance the community's capability to influence Council's decisions. This includes consultation with the community which is the process of informed dialogue between the Council and the community on an issue prior to the Council making a decision or determining a direction on that issue.

## **PART 2 – POLICY STATEMENT**

### **5. COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- 5.1 Camden Council is committed to ensuring that the community is provided with information and the opportunity to participate in decision making activities about issues that affect them. Council's Community Engagement Policy is also based on principles of social justice including equity, access, participation and rights.
- 5.2 The following principles provide the framework for which Council will undertake community engagement:
- Council is committed to keeping our community informed and listening to them.
  - Where appropriate, Council will proactively seek and encourage contributions from those who may be affected by or interested in a decision.
  - Council will consult broadly enabling a large number of residents and target groups to provide input through a range of mechanisms promoting accessible and inclusive engagement.
  - Council will conduct thorough identification of key stakeholders in the process of undertaking community engagement and provide as many opportunities as possible for engagement with identified key stakeholders.
  - Council will collaborate with stakeholders and other levels of government to achieve common goals.
  - Council will explain decisions to the community and how their input was considered.
  - Council will evaluate engagement processes and outcomes.
  - Council will provide the resources and support to staff in the community engagement process.
  - Council will endeavour to use cost effective and high value consultation opportunities.
  - Council will undertake to engage with the community at the earliest appropriate stage of the life of the project and consider timing of engagement activities to maximise participation wherever possible.
  - Council will ensure consultation venues are suitable and accessible.

- Where possible and appropriate, Council will link engagement processes with existing events, groups and activities.
- Where information is technical in nature, Council will provide explanatory information wherever possible.
- Council will provide information to consultation participants that it accurate, unbiased and written clearly.

5.3 Through this policy, Council seeks the following outcomes:

- A whole-of-organisation commitment to Council's community engagement process.
- Community engagement processes are incorporated into work practices.
- Community members feel that they have an opportunity to express their views, are listened to and receive feedback on how their input was considered.
- Enhanced reputation of Camden Council as a transparent and open Council through following clear, accessible and orderly participatory processes.
- Improve community ownership of Council decisions.

## 6. WHEN COUNCIL SHOULD ENGAGE

6.1 Council recognises that there are many different issues, situations and opportunities that will require engagement with the community. Council is committed to seeking out and facilitating involvement with the community where an issue or decision has the potential to have a high level of impact on the community.

6.2 Council recognises that differing issues will require varying levels of engagement and the use of different engagement methods. Council will undertake formal community engagement processes when it is:

- a legislative/statutory requirement;
- when Council resolves to consult the community;
- on issues with the potential to affect the well-being of community members;
- in identifying and understanding the needs and priorities of the community;
- in monitoring resident satisfaction levels of Council services and facilities;
- by agreement with a government agency or statutory body.

6.3 Council will endeavour to undertake community engagement beyond this scope. Council also recognises that it may not be possible to undertake community engagement in every circumstance.

6.4 Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council is required to publicly exhibit certain information for a set period of time. Notification in respect to Development Applications is governed by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Any statutory obligation must be adhered to.

## **7. PREPARING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

- 7.1 Camden Council recognises that a community engagement strategy should be developed for formal community engagement processes undertaken by Council. A template for the development of a strategy, level of engagement required and engagement methods, is available from Council's Community Engagement Team.
- 7.2 The following should be considered when developing the strategy:
- Objectives, aims and parameters.
  - Audiences and stakeholders researched and identified.
  - Engagement timeframes.
  - Level of engagement required (such as inform or consult).
  - Methods of engagement (guidelines on engagement methods are available in the Communications and Community Engagement Toolkit).
  - Roles and responsibilities.
  - Explanation of how community engagement will be integrated into the decision making process.
  - Methods of evaluating the engagement and providing feedback to participants.
  - Method of reporting results and outcomes.
- 7.3 Further information on how to engage with the community is available in Council's Communications and Community Engagement Toolkit.

**RELEVANT LEGISLATION:**

*Local Government Act 1993*  
*Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979.*

**RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

Media Policy  
External Communications Policy  
Communications and Community Engagement Strategy

**RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR:**

Director Customer & Corporate Services

**APPROVALS**

ELG, Council

**NEXT REVIEW DATE:**

March 2016

**RECORD KEEPING NOTES**

**PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS:**

Available to the public via Council's website.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Changes made</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Approved by General Manager	Nil	12 May 2015