Gladstone Regional Council

Council Policy

Title	**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**
Policy Number	**P-2019-06**
Business Unit/s	**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EVENTS**
Date of Adoption	**19 MARCH 2019**
Resolution Number	**G/193693**
Review Due	**19 MARCH 2022**
Date Repealed	

1.0   PURPOSE:

To ensure all residents and relevant stakeholders are provided with a fair and meaningful opportunity to participate and contribute to problem solving and planning decisions made by Council.

To provide effective stakeholder engagement enabling productive relationships, improved dialogue, create a culture of deliberation, putting the community at the core of Councils business and in turn stronger local democracy.

To ensure Council's community engagement practices are based, promote and enable best practice among Council workers and Councillors, ensuring Gladstone Regional Council meets its legislative requirements in relation to community engagement under the Queensland *Local Government Act 2009*.

2.0   SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Elected Members, Gladstone Regional Council employees, consultants contracted by Council and any other person/s that undertakes activities for Council.

This policy and associated documents define the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Councillors and staff in engaging with the community; and the tools by which Council will maximise its engagement with the community to strengthen local democracy.

The policy scope acknowledges the role of stakeholders having a role in providing input into Councils decision making processes

3.0   RELATED LEGISLATION:

Local Government Act 2009

4.0   RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- Corporate Plan 2018-2023
  - Strategic Goal One – Connect - 'Engaged, involved and proud communities'
- Community Engagement Corporate Standard
- Community Engagement Toolkit
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Assurance Standards

5.0   DEFINITIONS:

To assist in interpretation of this policy the following definitions apply:

"Community" - means 'the public'. The community includes ratepayers, residents and all the people who live, work, study, conduct business or use the services, facilities and public places in the region.

"Community engagement" – any planned processes that involves the community in problem solving, planning or decision-making and uses community input to assist in making decisions. Community Engagement can include communicating with the community about decisions made; consulting on specific ideas or proposals; involving the community in planning processes; and collaborating with the community to make decisions.

"Contractor" – means an independent entity that agrees to provide a certain number or quantity of goods, material, equipment, personnel, and/or services.

"Employees" - means any person employed by Council including permanent, temporary, full time, part time and/or casual arrangement satisfying the requirements of an employee under the *Industrial Relations Act 2016 (Qld)*.

"Our People" – means any person undertaking work on behalf of Council and includes employees, volunteers, contractors (and their employees), consultants, vacation employment students and work experience students of Gladstone Regional Council.

"Policy" - means Gladstone Regional Council's Community Engagement Policy.

"International Association of Public Participation IAP2" – means an international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and affect the public interest.

"Stakeholders" – means a person or organisation that can affect, be affected by or perceive themselves to be affected by a decision or activities, products and services and associated performance. Organisations will have many stakeholders, each with distinct types and levels of involvement and often diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and concerns.

6.0   POLICY STATEMENT:

Council recognises that engagement with the community and other stakeholders is an important part of the democratic process. Community and stakeholder engagement enables Councillors and staff to be confident that all views are considered along with technical requirements, research and any other policy or legislative requirements.

Stakeholder engagement compliments but does not replace the decision-making role of Council. Whether a community or stakeholder opinion is divided or overwhelmingly in favour of one option, it remains for Council to make strategic decisions and our people to make operational decisions.

Council is committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement with its community to facilitate a dialogue between Council and the community to strengthen the democracy process.

The level and method of this engagement will vary dependant on the stakeholder, topic, solution(s), issue(s) and or project requirements.

6.1 Principles and Commitments

With reference to Section 4(2) of the *Local Government Act 2009*, Council supports the principle of "meaningful engagement". Council's Corporate Plan 2018 - 23 demonstrates a solid commitment to community engagement from its strategic vision of 'Connect, Innovate, Diversity' and its value commitments to be ethical and community focused. This is further underpinned by Councils strategic goal of 'Engaged, Involved and Proud communities'.

Gladstone Regional Council is committed to the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values of public participation and where possible will use these principles to guide engagement activities by:

1. Recognising that those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the publics contribution will influence the decision.
3. Recognising and communicating the needs of all participants including the decision makers.
4. Seeking out and facilitating the participation of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Providing participants with an opportunity to offer input into the way they contribute.
6. Participation provides contributors with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Communicating to participants how their input affected the decision.

6.2 IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Under this policy, Council's engagement activities will be carried out in accordance with the public participation spectrum as set out by IAP2.

These levels are:

1. *Inform*
2. *Consult*
3. *Involve*
4. *Collaborate*
5. *Empower*

6.3 Policy Application

To facilitate the aforementioned commitment, Gladstone Regional Council has developed a community engagement framework and tool kit designed to build capacity and performance within the organisation, providing a guiding document outlining key consideration of our people.

This policy will be implemented through the following activities:

- Community engagement awareness included in induction process for new employees
- Community engagement training related to IAP2 methodologies for key identified staff
- Role out and promotion of Gladstone Regional Councils Community Engagement Toolkit.
- Community engagement consultancy and support for internal clients via Councils Community Engagement Specialist.

6.4 Roles & Responsibilities

Councillors and our people play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will ensure that sufficient engagement has taken place to inform strategic issues that may have a high level of impact or perceived high level impact on whole or large parts of Gladstone Regional Councils Local Government Area or on a specific suburb, area, community, user or interest group.

Our people shall ensure community engagement is considered at the beginning of every project, activity and strategy developed. They are required to have an understanding of the term 'community engagement'; how it applies to their roles; knowledge of where to access information on the methodologies and engagement tools available to them when going about their business; and knowledge on the types of activities that require advice of expert professionals.

7.0   ATTACHMENTS:

Nil.

8.0   REVIEW TRIGGER:

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1.   The related legislation or governing documents are amended or replaced; or

2.   Other circumstances as determined by resolution of Council or the CEO; or

3.   Three years from date of adoption.

TABLE OF AMENDMENTS		
Originally Adopted	6 JULY 2010	10/223 (formerly Policy P-2.00.02)
Amendment 1	18 MARCH 2014	G/14/1926
Amendment 2	19 MARCH 2019	G/19/3693 (formerly P-2014/20)

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LEISA DOWLING
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4