

Community Engagement Strategy

Review of Community Strategic Plan and
Disability Inclusion Action Plan



Introduction

About this Community Engagement Strategy

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines how Liverpool Plains Shire Council will engage with the community on the review and update of the Community Strategic Plan and Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

It presents a framework for community engagement on the update of the documents.

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines the guiding principles and approach for ensuring the community has an opportunity to have their say in a meaningful way.

The update and review of the Community Strategic Plan and the Disability Inclusion Action Plan will deliver the following objectives of

- Building capacity
- Inform and Involve
- Accountable and transparent
- Continuous improvement

Legislative context

Community Strategic Plan

Liverpool Plains Shire Council must have a community strategic plan that has been developed and endorsed by the Council. A community strategic plan is a plan that identifies the main priorities and aspirations for the future of the local government area covering a period of at least 10 years from when the plan is endorsed.

A community strategic plan is to establish strategic objectives together with strategies for achieving those objectives.

The council must ensure that the community strategic plan -

- addresses the four key areas of civic leadership, social, environmental and economic issues in an integrated manner, and
- is based on social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, and
- is adequately informed by relevant information relating to civic leadership, social, environmental and economic issues, and
- is developed having due regard to the NSW Government's State Plan ("NSW 2021") and other relevant State and regional plans of the NSW Government.

Liverpool Plains Shire Council must establish and implement a strategy ("community engagement strategy"), based on social justice principles, for engagement with the local community when developing the community strategic plan.

Following an ordinary election of councillors, the Council must review the Community Strategic Plan before 30 June following the election. The Council may endorse the existing plan, endorse amendments to the existing plan or develop and endorse a new Community Strategic Plan, as appropriate to ensure that the area has a Community Strategic Plan covering at least the next 10 years.

A draft Community Strategic Plan or amendment of a Community Strategic Plan must be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days and submissions received by the Council must be considered by the Council before the plan or amendment is endorsed by the Council.

Within 28 days after a Community Strategic Plan is endorsed, the council must post a copy of the Plan on the council's website and provide a copy to the Departmental Chief Executive.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Under the NSW *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*, councils are required to review their Disability Inclusion Action Plan ("DIAP") every four years. Legislation also requires councils to report progress on DIAP implementation in their Annual Report.

A Disability Inclusion Action Plan demonstrates local government's commitment to people with a disability on improving access to services, facilities and jobs. It's also designed to change perceptions about people with a disability.

Our Liverpool Plains

Located in the New England North West Region of NSW, Liverpool Plains Shire ("the Shire") extends across the traditional lands of the Gamilaraay (Gomeri) Aboriginal people.

The Shire sits at the junction of the New England and Kamilaroi Highways, approximately 350 kilometres north of Sydney, 250 kilometres north west of Newcastle and 60 kilometres south of Tamworth.

Incorporating an area of 5,082 square kilometres, the Shire extends from the Great Dividing Range in the east, west across the highly fertile and productive Liverpool Plains.

Today Liverpool Plains Shire is home to an estimated 7,903 residents, around 35 per cent of whom live in Quirindi, with 19 per cent living in Werris Creek and just over 18 per cent in the Shire's six villages - Caroon, Currabubula, Premer, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah and Willow Tree – and their surrounds.

Agriculture is the main economic activity, with the sector being the primary driver of the Shire's economy. The main activities are cattle and sheep production and broadacre cropping with crops including wheat, barley, sorghum, maize, chickpeas, faba beans, soybeans, sunflowers and cotton. The Shire also has a growing poultry industry. With deep, highly fertile alluvial soils and access to ground water, the Liverpool Plains is one of the most productive agricultural regions in Australia.

Who We Are

43.4%

of the population have completed Post School Education



10.9%

are Aboriginal

50.4%

male



49.6%

female



25.8%

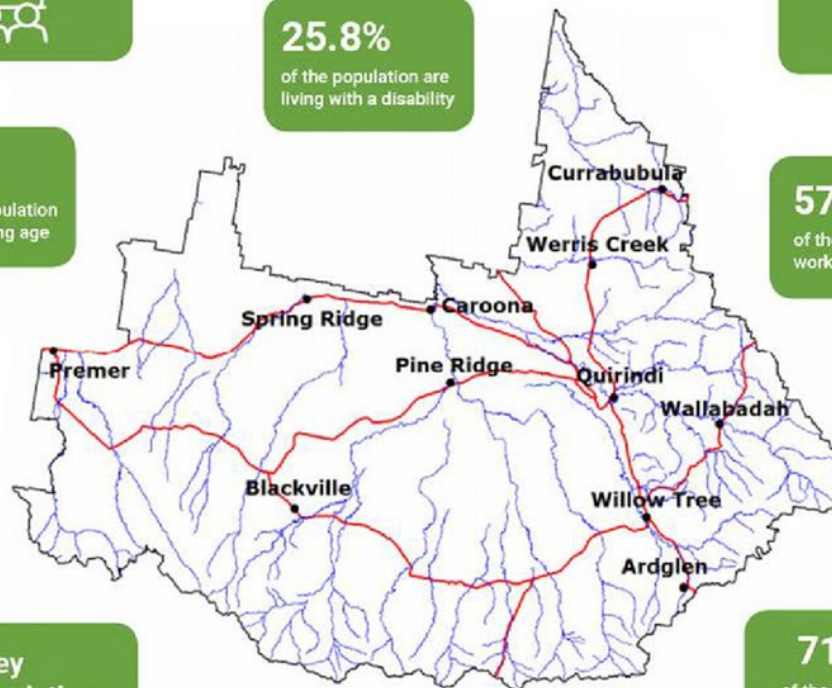
of the population are living with a disability

60%

of the population are working age

57.5%

of the population work full time



other key characteristics

three largest ancestries in the Shire in 2016 were Australian, English and Scottish.

council newsletters, rate notice inserts, local newspapers, word of mouth, Council community groups, LPSC Facebook page are the more likely means of receiving information about Council.

median age is 44 years old

0.7%

speak a language other than English at home

69.5%

of the population have internet access



71.1%

of the population has a nominated religion



* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics
2016 Census of Population and Housing

Engagement Framework

Community engagement is the term used for involving and interacting with residents and other stakeholders as a part of Council's decision-making processes. Community engagement allows community members to actively contribute to Council's decisions and actions.

Community engagement is considered to be an integral component of informed decision-making and consequently provides better outcomes for the community. As such, it aims to ensure that as many people as possible who are affected by decisions of the Council have the opportunity to be consulted about their needs and concerns prior to decisions being made.

Genuine and effective community engagement has benefits for the Council and the community. Broadly, community engagement allows the Council to tap into wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions.

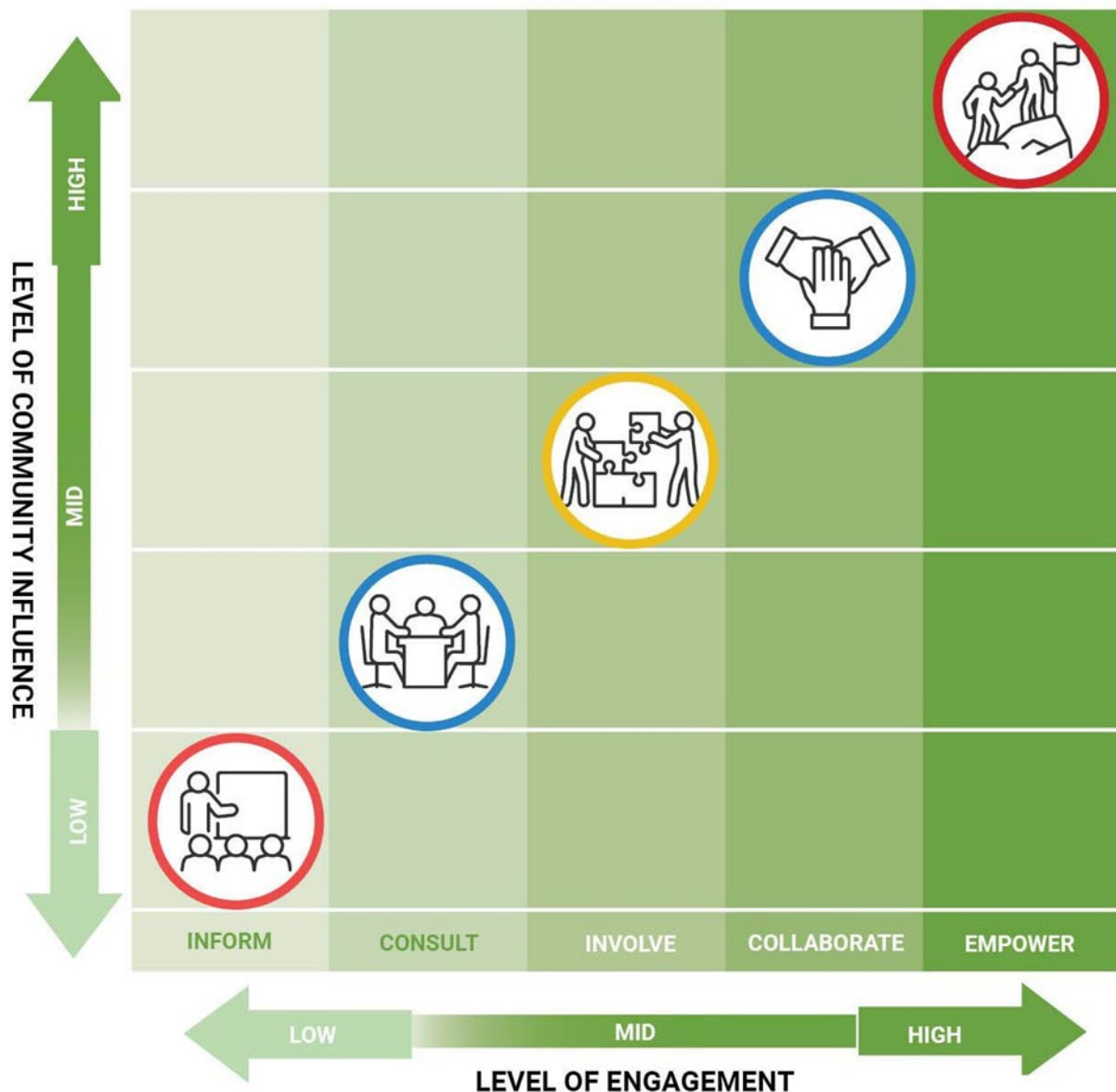


Our engagement methods

The Community Engagement Strategy has been developed to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to all engagement activities undertaken.

Council recognises that there is no 'one size fits all' model for community engagement. Notwithstanding, the community engagement process described in this Plan will be tailored to the particular needs of the project, stakeholders and the situation at hand in order to ensure that the community and stakeholders are appropriately involved on projects, matters and planning decisions that affect them.

The International Association of Public Participation recognises five (5) levels of engagement, as explained in the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.



	INFORM		INVOLVE		EMPOWER
	Lower level of engagement		Mid level of engagement		High level of engagement
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Goal	We will provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	We will obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions	We will work with you throughout the process to ensure that your concerns are consistently understood and considered	We will work together with you in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	We will help work towards the level of capacity to help the community lead and decide on the matter
Role of Community	LISTEN	CONTRIBUTE	PARTICIPATE	PARTNER	LEAD
Level of relevant engagement	e.g. Projects by the State Government that affect the local community	e.g. Participating in an online engagement on Council's Have Your Say website	e.g. Providing input to develop options for an infrastructure project for Liverpool Plains Shire Council	e.g. When developing a long-term vision and strategic plan	e.g. Building capacity skills of small business employees through skills-based training or community members joining the advisory committees which directly influence change
Examples of engagement methods	Advertisement Fact sheet Newsletter Social media Website	Focus groups Public exhibition Surveys	Workshops	Participatory decision making Co-design	Council advisory committees

Reviewing our Community Strategic Plan and developing our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The following table outlines the key steps in reviewing our Community Strategic Plan and developing our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Stage	Date	Action	Performance Targets
1	August 2021	Prepare and endorse Community Engagement Strategy.	Strategy adopted by Council.
2	September 2021	Background research and Preparation for Community Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete environmental scan – strategic assessment of key population, land use/housing, transport, community and economic trends issues and needs • Develop Community Profile – assessing key demographic and socio-economic trends • Assess progress to date in implementing Community Strategic Plan • Identify progress highlights, key strategic issues, challenges and opportunities going forward • Establish database to record stakeholders, community engagement and capture key findings 	Environmental scan and review of past achievements, current issues, challenges and opportunities completed Community Profile prepared Engagement database established
3	January 2022	Implement Community Engagement Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform • Consult • Involve • Collaborate 	Community Engagement Plan implemented in accordance with the principles and objectives of this Community Engagement Strategy
4	February 2022	Review and Assess Outcomes of Community Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify required changes to the Community Strategic Plan • Consult with representatives from all target groups to review proposed changes and finalise draft plan for exhibition 	Draft Plan finalised
5	June 2022	Community Strategic Plan exhibited and endorsed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public exhibition • Plan endorsed 	Council endorses revised Community Strategic Plan and Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Community Engagement Plan

The table below outlines the proposed community engagement approach including target groups, levels of engagement and timeframes for implementation. The plan remains flexible to allow for tapping into as-yet unidentified opportunity to reach our diverse community.

Target Group	Engagement Purpose	Timeframe	Engagement Level
Councillors	Briefing and report to Council for adoption of the revised Community Engagement Strategy	August 2021	Consult
Whole Community	Promotional campaign through a variety of channels to provide information on the review of our Community Strategic Plan and opportunities for involvement:	September 2021 – February 2022	Inform
	Obtain preliminary feedback on the Key Directions and objectives in the current Community Strategic Plan	September 2021 – February 2022	Consult
People with Disability	Promotional campaign through a variety of channels to provide information on the development of our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan and opportunities for involvement:	September 2021 – February 2022	Inform
	Obtain preliminary feedback on the Key Directions and objectives in the current Community Strategic Plan	September 2021 – February 2022	Consult
Key Agencies in the Liverpool Plains Shire	<p>Liaise with agencies to gather information to inform the State of the Report and obtain input for further agency engagement.</p> <p>In depth discussion on major issues of importance and gaps by key direction to inform the State of the report and update of the Community Strategic Plan.</p>	September 2021 – February 2022	Consult, Collaborate
Community Groups and hard-to-reach stakeholders	<p>A range of targeted engagement methods will be used to engage with community groups, specialists and /or harder to reach groups by tapping into the work of existing community groups and local networks.</p> <p>Examples include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, businesses and business groups, culturally and linguistically diverse people, older people, people with a disability and their careers, people with diverse sexualities, young people.</p>	September 2021 – February 2022	Inform, Consult, Involve and Collaborate

Timeframe

The IP&R framework requires that our revised Community Strategic Plan is endorsed by the Council by 30 June 2022.

The Disability Inclusion Act requires us to review our DIAP before

To meet these requirements, the following milestones need to be met:

Date	Milestone
August 2021	Community Engagement Strategy adopted by Council.
September 2021 – February 2022	Background research and analysis completed. Community engagement delivered.
March 2022	Draft Community Strategic Plan and draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan endorsed by Council for public exhibition.
April 2022	Public exhibition of draft Community Strategic Plan and draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
May 2022	Consideration of community feedback and submissions on draft Community Strategic Plan and draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan, with documents revised accordingly.
June 2022	Endorsement of the updated Community Strategic Plan, and accompanying Delivery Program and Resourcing Strategy, as well as new Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Preparing for Engagement

Building on past and current community engagement

In reviewing our Community Strategic Plan, we will seek to avoid duplication and over consultation and build on what you've already told us.

This includes considering the community feedback from the recent Special Rate Variation (SRV) proposal consultation undertaken in December 2020 and January 2021, including results from the telephone and online survey delivered by Micromex Market Research.

We will also review the engagement outcomes from recently developed strategies and plans, such as the Liverpool Plains Shire Recreation Strategy, Arts and Culture Plan, Quirindi Racecourse and Showground Masterplan and Quirindi Sport and Recreation Precinct Masterplan.

While we have undertaken consultation in recent years that can be drawn upon to inform the review of our Community Strategic Plan, we have not specifically engaged with people with a disability to identify how we can improve our planning, services and activities to accommodate their rights and needs and remove barriers to their participation in our community. This presents a critical gap in our engagement data, noting that, according to Census data, over 25 per cent of our residents are living with a disability.

As such, we have designed our Community Engagement Plan to incorporate targeted consultation with people with a disability. This will allow us to gain important feedback and suggestions as to how we can reduce barriers for inclusion for all residents and ensure their right to participate equally and meaningfully in community life.

Background research

To inform and prepare for the engagement process and the review of our Community Strategic Plan and development of our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan, a range of new and existing research, analysis and background information will be compiled, reviewed and assessed, including:

- Assessment of key national, state, regional and local issues and change drivers;
- Community profile data, including analysis of key socio-economic and demographic trends and Census data;
- The NSW State Plan and Premier's Priorities.

Monitoring Our Progress

We will continue to refine and improve the way we engage with our community, by keeping a check on the following:

- How we embrace and demonstrate the principles of engagement;
- How we reach a broad representation of people living, working and visiting the Liverpool Plains Shire, including hard-to-reach stakeholders and key community groups;
- How we engage in a timely, accessible and meaningful manner;
- How we provide feedback to participants on the results of their contribution;
- Whether participants have a clear understanding of the purpose of the engagement; and
- Whether the range of engagement approaches and techniques is suitable to the target group or participants.

Our community engagement activities will be monitored for effectiveness and community satisfaction through quantitative and qualitative measures, including:

- Number and variety of engagement activities offered;
- Contributions made by community and stakeholders through the various engagement activities;
- Number of formal submissions to the Council;
- Media coverage;
- Number of survey questionnaire responses; and
- Evaluations by participants at face-to-face events (virtual and actual).