
ENGAGEMENT CODE OF CONDUCT

SUMMARY

Clarence City Council engages with the community through a variety of forums in both online and face-to-face settings.

Engagement and communication, regardless of the subject matter, must always be safe for both community members and council employees/contractors and allow people to explore ideas and participate in conversations in a productive and respectful way.

Community engagement is a key component of council's commitment to delivering transparent governance in responding to the needs of the community, and empowering both community members and decision makers through demonstration of clear accountability.

Council may engage with community in a variety of ways including online, face-to-face, community information sessions, over the phone, or in larger scale public forums.

This code of conduct works in tandem with council's Community Engagement Policy 2020 which can be found here - [Community-Engagement-Policy-2020.pdf](#).

ABOUT

Council has compiled the following guidelines for engagement for both community members, and council employees and representatives. The guidelines aim to ensure that all consultation participants are treated with respect and have a positive experience regardless of their views or their role in a consultation/engagement.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may adversely affect the outcomes of a consultation or, in some cases, result in feedback being discounted or excluded.

1. ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1.1. It is highly recommended to read any supporting documentation or information prior to engaging so that your comments and ideas are informed and relevant.

1.2. Debate is welcome but should be constructive and respectful of differing views and opinions.

1.3. Please respect the time of both council employees and other community members by staying on topic and within scope.

1.4. The protection of free speech and diverse opinions and values does not include:

- Offensive language / swear words or content that a reasonable person would consider abusive, harassing, stalking, threatening or offensive toward another person or persons.
- Potentially libellous accusations or content that is defamatory, knowingly false or misrepresents another person.
- Threatening or offensive comments.
- Violations of confidentiality.
- Violations of privacy, publicity, moral or any other right of any third parties or infringements upon any copyright, trademark, trade secret or patent of any third party.

1.5. Respect moderators and/or council representatives. Even if moderators and representatives are behind a computer screen, please remember that they are real people who are doing their job.

2. CONSULTATION GUIDELINES FOR COUNCIL WORKERS

2.1. Officers are encouraged to engage with the public as early in a consultation planning process as possible.

2.2. Communicate effectively:

- Use multi-layered processes and multiple ways for community members to be heard.
- Keep the community informed and follow up where possible either by updating web or consult pages, pushing out communications on a decision, or calling back interested parties.
- Consider the form of your communication i.e. what hours, times, places suit your target audience.

2.3. Remember that you are representing council and, as such, your personal views on the consultation must not be aired.

2.4. Be kind and respectful regardless of participants views and how they may affect your project.

REPERCUSSIONS

Violation of 1.4 of the guidelines may result in a warning or instant disengagement. If a second violation occurs council reserves the right to block the offender from interacting on social media or may remove them from participating in a face-to-face consultation/engagement. Any public comments in violation of the guidelines will be deleted and feedback discounted.

Serious violations, such as threatening language towards staff or members of the community will result in immediate blocking online and may be referred to police.

Breaches of the guidelines in an online format will be dealt with as follows:

1. Removal of comment - any comment that, in the view of the moderator, is directed at a person or persons rather than the topic or process, or is abusive, defamatory, rude, or inappropriate in nature will be deleted. These comments made in a face-to-face context will result in a conclusion of the engagement.
2. Permanent blocking - a participant who continues to violate the moderation rules may have their access to the website permanently blocked.
3. Automatic blocking - a participant who posts or links to inappropriate, offensive or illegal material will be immediately blocked from social media.
4. Violations of moderation rules on Your Say Clarence will result in the comment/feedback being deleted and discounted from the consultation.

Breaches of the guidelines in a face-to-face format will be dealt with as follows:

1. Notice of breach - any comments or behaviour that, in the view of the moderator/facilitator/representative, breaches the rules will be flagged with the offender as inappropriate and they will be reminded of the guidelines for engagement.
2. Temporary suspension - a participant who repeatedly breaches the rules may be suspended from engaging with council for a period of time. The period will reflect both the severity and/or ongoing nature of the breach.
3. Permanent blocking - a participant who continues to violate the moderation rules following reinstatement after a period of suspension may be blocked from engaging with council.

In the event of the above, a council officer will ask the offender to leave the face-to-face setting and disengage. If they do not and the abusive behaviour continues the police will be called.

Council workers will judge engagements on a case-by-case basis and use common sense when assessing against the above guidelines.

Our intent is always that we are finding ways to engage and continue engagement wherever possible, rather than finding ways not to do so.