

Draft Community Engagement Strategy



Submission date: **19 November 2022, 7:32PM**

Receipt number: **4**

Related form version: **1**

Name

Email

Provide your feedback about the Draft Community Engagement Strategy here.

We already have a community engagement 'policy' which is totally ignored. It is a great concept , damn shame that this continues to be just a concept for BSC. The recommendation to resilience of flood prone land for emergency housing with zero community consultation is a perfect example. Endangering residents and their homes - it's a disgrace. No amount of strategy

Draft Community Engagement Strategy



Submission date: 29 November 2022, 11:14AM

Receipt number: 2

Related form version: 3

Name

Email

Provide your feedback about the Draft Community Engagement Strategy here.

Overall I think this is a good representation of Council's various levels and types of community engagement. Using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, from my experience I think Council does extremely well at the Inform and Consult levels, and pretty good at the Involve level. I would however like Council to consider how it might improve at the Collaborate and Empower levels. I think that at this level things get a bit uneven across Council's various departments, with some departments doing better than others. I would, as a concrete example, like to see a much greater level of collaboration built in to Council's project management software system, which at the moment still operates at the default level of 'Inform and Consult'. The IAP2 Collaborate has this as it's goal: 'To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.' To achieve this properly with say infrastructure projects, requires more collaboration points built into the project management system. Overall I do congratulate Council on its genuine and sustained efforts to engage our diverse and sometimes unruly community.

Draft Community Engagement Strategy



Submission date: **18 November 2022, 4:49PM**

Receipt number: **3**

Related form version: **1**

Name

Email

Provide your feedback about the Draft Community Engagement Strategy here.

It is well thought out, and all-inclusive. The challenge lies in connecting all of these various groups across the Shire in positive interactive dialogues and communications. more the community knows about what is going on, and how they can contribute proactively, the more opportunity to build on overall Shire cohesion, and respect.



Mullumbimby Residents Association

NOV 28th 2022

Submission by Mullumbimby Residents Association

Byron Shire Community Engagement Strategy

We have two suggestions we believe will greatly assist with Community Engagement in our Shire

1. Employ a full time Community Engagement /Liaison Officer
2. Assign Areas and Towns in the Shire for each Councillors responsibility.

We believe there is so much talent in this Shire, so many creative people, such a pool with intellect and professional experience that is completely untapped. Why? Because so many do not know what the Council is doing. Nor do they know how to become meaningfully involved. And, if and when they do, they find it very difficult to have their views heard with no feedback loop.

We Believe to keep doing what has always been done (which is basically what this Draft Strategy lays out) is not going to make much difference.

Therefore, we suggest the appointment of a Community Engagement /Liaison Officer to greatly assist with enabling the community to become more engaged and involved.

1. Community Engagement /Liaison Officer

There are two distinct roles for a Community Engagement/Liaison officer. One is to help Engage the Community and the other to be the Connection between Residents and Councillors and Staff.

Lismore and Tweed Council have such persons and we have been told their role has been absolutely fundamental and invaluable with regards to Community Engagement, Community Involvement and Community feedback to Council.

For example

Tweed Shire Council have an Engagement and Events Team which include a Project Leader, two Community Liaison officers (one for infrastructure and one for flood recovery) plus a dedicated Community Engagement Officer for all other issues.

Lismore City Council has a dedicated Community Engagement Co-ordinator

Why Byron Shire needs a Community Engagement /Liaison officer:

1. At present residents, when they have concerns, are advised to contact the Department in Council that may best deal with their issue. However, getting information from staff is very limited as staff are heavily restricted in what they can say or advise and certainly do not have the role of advocating for the resident.
2. Very few in the community have any idea of what Council is doing. The Web Page "YOUR SAY" and the occasional Advertisement in the Echo is nowhere near enough. Most people aren't even aware of the Web Page or keep up with the latest postings.
3. When the Council does hold public information meeting very few turn up. We need someone to spruik and encourage people to come.
4. Making a Submission is not easy and very time consuming. What is submitted has no follow up on how it is used or taken into account. This is called CLOSING THE LOOP. We would like to see how Byron Shire Council could improve on delivering this important task.
5. The 5 minutes to speak at Council Meetings is very daunting and far too short and most people are very reluctant to do this.
6. Usually it is also the same people who respond to community input and we believe a wider strategy is needed to cover those less able or inclined to be included.
7. We need someone who is a great communicator and full of life and fun to take on this position. Byron Shire is unique but our Council does not reflect that uniqueness.

2. Councillors Community Engagement

1. Councillors, although there to represent the Community, do not have the time to encourage community participation. They are often difficult to contact and very under resourced to spend time properly communicating with the public.
2. There is also a problem for residents to know which Councillor to contact for their particular issue.

To help solve this we propose allocating a specific area and town for each Councillor responsibility. This councillor would then represent that area at Council Meetings. This was previously the case before the Ward Electoral System in the Shire was abolished several years ago.

3. We note on page 18 of the draft Community engagement strategy that:

“Council invests in ongoing training for staff in the IAP2 framework as well as other professional development opportunities to learn about best practice and new and emerging engagement techniques.

The most important thing is for the community to have confidence that engagement and consultation is at the core of our business; that people know that opportunities to feed into process and projects are, and will always be, available.

It is about being consistent, educating people on where to find information and how to contribute.”

We also believe it would be advantageous to give feedback to Community on the number of Councillors and/or Staff, who have participated in the Community Engagement Training as outlined in the IAP2.org.au website.

<https://iap2.org.au/training/iap2a-certificate/>

We wish to begin a dialogue with Council and other Community Organisations with regards to these suggestions and would appreciate a meeting with the decision makers regarding this Community Engagement Strategy. This at least will be a start in closing the Loop.

With thanks

Dale Emerson

President

Mullumbimby Residents Association

Draft Community Engagement Strategy



Submission date: **1 December 2022, 2:55PM**

Receipt number: **6**

Related form version: **3**

Name

Email

Provide your feedback about the Draft Community Engagement Strategy here.

The Community Engagement Strategy is a welcome companion piece to the earlier Community Participation Plan, being based on the same IAP2 methodology. The Mayor's Foreword includes a very positive and aspirational statement of the Byron community engagement vision. The notion of a meeting place where people can come together to connect, share, grow, inspire, and create positive change – and give input, ideas, and continuing dialogue, enables the community voice to make a meaningful contribution to council decisions with constructive dialogue.

Byron Council has done much work over several years to create an inclusive and accessible culture that welcomes and considers all voices and opinions – not just the loudest ones. I have participated in many forums where constructive suggestions are appreciated and acted upon, thereby delivering better community outcomes.

I acknowledge and appreciate the use of a wide range of techniques to provide the community with information and connection across the engagement spectrum defined by the IAP2 model. Hopefully Zoom meetings, forced upon us by COVID and floods, will reduce over time as these are not an ideal replacement for physical workshops and information sharing sessions.

The benefit of early and effective engagement and consultation was recently demonstrated in Bangalow with a stakeholder-based Community Working Group created to provide additional feedback for the Bangalow Material Streetscape Guide. An early onsite consultation also

included the project consultant, BSC staff and PPC reps, and was therefore able to apply a broader base of community knowledge towards validating and improving some basic design concepts. Suggested change to the Draft CES, p14, Community and stakeholder channel - add "and Community Working Groups" after "Place Planning Collective".

Having become quite involved with Byron community matters as president of the Bangalow Progress Association, I am confident that the engagement and consultation process works well, with full credit due to the Media and Communications team who drive this program with sincerity and energy. The Community Engagement Strategy provides a very useful reference document for describing the overall engagement framework.

Draft Community Engagement Strategy



Submission date: **1 December 2022, 11:32AM**

Receipt number: **5**

Related form version: **3**

Name

Email

Provide your feedback about the Draft Community Engagement Strategy here.

I offer this submission as an active local community member, from my experience as an advisory committee member (Water & Sewer), and also as a PhD researcher in the field of community engagement and water management.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT & WHEN TO ENGAGE

I would like to see far greater attention given to the “collaborate” and “empower” levels of the IAP2 spectrum, particularly through the use of codesign principles for major planning and strategy preparation. In codesign, community is engaged early, ongoing and meaningfully as partners in strategy/plan preparation. This is the antithesis to releasing a completed “draft” document and asking for comments.

For example, as a member of the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee, I see huge potential for a codesign approach to our IWCM which is currently in being drafted. However, despite raising this repeatedly since I joined the committee earlier this year, I have been provided no information on the proposed engagement for the IWCM plan and get the impression we will be left with a classic “design, announce, defend” approach as seems the norm for most council plans and strategies. For further information on codesign in water strategy, see this article I co-authored for AWA, or check out the recent Lower Hunter Water Strategy or MidCoast Council’s IWCM engagement process. (LINK) It would be disappointing for Byron Shire – with our remarkably active, engaged and informed community – to lag behind the state in water strategy engagement.

It is also a missed opportunity that codesign was not used to

prepare this Community Engagement Strategy, or the Community Participation Plan (about which I have similar reservations to what is outlined below). Why not gather a group of active community members – from the stakeholder groups identified in this strategy, the advisory committees, other active community groups like Mullum Cares or Resilient Byron, and from the community at large – to ask us how we would like to be engaged? Instead, we are being told how we will be engaged. There has been minimal opportunity to provide feedback to the preparation of this draft, and like any public exhibition of a draft I hold reservations about how the feedback will be incorporated.

This is closely related to the question of when to engage. I would like to see greater commitment for council to engage at the initial planning stages for major strategies and plans. For example, council could release a survey or hold workshops to let community set planning and strategy objectives at the outset, and return throughout the strategy development process. Then, by the time a strategy gets to public exhibition, community has already has opportunity to impart their values and aspirations. It is less likely that a proposed strategy will be unacceptable to community, and there will be significantly greater trust in the decision-making process. The impression of tokenistic engagement will be avoided.

CLARITY ON HOW FEEDBACK WILL BE CONSIDERED AND APPLIED

This strategy is extremely vague on how feedback – where sought – will be considered and applied within planning. Case in point, this draft strategy itself: I have no idea what council will do with this written feedback after I submit it. As a passionate community member, I am taking the time to submit it anyway, but this lack of transparency is a deterrent to spending my valuable time preparing a submission.

There is a common perception that written submissions are a waste of time; being clear about what feedback council would like, what aspects of the strategy may be changed based on feedback, and how feedback will be considered may go some way to addressing this lack of trust in engagement processes.

Specifically, “Acknowledge community feedback so it can be considered by Council in its decision-making process” [When we engage table, “What for” column] does not inspire confidence that feedback is desired or will be meaningfully considered. What else might community engagement be for? Perhaps to provide accountability and legitimacy? Or to ensure council planning is grounded in community values and aspirations? In this strategy, I would like to see a greater commitment than just acknowledgement of community feedback, and specific details on how feedback will be considered.

METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

While there are diverse and (some) robust methods in the “how we engage” table and the “how we may engage” column of the “when we engage” table, there is a lack of specificity on when council will move beyond public exhibition of a draft document to utilise more meaningful engagement approaches. I urge council to move beyond consultation on draft documents - as exemplified by this draft community engagement strategy.

A simple first step would be providing a submission framework for community feedback, for community members who may not be familiar with writing submissions/providing written feedback. This would also be useful for community to understand exactly how council will use the feedback provided. So, for this draft Engagement Strategy, instead of a single-question survey form with space to “Provide your feedback”, Council could have developed a short questionnaire for community members to respond to. You could have broken down the key points of the strategy, e.g. asked for feedback on the methods of engagement for the different types of council activities. You could have left space for community to identify key stakeholders who were not included in the stakeholder analysis. You could have asked the question "how do you like to be engaged?" or "how do you hear about council's engagement opportunities?" There are a range of approaches that would be less intimidating than a blank box in which to provide comments!

Looking beyond this, workshops, drop-in sessions and stalls are a great way to hold a conversation with community

about the direction they would like to see a strategy go. Having activities and/or clear questions on which you are seeking a response would also make this more accessible to community members who are not accustomed to providing feedback. No strategy or plan should rely on written comments without face-to-face engagement components to allow a two-way conversation between council and community.

Considering the accessibility of feedback mechanisms to community members of different backgrounds, education levels and familiarity with local government processes would go a long way to reflecting the values and aspirations of the broader Byron Shire community, not just those of us who having the ability, time and energy to write a formal submission.

Noting that “our commitment to our community is to do our best to give every opportunity to people to provide feedback”, it is essential to move beyond a reliance on public exhibition of completed drafts and written submission as the primary method of engagement.

Hi Annie

I'm a local town resident; I live in town and work in the Industrial Estate.

Just a quick email in regards to Community Engagement.

There is not one friend/local person I know who does not complain that the council no longer advertises DA's in the paper. It was a valuable and important service to this small community that has intense pressures of development and tourism on them 24/7.

If we feel strongly about this, would a petition help to get this service to the community resurrected ?

I have also noted that Level 2 advertising for certain DA's is not being done as outlined in the Community Engagement document. Who would we bring this to the attention of in the future?

Thanks for your help regarding this matter.