COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY 2020

1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines Clarence City Council's commitment and approach to community engagement to assist the council in its decision making.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy will be achieved by:

- Demonstrating accountability and transparency in council's community engagement practices;

- Empowering decision makers through appropriate community engagement;

- Encouraging and providing opportunities for the Clarence community and stakeholders to contribute to council information gathering and decision-making processes;

- Enhancing community knowledge about how council operates, including its decision-making process within the scope of council's various roles and functions;

- Enabling council to make appropriate decisions by considering the impacts on its communities and stakeholders, and by seeking to balance both short and long term competing interests;

- Building confidence in decisions made by council;

- Being clear when the council is the ultimate decision maker; and

- Fulfilling council's statutory and fiduciary obligations in accordance with relevant legislative requirements.

3. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

This policy meets relevant statutory requirements and in particular:

- *Local Government Act 1993; and*

- *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993.*

This policy aligns with:

- City of Clarence Strategic Plan 2016-2026 (and any successor to that plan);

- Customer Service Charter;

- Aldermen Code of Conduct;

- Privacy Policy;

- Guide to Planning and Community Engagement; and

- International Public Participation Principles.

4. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this policy.

Consultation/Engagement	Refers to how council connects with its communities and key stakeholders to exchange views, ideas and information in the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programs, projects and services.
Communication	Refers to the various ways in which council connects with its communities and key stakeholders to: • inform • exchange information and/or ideas • build better understanding of decisions and/or outcomes.
Community	A group of people united by at least one common characteristic; such as: • geography, • shared interests, • experiences, • values or attitudes and who are connected to the City of Clarence.
Stakeholder	A person, group or organisation, who may be affected by, have a specific interest in, or would like to contribute to, a council decision or issue under consideration. They may be within or external to council. This includes Special Committees of Council as prescribed under the *Local Government Act 1993.*

Statutory Consultation	Formal public consultation/engagement required by, undertaken and managed in accordance with relevant legislation. Where this relates to development applications made in accordance with the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA), council will advertise and display the application for 14 days (or such longer period as agreed by the applicant) in accordance with LUPAA requirements. The additional consultation methods and options provided by this policy do not apply.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with the following principles. Council will:

■ Communicate openly and in a timely way, in plain English;

■ Have a planned approach to community engagement activities;

■ Provide information and opportunities for community involvement that are meaningful, inclusive, accessible, and seek a diverse range of perspectives;

■ Be clear about how much opportunity there is for stakeholders to participate through the consultation process and to contribute to a decision;

■ Ensure processes conform with relevant statutory requirements;

■ Ensure Aldermen have to opportunity to provide input reflecting community views and expectations into the consultation and engagement planning process;

■ Use a variety of engagement/consultation techniques to engage with relevant communities and stakeholders;

■ Keep the community and stakeholders informed, including reasons for decisions;

■ Ensure that all contributors to any community engagement activity are informed of the outcomes following the completion of consultation and engagement;

■ Review completed community engagements to identify opportunities to improve council community engagement practices; and

■ Retain records in accordance with relevant statutory requirements.

6. EXCEPTIONS

There are times when council will not undertake community engagement. These circumstances include:

- Ordinary council operational activities and decisions, such as maintenance, repair, investigation or similar activities. However, where ordinary operational activities (such as a road reconstruction) are likely to significantly impact an identified group of people (for example, certain residents or store holders), consultation will occur; Day-to-day operational decisions;

- Where there is immediate risk of injury or harm or an emergency situation,

- Legal or commercial constraints that prevent or restrict community engagement;

- A conflict with statutory consultation requirements;

- Where an Alderman is acting on an individual basis; and

- Where council is not controlling or managing the consultation. This will happen from time to time when private enterprise or other proponents are managing the community engagement processes. Council will encourage all proponents to undertake appropriate community engagement, using council's engagement policy as a guide for best practice.

7. REVIEW

Council will review this policy within 12 months of each Tasmanian local government election.

8. CONSULTATION TOOLS

Council will utilise one or more of the following consultation tools to conduct its community engagement activities. Consultation tools will be determined based on a 'best fit' assessment.

Tool	Overview
City of Clarence website	Used to centralise information on a project and to promote consultation activities.
Direct email/letter	Used to deliver information to a targeted group. Can also be used to provide updates on a project.

Advertisement	Provides information or advises of an opportunity to engage. Types include: print (*Eastern Shore Sun, Mercury*, newsletters, etc.), radio and video (television or online).
Social media	Used to engage online through interactive social platforms such as *Facebook*. Complements other communication methods.
Signage/posters/flyers	Used to communicate information on the project. Complements other communication methods.
Media release	A written communication for the media announcing timely, newsworthy and accurate information.
Your Say Clarence (website)	Used to centralise a range of information on a project and to utilise the following online engagement tools: • **Polls:** Useful for getting a quick answer on a question here participants choose their answer from multiple choice. • **Surveys:** Used to gather feedback in a guided way. • **Stories:** Where participants share a story relating to the subject matter of the consultation. Useful for understanding community views and individual perspectives. • **Guestbook**: Where participants upload comments on a consultation/topic. • **Questions:** Where participants can ask questions with responses provided publicly or privately. Useful for managing issues and as a communications risk mitigation tool. • **Forum:** Where participants share their experiences with others, ask questions and have conversations in a safe and interactive environment. • **Ideas:** Where participants can add their ideas for public endorsement and comment. • **Places:** Where participants can provide their feedback by adding a pin on a map and adding photos and completing a quick survey.
Reply paid postcards	Used to provide information and receive feedback on a project. Seen as a more user-friendly approach than a letter.
Public display	Used to provide more information about a project. Can be used for information only or staffed for questions and answers.
Presentation	Used for face-to-face interaction to inform a specific group on a project. Groups may be made up of people representing a broad cross section of the community or with a segment or user group.
Walk and talk	A walking meeting at the site of a consultation. Used to provide information about a project. Attendees can ask questions and provide feedback.
Interviews	Used to gather individual views either on the phone or in person.

Formal submission (legislative requirement)	Used to gather written responses on a proposed decision, policy or document. The *Local Government Act 1993* indicates where there is a legislative requirement for formal submissions. The details required in a formal submission include name, contact details of the person submitting the form and the date of submission. Formal submissions are provided to council and may become publicly available information.
Public meeting	Used for face-to-face interaction to provide information and seek feedback. Useful to determine the level of interest in a project. A public meeting may also be a legislative requirement of a project. Types of public meetings include information sessions, presentations (panel, keynote), and Q&A.
Advisory committee/working groups	Council has several advisory committees and working groups that provide recommendations to council. A new committee or working group may also be created for a project. A committee or working group may be time-limited or an established/permanent function.
Workshop/focus group	Used for face-to-face interaction to gather unique insights on how the project may affect stakeholders. Workshops/focus groups involve a facilitator asking questions that participants reflect on and share their thoughts to assist with decision-making. A valuable tool for complex projects.
World Café	Used to bring people of different backgrounds together to discuss, explore, understand and problem-solve issues. A facilitator sets the context for the session and participants start a conversation about the project or a topic. Participants start at one table and move around other tables to continue the conversation with others. Participants end back at their original table and share what they have learnt. Duration can vary from one hour to several sessions depending on the complexity of the project.

This policy is supported by the operational document Guide to Planning for Community Engagement and the Working Together Structure.

For information on this policy contact Manager Communications and Strategic Development.

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