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*COMMUNICATIONS  
AND EXTERNAL  
STAKEHOLDER  
ENGAGEMENT  
STRATEGY*

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## Overview

Lachlan Shire Council (Council) understands the importance of having informed stakeholders, who are engaged with Council and what it is working to achieve. These stakeholders include our community and all other parties that are affected by Council decisions. Having informed stakeholders ensures we create a common understanding of our goals, how and why decisions are made and the benefits that will flow to our stakeholders.

Council will create this informed community through building relationships with its stakeholders and developing channels for ongoing dialogue to aid in the decision making processes. Council recognises receiving diverse perspectives and potential solutions enables Council to make more informed decisions and strengthen delivery of services to our stakeholders.

Council is committed to:

- Informing stakeholders of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives
- Promoting transparency and accountability in Council's decision making processes
- Promoting opportunities for public consultation, feedback and participation in Council activities
- Representing the views of the local community and acting as an advocate to the State and Federal Governments and in all appropriate forums.

## Objectives

Council's goal is to provide effective communication in a timely manner, through a variety of communication channels to ensure that information is received by its community and other relevant stakeholders to enable them to contribute their views and opinions, which can then be reflected in Council's decision making.

Council is committed to providing effective and timely communications by:

- Regularly engaging and communicating with its stakeholders
- Undertaking community consultation on key issues affecting its community
- Being open and transparent in its business processes and decision making
- Seeking a range of views on particular issues and if required, develop consultation plans that are tailored to the particular issue
- Actively listening to feedback received from its stakeholders.

This strategy sets out how Council proposes to engage with its external stakeholders to achieve these objectives.

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## Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an important process of fostering relationships between Council and its key stakeholders, whereby Council shares information, consults, involves, collaborates, and actively encourages constructive feedback to help shape the planning and delivery of services and Council decisions. It is not a single activity but a way of building a stronger understanding of what our community and other key stakeholders want from Council.

### Levels of Stakeholder Participation

Council recognises different levels of engagement are required with its stakeholders depending on the purpose of the engagement and the likely impact of the matter(s) to be discussed. Four levels of stakeholder participation have been identified.

Level of	• Examples of Participation Level
Informing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising stakeholders of a situation, a proposal or a decision made in response to a situation</li> <li>• Providing advice on an issue</li> <li>• Notification of opportunities to participate further in Council decision making; upcoming events and Council activity.</li> </ul>
Seeking Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding market research to identify needs or issues</li> <li>• Seeking feedback on service proposal, action or issue</li> <li>• Seeking comment on planning proposals</li> </ul>
Involving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community forums to encourage discussions or debate on issues</li> <li>• Personal contact and meetings that encourage participating</li> <li>• Negotiations relating to the planning process; acquisition of goods and services</li> </ul>
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a structure for involvement in decision making e.g. working party</li> <li>• Enabling ongoing involvement/collaborating to achieve outcomes</li> </ul>

### Level of impact on stakeholders

Level of impact	Type of impact
Level 1	High impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 2	Lower impact on stakeholders in local government area
Level 3	High Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community
Level 4	Lower Impact on a localised section of the stakeholder community

A toolkit to help staff determine the appropriate level of engagement has been prepared and is included at Attachments.

## Communication with Stakeholders

There are a variety of communication methods that Council will use depending on the purpose of the communication and the intended audience. Often, to ensure a representative response, a number of different methods may be used. Below is an overview of the methods Council may use to communicate with its stakeholders.

Communication Objective and Method				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Fact Sheets; Community newsletters; Websites/Social Media; Flyers; Emails; Volunteer networks; Staff networks; Community exhibitions and displays; Community notice boards; Media release; Council notices; Presentations.	Public comment and submissions; Focus groups; Surveys; Workshops and meetings; Feedback forms; Interviews; Suggestion boxed; Social Media.	Open meetings and workshops; Competitions; Youth and other targeted reference groups; Internet discussion and feedback (if possible)	Consensus building; Participatory decision making; Interagency networks and working groups; Reference groups.	Delegated decisions through council Committees and Council affiliated volunteers.

## Communication with Community and other External Stakeholders

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and timely communication and consultation with the wider community. Council receives feedback from its community, both verbally and in written format. This feedback provides Council with an opportunity to understand what its community wants from it and also to help inform its decision making.

The major formats where Council receives feedback from, and communicates with its community and other external stakeholders include:

### Correspondence

Council defines correspondence as including letters, facsimiles, and e-mail messages. In all of these cases Council will provide a clear, concise and prompt response to all customer enquiries in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter. Council captures this information into an electronic records management system to ensure that it is accessible and searchable.

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## Council's commitment is:

- To provide a definitive response in clear and unambiguous language, or acknowledge receipt of correspondence and an approximate timeline for a response within three business days from date of receipt of correspondence;
- If the information cannot be provided in a timely manner, the responsible officer is required to update the author of the correspondence regularly;
- Responses may be made by formal letter or by email which must subsequently be saved in Council's record management system; and
- All verbal interactions with the correspondent must be recorded by way of file note or email and saved to Council's record management system.

## Telephone Calls

Council staff will answer all calls promptly, quickly refer calls to the appropriate officer and provide clear and concise information in response to caller inquiries.

Council's commitment is to:

- Answer calls as promptly as possible;
- Advise the caller on answering of the name and department of the officer answering;
- Deal with the call, redirect the call or take a clear message as appropriate;
- Always return calls within one business day and ensure any follow-up activities are carried out promptly; and
- Record all significant telephone calls in the form of a file note in Council's record keeping system and regularly review these records to identify issues and ensure this commitment is being met.

## Face to Face Communications

Council staff engage with members of the community to impart information and gather feedback through face to face contact from over the counter enquiries at its offices and also through attendance at external meetings.

Council's commitment is to:

- Enter into dialogue in a meaningful and respectful manner;
- Provide the community with informed and accurate information;
- Actively listen and respond to verbal feedback in a courteous manner;
- To follow up in a timely manner any enquiries that cannot be resolved at the time; and
- Record all verbal interactions with the correspondent must be by way of file note or email and saved to Council's record management system.

## Social Media

Council is committed to keeping its community informed of relevant events and has established a Facebook page and website to facilitate this.

Council's commitment is to:

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- Post a minimum of five Facebook posts regarding Council activities per week;
- Use its Facebook presence to broadcast and promote community events as it becomes aware of these;
- Regularly review feedback received through its Facebook page and provide responses, as appropriate to posts;
- Actively maintain its website presence to ensure information provided is current, is relevant to reflect the activities of the Shire and continues to be a source of information for its community;
- Work to develop its website to encourage feedback from its community; and
- Record all information received through its social media presence in Council's record management system to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

## Print Media

Council uses local newspapers to ensure its community is aware of things happening at Council through advertising of job opportunities, tenders and other items of public interest. In addition Council provides content for a fortnightly newspaper column and a quarterly Mayoral Newsletter detailing key activities happening at Council and matters of interest to its community.

## Council's commitment is to:

- Keep its community informed through the use of print media for those in its community that do not have access to other means of communication;
- Provide content for a fortnightly newspaper column detailing key activities being undertaken;
- Advertise all items of potential interest to its community including work opportunities, tenders, planning activities and other relevant matters; and
- Maintain a print media register to ensure all advertised content is recorded and reviewed for omissions or inconsistencies.

## Open Council Meetings

Council holds its meetings on a monthly basis to discuss matters of interest to its community and progress against achieving the objectives outlined in the 2017-2027 Community Strategic Plan. These meetings are generally open to members of the public to attend and view Council deliberations and subject to providing written notice in the prescribed format and within the prescribed timeframes members of the public may address Council on relevant matters. These meetings are held across the Shire on a rotational basis to allow members of the community increased opportunities to attend.

## Legislative Compliance

Council also keeps its community and other stakeholders informed through its legislated reporting requirements. Council through its annual integrated planning and reporting processes seeks stakeholder input on key deliverables and the financial impacts of these deliverables. These proposed outputs are then reported to stakeholders through the 10 year Community Strategic Plan, the 4 year Delivery Program and annual Operating Plan.

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Council then reports annually, through its annual report, on progress towards achieving these deliverables; and through its financial statements on how it has applied monies received towards achieving these.

These reports are formally adopted by Council and provide opportunity for the community to express its views on Council activities.

## Public Consultation

From time to time Council will undertake additional consultation with its community on specific items where it requires additional feedback that could be obtained through the means outlined above. In these instances Council will advertise widely for submissions and dependent on need, hold public meetings, focus groups and community forums to discuss the relevant issues. Council may also undertake surveys of its residents to obtain additional feedback.

## Authority for Communication with External Stakeholders

The General Manager and Mayor are authorised by Council to handle all media enquiries and/or to authorise release of information to the media.

All other communication with external stakeholders should be reviewed and/or approved by the relevant Manager or Director prior to release.

## Definitions

**Community Engagement:** is a term that covers all the ways that Council and its community come together to improve decision making, build relationships and partnerships, raise awareness and complement representative government. It is a way of working side by side and building support for the shared goal of making the community a better place to live.

**Consultation:** is the process of developing understanding of the issues and boundaries around a particular topic or issues before decisions are made. We consult with one another when the boundaries around a decision are not understood.

**Communication:** the exchange of information. We communicate with each other when the boundaries around an issue or decision are understood.

**Communication of Interest:** all those who have an interest in a particular proposed project, program, issue or action.

**Capacity Building:** the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve a purpose.

**Staff:** includes all persons employed by Lachlan Shire Council on a full time, part time and casual basis as part of its overall workforce.

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## Attachment A: Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit

In undertaking communications with stakeholders it is important to treat this work as a project in its own right and plan the work you need to do to ensure success. This toolkit is designed to help you think about what you need to consider when planning your communication project.

Know and understand what it is you are trying to communicate

You will need to have a clear understanding of what it is you want to convey in your message and who you want to convey the information to.

### Questions to ask may include:

- What is the purpose of the message;
- What is the proposal or event, when and why is it occurring;
- Who will be impacted by the proposal and what are the likely impacts going to be;
- Do other areas of Council need to be included in the communication; and
- Is there sufficient budget to undertake the communication or consultation process?

### Determine the level of stakeholder participation suitable for the project:

Think about who are the key stakeholders for this project, what do you want from these stakeholders – for example do you want feedback, do you want to inform them?

### Things to consider:

- Are the stakeholders internal to Council or part of the broader community, or both?
- What is the level of involvement you want from the stakeholders?
- How do you want to receive stakeholder feedback – does it need to be formal or will an informal response suffice?
- How will the feedback from stakeholders be used in the project you are undertaking?

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**Attachment B: Identify the level of impact your project will have on the stakeholders**

<b>Level of impact</b>	<b>Criteria for determining the level of impact</b>	<b>Examples of projects/initiative</b>
<b>Level 1</b>	<p>A project that impacts a substantial and significant range of stakeholders (area of people) .</p> <p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the shire.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk or significant or significant impact and/or conflict across the Shire,</p> <p>Likely high level of interest from the community.</p> <p>Potential high impact on state or regional strategies or directions.</p> <p>Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of the broader community.</p>	<p>Community Strategic and is components (Operational Plan, Delivery program, Assets Plans, etc.)</p> <p>Significant policies/plans/strategies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability Action Plan</li> <li>• Capital Works Program</li> <li>• Social Plans</li> <li>• Environmental Plan</li> </ul> <p>Removal or changes to a district or regional facility/service; change to Shire-wide services.</p> <p>Provision of a district or regional facility/service e.g. new library; planning for a regional/district wide facility/activity.</p> <p>New heavy industries to the shire such as Mining.</p>
<b>Level 2</b>	<p>Some lower level real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk across the Shire.</p> <p>Potential for some controversy or conflict across the Shire.</p> <p>Potential lower level impact on state or regional strategies or directions.</p>	<p>Revising the Capital Works Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor modifications to fees and charges</li> <li>• Minor changes to service delivery</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<p>High level of real or perceived positive or negative impact, or risk on a local area, specific community or user groups/s of a facility of service.</p>	<p>Removal or changes of a local facility/service, for example changes of equipment in a playground; Local road closures.</p>

	<p>Significant change or loss to any facility or service to a specific community/target group.</p> <p>Potential for a high risk controversy and/or conflict in a localised area.</p>	<p>Review of community facilities; major works on local facilities.</p>
<b>Level 4</b>	<p>Lower level of real or perceived impact (positive or negative) impacting on a specific target group or activity at a local level.</p> <p>Low or no risk controversy or conflict in the local community</p>	

## Attachment C: External Stakeholder Engagement Matrix

Legend: **E – Essential**, D – Desirable, O – Optional, N/A – Not applicable

Type of Consultation	Level 1 High impact Shire	Level 2 Lower Impact Shire	Level 3 High Impact Local	Level 4 Lower Impact Local
<b>Informing</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>
Personal Telephone Contact	O	D	O	O
Meeting	O	D	O	D
Written Correspondence	D	D	D	N/A
Website/Internet	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	D	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issues/project	O	O	O	O
Pamphlet	O	N/A	O	O
Letter Box Drop	O	D	O	O
Notice in Local Paper	<b>E</b>	O	D	A
Media Release	<b>E</b>	N/A	O	N/A
Site Display	O	O	O	O
Displays in Other Locations (e.g. library)	O	O	O	N/A
<b>Seeking information</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	D
Suggestion Box	N/A	N/A	O	O
Telephone Survey	D	O	O	O
Written Survey	O	O	O	N/A
Website/Internet	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	O	O
Establish email distribution list on specific issue/project	O	O	O	O
Hotline/Phone-in	O	O	O	N/A
Letter or Media Promotion Inviting	<b>E</b>	O	O	N/A
Public Exhibition	<b>E</b>	O	O	N/A
Interview	O	D	O	O
Focus Group Session	D	D	D	D
<b>Involving</b>				
Meetings with User or Stakeholder Groups	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	D	D
Website/Internet	<b>E</b>	<b>E</b>	O	D
Workshop Session	D	D	D	D
Meeting by Invite	D	D	D	O
Site Tour/Meeting	D	D	O	O
Public Meeting	O	O	O	N/A
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	D	O	O	O
Taskforce or Working Party	D	O	O	O
Joint Venture	O	O	O	O

**Attachment D: Checklist for calling Public Meetings**

<b>Authorisation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Attached is a Council resolution (Minute) authorising the calling of a public meeting OR formal authorisation from the General Manager OR Director approving the selected consultation process			
<b>Consultation Strategy</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Have you established the appropriate level and category of community consultation in accordance with this document? If so, what type and level has been selected?			
<b>Purpose of the Meeting/Key issues</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The purpose of the meeting has been separately identified and is attached			
An agenda for the conduct of the meeting has been completed and is attached			
The Key Issues have been separately identified and are attached			
<b>Venue Hire</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Access for people with disabilities			
Venue size is sufficient size with available chairs to seat all people			
All necessary equipment is available for the meeting and working (e.g. lighting, overhead Projector / screen, microphones, air con, PA equipment, etc)			
Budget allocation for equipment and venue hire has been identified			
Cabling and connections available for technological presentations i.e. internet			
Arrangements have been made to collect keys and obtain security access			
<b>Councillor Invitation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
All Councillors have been notified of the public meeting and given all necessary details in writing of the matters noted in this checklist			
<b>Invitees</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
A list of persons invited to attend the public meeting has been finalised and is documented and attached hereto			
<b>Chair of the Meeting</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The Chairperson of the public meeting is ..... and this person has agreed to chair the public meeting.			
<b>Recording Decision</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The officer nominated to record the necessary decisions taken at the meeting is ..... and this person has been advised of this requirement			
<b>Notification of Stakeholders</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>

<p>All forms of public notification have been considered and the following forms of public notification have been taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Facebook</li> <li>• Condobolin Argus</li> <li>• Lake News</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Timeframe for notification of Stakeholders</b> <i>Depending on the time of consultation to be undertaken, there are often legislative requirements that must be adhered to, e.g. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 No 203.</i></p>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<p>Legislative requirements have been considered and notification of stakeholders complies with all legislative requirements</p>			
<p>Public exhibition of documents (where applicable) has occurred prior to meeting</p>			
<p>Authorisation documentation indicates compliance with legislation (where applicable)</p>			

**Attachment E: External Stakeholder Groups**

It is important to identify the appropriate sections of the community. These key stakeholders are to be involved in the consultation process. Examples of community segments to be considered are:

Owners of adjoining or affected land	<p>Primarily in development matters, rate and property matters or health matters.</p> <p>In general, an owner or occupier should receive personal notification of any service or activity that will have a specific and direct effect upon them. It is noted, however that in relation to the statutory notification process for development applications, a public meeting would not be warranted.</p>
Streets or Neighbourhoods	For traffic matters, dealings on Council land, garbage collections or for larger scale development matters.
Shire wide	For community-wide issues, providing general information e.g. recycling, Council functions, community land activities, community strategic plans.
Other Government Agencies	Council has a large advocacy role to play in advising other levels of Government of the needs and expectations of the community.
Neighbouring Councils	Council will consult with other councils on issues which cross the boundaries of the Shire e.g. waste management, resource sharing, and transport infrastructure.
Elected Representatives	Local, State and Federal representatives act as advocates for the people in a wide variety of matter.
Police	In a community liaison capacity for traffic, vandalism and criminal matters or development matters such as amusement centres and alcohol free zones.
Specific Target Groups (Older People, Cultural and Linguistically Diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Youth, Women, Children & People with Disabilities)	To ensure that affected target groups are consulted on relevant Council policies and services.
Sporting Groups/ Sports Council/Showground Users	In making decisions about sporting, recreational and leisure facilities in the Shire area.
Environmental Groups	In relation to environmental issues.

Chamber of Commerce	In matters where a Chamber of Commerce (or other organisation representing local business) is active and can provide information regarding the needs of the business community.
Community/Social Groups S.355 committees & Village Committees	Community/social groups comprising local residents should be consulted in relation to their particular interest areas and needs as well as activities and functions conducted by Council (Social, artistic or cultural interest).
Religious Groups	In matters of religious significance and social values.