



# Community Engagement Strategy

Our approach to engaging our community and stakeholders



northern  
beaches  
council



## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and their Country and pay our respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.



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## Purpose of this Strategy

This Strategy has been prepared to provide you (our community) with a clear understanding of the ways you can expect us to talk and listen to you, prior to Council making important decisions that may affect you or the services and spaces you use.

It details our principles and approach to delivering effective and robust community and stakeholder engagement on Council led projects and highlights why it is important to reach and engage with our whole community.







## 1 Introduction

We recognise our community's right to have input into the decisions that are important or of interest to them.

Engaging our stakeholders and community allows us to gather feedback which may include views, needs, issues and aspirations. We use this information to support effective, considered and sustainable decision making.

While engagement does not replace the final decision making of the elected Council, community engagement plays an important role in ensuring the final recommendations made by staff are equitable and well-informed.

Community engagement also provides opportunities for our community to hear different views and learn from other's experiences.



Outlined below are the seven community engagement principles that underpin our engagement practices. The principles are of equal importance.

### **Principle 1**

#### ***Prioritise and champion best practice engagement***

We build and maintain an organisational culture that genuinely wants to hear what the community says including providing our community with opportunities to participate in, and contribute to, Council outcomes.

### **Principle 2**

#### ***Plan thoroughly***

We consider the time and resources needed and recommend a diverse and agile engagement approach. A tailored, yet flexible Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is developed based on the nature, complexity, range of stakeholders and anticipated impacts of the project.

### **Principle 3**

#### ***Create open, accessible and diverse engagement opportunities***

We provide a diverse range of engagement activities to encourage participation from the whole community with the aim of reaching those who will be impacted or interested, including priority and other underrepresented communities.

### **Principle 4**

#### ***Communicate effectively***

We promote and deliver open, honest, inclusive and engaging content. Information provided to the community is comprehensive, fit for purpose, objective, timely, in clear and plain English and balanced to support the decisions we need to make.

### **Principle 5**

#### ***Build and maintain relationships***

We are committed to building relationships with our community and key stakeholders. Our approach to engagement aims to reach diverse communities and we strive to understand their needs and aspirations.

### **Principle 6**

#### ***Listen and respond***

We actively encourage everyone to express their views in an open and respectful manner.

We are genuinely committed to listening to our community and considering their views, issues and aspirations when making or recommending decisions.

We respond to feedback to demonstrate how community input was considered.

### **Principle 7**

#### ***Learn and improve***

We are always learning and continually looking for ways to improve.

### 3 Ways we engage our community and stakeholders

Successful engagement programs are supported by careful preparation and thorough planning.

Each project is unique, and how much engagement and activities are needed to support this will vary depending on the nature, potential impacts and complexity of the project.

We recognise the different groups of people that make up our community and have established engagement processes to reflect the diversity of these, including priority (underrepresented) populations.

When determining the best engagement approach for a project, consideration will be given to the level of community interest, potential impacts to our community and other stakeholders, or social sensitivities, legislative requirements, environmental challenges, as well as any time and financial constraints.

To support the best outcomes possible, we will identify who needs to be involved and undertake engagement in a variety of ways, to ensure everyone who may be affected by, or interested in, a decision has the opportunity to:

- find out about the project including what we are asking and why
- indicate their sentiment including different levels of support
- suggest changes
- raise any issues, concerns, ideas and considerations relevant to them
- hear back on how we considered their feedback and information.

The following sections describe the methods and tools we use to engage our community.



### 3.1 How we prioritise and champion community engagement

We are committed to engagement practices that support effective and sustainable decision making.

We prioritise engagement by:

- developing fit for purpose processes, procedures and systems
- taking a 'community-centric' approach to project planning
- adhering to the community engagement principles in all interactions with community members
- allocating sufficient time and effective resourcing to thoroughly plan, implement and report on engagement
- delivering training and promoting capacity building for staff
- ensuring consultants are following our processes and meeting our standards.

When planning for community engagement, we will determine the most appropriate level of participation depending on the nature and complexity of the project/issue. This is critical to choosing the most appropriate approach, activities and tools for both the project and the needs of the community.





We use the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum as a general guide to assess the anticipated level of engagement required.

**Figure 1**  
IAP2 spectrum of Public Participation

Increasing impact on the decision					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To inform the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The spectrum describes the desired level of public participation and highlights that the community's role in decision making is a critical element affecting the design of any community engagement strategy. The spectrum is used internationally and is found in public participation plans around the world.

The Empower level on the spectrum has limited application in local government as the elected Council is the decision making body. It is likely that most community engagement will occur on the levels of Inform to Collaborate.

3.2 How we plan

Thorough and robust planning is critical in delivering successful project outcomes and making effective and sustainable decisions.

We will prepare Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plans for all level one to three projects, however, each will vary in detail depending on the nature and complexity of the project. The level of engagement is guided by the level of impact as identified in Table 1: Levels of impact and engagement.

Tailored and innovative approaches will be identified where possible to encourage and enhance participation from the wider community including priority (underrepresented) populations. At any time during a project it may be necessary to reassess the level of engagement and vary the engagement approach due to a change in the situation or recognition of further implications or community needs.

Engagement is aligned with Council’s project planning methodologies to ensure engagement stages match project objectives, timeframes and milestones, and to identify engagement appropriate to the key decisions needed.

This diagram details the community engagement process:

Figure 2  
Engagement planning process





**Table 1**

Levels of impact and engagement

Level of engagement needed	Nature and complexity indicators	Project types	What you can commonly expect from us
Level 1 - Inform and involve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct impacts identified to residents or stakeholders</li> <li>• Risk to the whole or large part of the Northern Beaches community if solutions or outcomes are not fit for purpose</li> <li>• Potential impact to priority (underrepresented) populations</li> <li>• Potential impact to natural environment or heritage (Aboriginal or European)</li> <li>• Potential impact on the health and safety of the local or wider community</li> <li>• High level of complexity including one or more technical documents</li> <li>• Document size greater than 30 pages</li> <li>• A wide range of divergent views is expected</li> <li>• The potential or proposed loss of, or significant change to, any facility or service to the community</li> <li>• The proposed loss of, or significant change to car parking</li> <li>• Relationship with state or regional strategies or directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Polices</li> <li>• Frameworks</li> <li>• Strategies</li> <li>• Plans (Action Plans)</li> <li>• Plans of Management</li> <li>• Major (LGA-wide) studies</li> <li>• Masterplans</li> <li>• Discussion/issue papers</li> <li>• Major infrastructure project</li> <li>• Land categorisation (e.g. change from community to operational land)</li> <li>• Removal or major change of a facility or service</li> <li>• Provision of a district or regional facility (e.g. skate park, indoor sports centre)</li> <li>• Environmental Assessments (Review of Environmental Factors, Environmental Impact Statements or other changes that impact on natural bushland or waterways)</li> <li>• Improvements LGA wide service (e.g. Emergency Services)</li> <li>• Change to a district or regional facility (e.g. Aquatic Centres and Theatres)</li> <li>• Removal or relocation of open space or a regional playground</li> <li>• Changes to a major road or transport corridor</li> </ul>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start as early as practical in the project lifecycle</li> <li>• allow for as much time as possible to plan, implement and report</li> <li>• allocate sufficient resources to plan and conduct engagement</li> <li>• review previous or similar engagement history</li> <li>• implement a minimum two-staged approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stage 1 - ideation, explore opportunities, highlight issues, identify gaps</li> <li>- Stage 2 - public exhibition of the draft plan - have we got it right?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• establish an online project page</li> <li>• exhibit for 28 days at a minimum - consider six to eight weeks</li> <li>• erect signage at physical sites</li> <li>• use at least three data capture methods: (e.g. online comment form, ideas board, email, written survey etc)</li> <li>• consider other tools such as idea boards, online forums, social/hotspot mapping</li> <li>• conduct at least one information session (physical or virtual)</li> <li>• post on social media</li> <li>• send email updates</li> <li>• provide summarised information or a standalone summary document utilising info graphics, where possible</li> <li>• consider developing video content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promotional</li> <li>- descriptive/educational (pre-recorded or live webinar or slide presentations)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Level 2 - Inform and consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected impact to a local community (e.g. whole or most of a suburb or Strategic/Town/Village Centre)</li> <li>• Some impact to the broader Northern Beaches community likely</li> <li>• Broader community interest in project</li> <li>• The change to any facility or service to a local community</li> <li>• Moderate degree of divergent views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General changes to a Council service</li> <li>• Concept and landscape plans (open space and reserves)</li> <li>• Removal or relocation of a local playground</li> <li>• Significant upgrade regional or local playground</li> <li>• Change to or loss of valued activity or program (e.g. local youth activity)</li> </ul>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start as early as practical in the project lifecycle</li> <li>• allow for as much time as possible to plan, implement and report</li> <li>• allocate sufficient resources</li> <li>• review previous or similar engagement history</li> <li>• implement a minimum one-stage engagement approach (a two staged approach may be recommended depending on the information required)</li> </ul>

Level of engagement needed	Nature and complexity indicators	Project types	What you can commonly expect from us
Level 2 - Inform and consult (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for some controversy or conflict between community members</li> <li>• Removal of street trees</li> <li>• Changes to local infrastructure</li> <li>• Moderate to minor level of environmental impact/risk</li> <li>• Potential for some, although not significant impact on state or regional strategies or directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelopment of a sportsground including proposed lighting</li> <li>• Local study</li> <li>• Local trial</li> <li>• Proposed removal or development of a local park</li> <li>• New cycleway</li> <li>• Local street road change or closure</li> <li>• LGA-wide art project</li> <li>• Change to a local event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish an online project page</li> <li>• erect signs at physical sites</li> <li>• letterbox drop notifications to neighbouring resident</li> <li>• ensure concepts, design or maps are clear with technical language minimised</li> <li>• uses at least two data capture methods (e.g. online comment form, ideas board, email, written survey etc)</li> <li>• send email updates</li> </ul>
Level 3 - Inform and consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential impacts to a localised section of community (part of a suburb, local neighbourhood or street)</li> <li>• Moderate impact to a small community or user group/s of a specific facility or service (mostly mitigatable)</li> <li>• General community support for proposal likely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to fees and charges (unless deemed contentious)</li> <li>• Minor upgrades to a local playground</li> <li>• Development or renewal of a shared path</li> <li>• Pedestrian crossing upgrades</li> <li>• Local street or streetscape upgrade - no ongoing traffic changes or parking impacts</li> <li>• Local art project</li> <li>• Naming and nominations</li> <li>• Leases and licences</li> <li>• Changes to a local activity program</li> </ul>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start as early as practical in the project lifecycle</li> <li>• allow for as much time as possible to plan, implement and report</li> <li>• allocate sufficient resources</li> <li>• implement a one-stage engagement approach</li> <li>• establish an online project page</li> <li>• letterbox drop notifications to neighbouring residents</li> <li>• ensure concepts, design or maps are clear with technical language minimised</li> <li>• use at least one data capture method</li> <li>• send email updates</li> <li>• erect signs at physical sites</li> </ul>
Level 4 - Inform and provide enquiry channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low or no risk of controversy or conflict at the local level (small neighbourhood or street)</li> <li>• Local area, small community or user group/s of a specific facility or service</li> <li>• Only a small change or improvement to a facility or service at the local level</li> <li>• Likely agreement by majority of community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footpath - new or renewal</li> <li>• Easement notice</li> <li>• Road Reserves</li> <li>• Playground repairs</li> <li>• Basic concept designs</li> <li>• Maintenance work</li> </ul>	<p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure concepts, design or maps are clear with technical language minimised</li> <li>• provide an email address and contact phone number for enquiries</li> <li>• erect signs at physical sites</li> <li>• notify close by residents by mail prior to construction.</li> </ul> <p>Comment/enquiry forms are optional but may assist in collating enquiries</p> <p>An online project page is recommended, but not compulsory.</p>

### 3.2.1 Developing a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Our overall approach to engagement will be open, flexible and responsive.

The engagement plan is a 'living' document and will be updated throughout the project as needed.

The plan will:

- define the project scope, background, broad timelines, purpose and engagement objectives, and desired and/or expected outcomes
- identify any legal and/or policy requirements
- consider previous projects of a similar nature and any other historical context or relevance including resources, budget, systems and time required
- identify the resources, budget systems and time required to deliver the required level of engagement
- build an understanding of the community demographics, history, trends and local issues
- consider potential risks and tactics to mitigate them
- consider other projects being engaged on at the same time
- build a deeper understanding of the community by identifying all stakeholders, interested community members, and their anticipated levels of interests and any potential impacts
- identify tactics, content and key messages guided by behavioural science principles
- select engagement methods and tools that provide people with a range of options for participation, taking into consideration the collection of both quantitative and qualitative information
- incorporate the communication approach to inform, update and close the loop with participants
- devise an action plan that highlights key milestones and deliverables
- identify reporting and evaluation measures.



### 3.3 How we communicate with you

It is important to us to share information with our community in a clear, transparent and consistent way.

In the context of this Strategy, we are mainly referring to the sharing of information to support the engagement process.

We use a combination of online, print and physical (face to face) communication channels to provide the community with every reasonable opportunity to hear about a project and decide whether it is something that is important or of interest to them.

We aim to provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist in understanding the project context, challenges faced, alternatives, opportunities for improvement and/or solutions in a meaningful way.

We will describe the purpose and the steps of the engagement process and continue communicating and sharing information across the whole lifecycle of a project including prior to, during and following the engagement.

We prepare content and materials that are in plain English and easy to read. We strive to use relatable narratives (stories) to describe what we are doing, how and when we are doing it, and why. We will provide a clear call to action and layers of information to allow individuals to read as little, or as much as they like. Table 2 describes the common ways we share information with our community.

**Table 2**

Communication matrix

What we do	How we do it	Ways we do it
Share information with you	<p>We:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create easy to understand information through the use of clear, accessible and appropriate language, graphics and imagery</li> <li>• use simple and prominent calls to action (e.g. what we think you should focus on and do)</li> <li>• provide summaries of complex documents or breakdown information into chunks, steering readers to relevant sections of a document or webpage</li> <li>• build layers of information that allows the reader to make an informed decision regardless of the amount of time or their abilities</li> <li>• update the project page and send emails regularly</li> <li>• provide open and close dates</li> <li>• provide up to date comment and submission counts</li> <li>• look for opportunities to provide information in alternative formats and in languages other than English when relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emails</li> <li>• Web (project) pages</li> <li>• FAQs</li> <li>• Factsheets</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Print media</li> <li>• Direct (mail) notification - letter, brochure, flyer, post card</li> <li>• Information sessions</li> <li>• Onsite signs and displays (including QR codes)</li> <li>• Banners, posters and other static display material</li> <li>• Video - information/educational based or promotional</li> <li>• Artist impressions (including before and after graphics)</li> <li>• Social/hotspot mapping</li> <li>• Images and info graphics</li> <li>• Video content (You Tube or embedded etc.)</li> <li>• Easy to read online flipbooks</li> <li>• Pre-recorded webinars</li> <li>• Telephone calls</li> <li>• Physical/paper documents</li> </ul>

### 3.3.1 Reaching diverse communities

We will strive to ensure information shared with our community across all our channels is written in a way that all people can easily understand it. There are times when we need to go above and beyond this to reach people in the community that we have identified as being particularly impacted by the project.

We will consider the following:

- People living with disabilities and their carers.
- People who do not speak English as their first language (or at all).
- People with various lived experiences of cultural, societal, financial and other differences.





### 3.3.2 How we create open, accessible and diverse engagement opportunities

Once we have the community's attention through various communication methods, as already outlined, we need to make engaging with us easy, accessible, interesting and as diverse as possible. This is sometimes challenging, as our projects are often complex and technical.

We will primarily use online methods to engage, however, will aim to hold physical (face to face sessions), where practical, dependent on audiences we are trying to engage and the information we are collecting. Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners or Welcome to Country will be provided for both online and physical events.

An online 'Have Your say' project page will be established for all projects identified as level one to three allowing for opportunities to have meaningful dialogue and input from the community and key stakeholders. The Engagement matrix shows some of the common ways we engage and interact with our community and stakeholders. (Table 3: Engagement matrix)

We aim to:

- provide consistent and reliable engagement opportunities while looking for varying and innovative ways to make it interesting, without compromising ease of use
- gather feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions
- listen to and acknowledge issues, concerns and opportunities for improvement
- understand community sentiment including varying levels of support
- look for opportunities to partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and/or the identification of the preferred solution.

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Note consultation on development application and planning proposals is guided by the Northern Beaches Community Participation Plan (Plan Making and Development Assessment). This is a requirement of Division 2.6 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

**Table 3**  
Engagement matrix

What we do	How we do it	Ways we do it
Create open, accessible and diverse engagement opportunities	<p>We:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• start engagement early and continue to keep everyone informed and involved throughout the process</li> <li>• offer diverse, tailored and innovative online and physical activities to encourage wide participation</li> <li>• provide multiple ways for the community to have their say on each project</li> <li>• endeavour to go where our communities are already interacting - both in online and physical environments</li> <li>• ensure both the online environment and physical venues and locations are accessible</li> <li>• deliver engagement activities at days, times and locations that are convenient to the community, taking care to avoid holiday periods and cultural or religious celebrations, where possible</li> <li>• provide materials in a culturally appropriate format and consider experienced and culturally sensitive facilitator and Auslan interpreters where there is significant cultural interest/participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online submission/comment forms</li> <li>• Open (self-selected) online surveys</li> <li>• Phone surveys</li> <li>• Closed (pre-selected) online surveys</li> <li>• Intercept surveys</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Q&amp;A sessions</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Live webinars</li> <li>• Pop ups and drop ins</li> <li>• Site tours</li> <li>• Social pinpoint/hotspot mapping</li> <li>• Ideas boards</li> <li>• Interactive PDFs</li> <li>• Story (narrative) collection</li> <li>• Online discussion forums</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> <li>• Public hearings (plans of management)</li> <li>• Hotline/phone</li> <li>• Events - local and LGA-wide</li> </ul>

### 3.4 How we build and maintain relationships

We actively work with our community and look to partner with key stakeholders, to help establish relationships, build trust, and create better outcomes for our community.

**Table 4**

Collaboration matrix

What we do	How we do it	Ways we do it
Work with you	<p>We:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborate with the community and stakeholders on projects of high importance, complexity and value</li> <li>• look for opportunities to partner with key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion forums and debates</li> <li>• Project working groups</li> <li>• Committees</li> <li>• Deliberative polling</li> <li>• Participatory budgeting</li> <li>• Community summit</li> <li>• Panels</li> <li>• Citizen's Jury (modified)</li> </ul>



Every Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan will identify relevant stakeholders, along with their needs or potential interests and our proposed engagement activity for each. This 'stakeholder map' may be refined as a project progresses and any new information emerges. The following is a list of some of our more regularly engaged community and stakeholders.

**Table 5**

Indicative list of community and stakeholders

### Key stakeholders

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Advocacy groups                                   | • State and Federal Members of Parliament             |
| • Arts and culture groups                           | • Mayor and Councillors                               |
| • Carers  | • Media   |
| • Chambers of commerce/business associations        | • Neighbouring councils                               |
| • Children (under 18)                               | • Not-for-profit organisations and groups             |
| • Clubs and hotels                                  | • People with a disability                            |
| • Community service providers                       | • Ratepayers  |
| • Community groups                                  | • Residents (including those who rent)                |
| • Commuters   | • Resident associations                               |
| • Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds | • Schools and educational facilities                  |
| • Emergency services                                | • Seniors/senior groups                               |
| • Environmental groups                              | • Service groups                                      |
| • Families  | • Sporting, leisure and recreational clubs and groups |
| • First Nations People                              | • Students  |
| • Government departments and agencies               | • Visitors/tourists                                   |
| • Homeless/unhoused/rough sleepers                  | • Volunteers/volunteer organisations                  |
| • LGBTQIA+ communities                              | • Workers   |
| • Local business and industry                       | • Young people (18-30)                                |

### 3.5 How we listen and respond

We want to ensure that the feedback of those engaged is taken into account when decisions are made. Effective engagement is only as good as the information we receive and how it impacts the final outcomes and decisions.

We prepare a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report for every project categorised level one to three (as identified in Table 1).

As part of the reporting process we will:

- read every response
- use robust and reliable information management systems to collect and store data
- analyse the data and information to identify sentiment, themes, issues and priorities
- use consistent data analysis methods, considering the appropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative information
- identify gaps in participation and information needs that are still to be addressed and identify further engagement opportunities, where needed
- identify feedback that is out of scope of the project and respond where possible  
(A response may include forwarding to relevant departments/teams for consideration)
- identify any confirmation or political bias that may have influenced responses. If any are found, we will consider remedying actions
- prioritise and action health and safety concerns raised as soon as possible
- note form letters and petitions responses
- work with our community to ensure that feedback is, where applicable, directly reflected in the solutions developed
- prepare the internal report in a clear and succinct format for decision-makers.

### 3.5.1 Responding to feedback

Once we have considered the feedback received, Council staff will make, or recommend, decisions. We will then prepare a response (or a series of responses) to our community and stakeholders. As part of this response process we will share the outcome confirming how the engagement contributed to the decision. This will include:

- updating our project page with outcomes of the engagement including the Community Engagement Report and, where possible, provide next steps
- emailing everyone who provided feedback (and did not opt out from regular updates) or expressed an interest in the projects (+Follow) and other key stakeholders showing findings and outcomes with links back to the project page for more information
- where relevant, continuing to work with local community members to support delivery of project outcomes
- updating the project page with links to final endorsed documents
- updating the project page when project construction has started and completed (where relevant).

When the final decisions are being made by the elected Council, we will also email everyone who has provided feedback (and not opted out of receiving updates) or chooses to receive regular project updates by email (subscribers), that the item/report has been placed on the Council meeting agenda.

The email will contain links to the Council Agenda, Attachment Booklets, and information on how to attend and address the Council.

Once a decision is made, we will send an additional email to this subscriber group to inform them of the outcomes and any next steps. In some cases, we may also promote the outcomes through traditional media and social media channels.

The project page will be updated in line with email updates.





### 3.6 How we learn and improve

To ensure we continually learn and improve, it is critical that the engagement process is evaluated. Our evaluation approach focuses on both the outcomes and process of community engagement.

We will review engagement processes at the end of each stage to identify outcomes and opportunities to improve practices for future stages. Following this, a reflective 'lessons learnt' report will be created and shared with relevant staff. We will look for ways to include the community in this discussion where appropriate.

The following techniques will assist in providing an indication as to the overarching effectiveness of the process and may highlight issues of equality or ineffectiveness of the communications channels and content delivery.

Not all evaluation techniques will be used for every engagement. The relevant tools will be identified in each individual Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan dependent on the nature and complexity of the project.

### 3.6.1 Quantitative assessments

#### Visibility/reach

- Review of email updates/electronic direct mail (eDM) reach, numbers of opens and clicks.
- Social media reach and number of clicks.
- Total visits to project page(s).
- Traditional media reach.

#### Number of participants

- Count of total submissions/comments received.
- Number of participants in other engagement activities, e.g. ideas generated, surveys completed (including number of dropouts) and pins dropped (on social map).
- Attendance numbers at online and physical sessions/events/webinars.

#### Conversions

- Assessment of the direct correlation between the number of visits to a page and activity/activities completed, e.g. submission/comment form, ideas board or forum comment.

#### Time on page

- Calculation of the average time participants spent actively reading or participating on the project page.

#### Demographics

If collected are used to gauge a broad understanding of whether the tools and techniques were effective in reaching certain segments of the community).

- Review of the spread of demographics across whole community (representative-based sample).
- Number and effectiveness of information distribution of identified priority population or other directly impacted groups were satisfactorily represented.



### 3.6.2 Qualitative assessments

#### Timing

- Assessment of whether action/project plan delivered on time and/or adjusted accordingly based on project changes.

#### Risk and issues management

- Assessment to determine if the risk mitigation and issues management tactics were successful.

#### Outcomes/depth of response

- A wide range of views collected across all/most stakeholder groups or identified impacted audiences.
- Feedback review - looking for indications that the participant/respondent read the material provided, raised valid concerns and made reasonably informed suggestions for improvement.

#### Ongoing impact

- Substantial improvement to community experiences, wellbeing, or to local environments.
- Increase or decrease in the use of a space or facility following construction (if applicable).
- Ongoing feedback including compliments and complaints received.

### 3.6.3 Combination assessments

#### Evaluation forms

- Evaluation forms are commonly used for face to face activities (e.g. community meetings and workshops). These will commonly ask the participant to rate their overall experience and/or satisfaction levels and offer an opportunity to identify any improvements.

#### Satisfaction surveys/interviews

- A sample of respondents surveyed or interviewed to understand levels of satisfaction in the engagement process and to identify opportunities for improvements.
- Ongoing monitoring through an annual satisfaction survey and other research methods.

## Glossary of common terms

### **Comment**

A response from a community member or stakeholder that is not part of a formal public exhibition endorsed by Council.

### **Communications**

The exchange of information from Council to the community.

### **Community**

A group of people including people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use Council services, facilities and public spaces and places.

### **Community Engagement**

A broad term that essentially means how we interact with our community. It is commonly considered as a two-way (or more) conversation where Council provides the community with information and asks the community to provide their feedback.

### **Community Participation Plan (CPP)**

The CPP is a requirement of the EP&A Act (division 2.6 and Schedule 1) designed to make participation in planning clearer for the community of the Northern Beaches.

It also establishes our community participation objectives, which we use to guide our approach to community engagement in relation to Plan Making and Development Assessment functions.

### **Consultation**

The origins and use of the word consultation varies depending on the context and sector that it is used.

Council uses the word consultation to broadly mean the same as engagement.

For example, we will 'consult' with our community to see what they think about a particular idea or course of action.

It is also commonly used engagement practitioners and in public participation literature to identify a specific stage and type of engagement (as per the IAP2 spectrum).

### **Deliberation**

An engagement process with a select group of community members that focusses on a defined issue, weighs up options and provides recommendations to decision-makers.

### **Deliberative engagement**

A series of engagement practices that demonstrate influence, inclusion, participation and deliberation to open community dialogue and discussion as part of a movement towards a solution or in some cases consensus (e.g. Citizen Jury).

### **IAP2**

International Association of Public Participation ([www.iap2.org.au](http://www.iap2.org.au))

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Please note that there are multiple definitions of some of these terms. We are identifying how we define them as part of the delivery of Council's approach to community engagement.

### **Level of Public Participation/Engagement**

The degree to which a community is involved in decision making.

### **Priority (underrepresented) populations**

Council's Better Together Social Sustainability Strategy 2040 identified emerging priority (underrepresented) populations within the community who have a unique set of circumstances that need to be considered in planning for future social wellbeing and resilience on the Northern Beaches.

- Young people
- Older people
- People living with disability
- Families
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people
- Essential workers.

The term also commonly refers to LGBTQIA+ people, those experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, refugees and asylum seekers, and other low socio-economic and potentially vulnerable youth and adults.

### **Public Participation**

An alternative term for community engagement more commonly used by industry professionals.

### **Quantitative assessment**

A review that involves looking at or measuring the tangible outcomes (hard data) including actual numbers. In a community engagement setting this would include voting or response numbers, participant attendance at information sessions.

### **Qualitative assessment**

A review of subjective characteristics and opinions - things that cannot be expressed as a number such as text, video, photographs or audio recordings.

### **Representative engagement**

Describes actively seeking out and involving individuals or groups impacted by Council's activities, projects or decision making to ensure diversity of viewpoints and values are considered.

### **Stakeholder**

Individuals, groups of individuals, organisations or political entities who have specific stake (interest) in the outcome of a decision.

### **Submission**

A formal response to a public document (more commonly a policy, plan, strategy) generally made during the public exhibition period.



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