

**Liverpool Plains Shire Council**

**Community Engagement Strategy & Community  
Participation Plan**

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## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this land, the people of the Kamilaroi Nation.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders, both past and present.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to Liverpool Plains Shire.

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## **Message from the Mayor and General Manager**

Our community vision to aspire to a great rural lifestyle that is inclusive of all cultures with access to quality services and facilities underlies the development of this Community Engagement Strategy & Community Participation Plan.

We take our responsibility to consistently engage with the community through a variety of different forms very seriously and our commitment to continuously improving engagement with all stakeholders underpins this strategy.

We will be making every effort to keep the community informed, consulted and involved in decision making at key stages regarding Council matters which require engagement, and we will give due consideration to how we evaluate and respond to feedback. We hope that the community will take this opportunity to work together with Council so that we can achieve meaningful outcomes.

Council recognises the need to strengthen our engagement with the Liverpool Plains community and is committed to doing so. This Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan seeks to address frustrations within the community that a lack of information has been provided previously and we will take significant steps to implement a new business system to provide better ways of relaying information to the community.

Council makes a concerted effort to try and respond to community members within a reasonable timeframe to ensure that customer action requests are actioned and resolved where possible. We have taken steps to improve how information is provided to the community through Council's website, social media, and media releases.

Council will continue to strengthen our Community Engagement through multiple channels including direct engagement with Local Advisory Groups, community and special interest groups; local media including radio, print and social media; and face-to-face contact. By engaging with a wide variety of organisations, residents, businesses, students and community representatives our aim is to deliver positive outcomes for our community.

Mayor Councillor Doug Hawkins OAM

Gary Murphy, General Manager

## **Section 1: Community Engagement Strategy and Participation Plan**

### **What is the LPSC Community Engagement Strategy?**

Community engagement is a critical part of Council's day-to-day business and planning for the future. Understanding our community helps us make more informed and sustainable decisions that are reflective of community needs and aspirations. Community engagement provides an opportunity for members of the Liverpool Plains community to participate in planning matters relevant to our region.

LPSC's Community Engagement Strategy outlines the process for involving the LPSC Shire community in Council's strategic planning and decision-making processes, ranging from the development of Council's Ten (10) Year Community Strategic Plan and policy positions to day-to-day operations.

Our engagement strategy outlines the ways we engage with our community, key stages in the engagement process (inform, consult, and involve/collaborate), the broad categories of Council matters which require engagement, and how we evaluate and respond to feedback.

Part of Council's core responsibility is to consistently engage with the community through a variety of different forms. Our engagement strategy will outline Council's commitment to keeping the community informed, consulted and involved.

## ***What is Community Engagement?***

For the purposes of this strategy, community engagement is defined as the processes and structures in which Council:

1. Communicates information to the community; and
2. Seeks information, involvement and collaboration from the community with the primary aim of informing Council's decision making.

In general terms it is an inclusive process to ensure the community has the opportunity to participate in decisions that may impact them.

The process of community engagement can extend from a phone call or letter, to a program of major community meetings. The initiative for community engagement may come from within Liverpool Plains Shire Council or from outside.

## ***Benefits***

Effective engagement makes communities feel more connected with their councils, strengthening trust, goodwill and respect.

Benefits from the Community Engagement Strategy are that it:

- commits Council to be open and accountable
- helps Council plan services better to meet community needs and aspirations
- helps Council prioritise services and make better use of resources
- allows a broader range of views to be expressed, more information to be assembled, and more possible solutions to be considered before making decisions
- enables Council and the community to work together to achieve balanced decisions
- offers opportunities for residents to contribute to and influence outcomes which directly affect their lives
- encourages greater community ownership and acceptance of Council decisions.

## **Community Engagement Strategy**

### **Legislative requirements**

Amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993*, introduced in 2009, require all Councils in NSW to develop a long-term Community Strategic Plan, to enable better outcomes focused on the needs and aspirations of the community. To ensure that the plan reflects community needs, the Act states that councils must prepare and implement an Engagement Strategy. The strategy needs to specifically address the issues around determining 'Levels of Service' that the community expects from Council. This information can then be used to plan and guide the quality and effectiveness of policy development, service level planning, infrastructure works, major projects, advocacy and partnership development.

### **Census data**

The strategy has considered and responded to the Council area's 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data. By doing this, the strategy seeks to respond to our unique community features.



## **Community Participation Plan**

Community participation is an overarching term covering how we engage the community in our work, including strategic planning and making decisions on proposed development. The level and extent of community participation will vary depending on the target community, the nature of the proposal under consideration and the potential impact of the decision.

### ***What is our Community Participation Plan?***

Our Community Participation Plan (CPP) is designed to make participation in Council's planning functions clear for residents of the Liverpool Plains Shire Council local government area. It does this by setting out in one place how and when you can participate in the planning system regarding strategic planning exercises and the assessment of applications for different types of development. This CPP also establishes the community participation objectives which we use to guide our approach to community engagement. The CPP has been prepared with recognition of the objectives and principles in Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

### **What functions does the community participation plan apply to?**

#### ***Strategic planning***

Strategic planning is the process whereby we set the strategic direction for land use and development in the Liverpool Plains LGA. It involves planning to allow for growth and change, whilst preserving the valuable, unique qualities of the place.

#### ***Development assessment***

Liverpool Plains Shire Council has a duty to assess and determine applications for consent for a range of development. When making decisions on these developments, consideration is given to whether land use proposals are in accordance with Council's strategic plans, development standards, the public interest and applicable policies and guidelines. Proposals assessed may be residential development, rural development, subdivisions, and commercial and industrial development.

## **Legislative requirements**

Our Community Participation Plan is a requirement of Division 2.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)* and applies to the exercise of planning functions by staff of Council. Our CPP will be reviewed on a periodic basis.

In preparing this CPP Council has considered the following principles of community engagement established by Section 2.23(2) of the *EP&A Act*:

- a) The community has a right to be informed about planning matters that affect it.
- b) Planning authorities should encourage effective and on-going partnerships with the community to provide meaningful opportunities for community participation in planning.
- c) Planning information should be in plain language, easily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation in planning.
- d) The community should be given opportunities to participate in strategic planning as early as possible to enable community views to be genuinely considered.
- e) Community participation should be inclusive and planning authorities should actively seek views that are representative of the community.
- f) Members of the community who are affected by proposed major development should be consulted by the proponent before an application for planning approval is made.
- g) Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions (including how community views have been considered).
- h) Community participation methods (and the reasons given for planning decisions) should be appropriate having regard to the significance and likely impact of the proposed development.

## **IP & R**

Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) is a strategic planning framework mandated by the NSW Government. The framework requires councils to take a comprehensive and rigorous approach to strategic organisational planning, resourcing, reporting and community engagement.

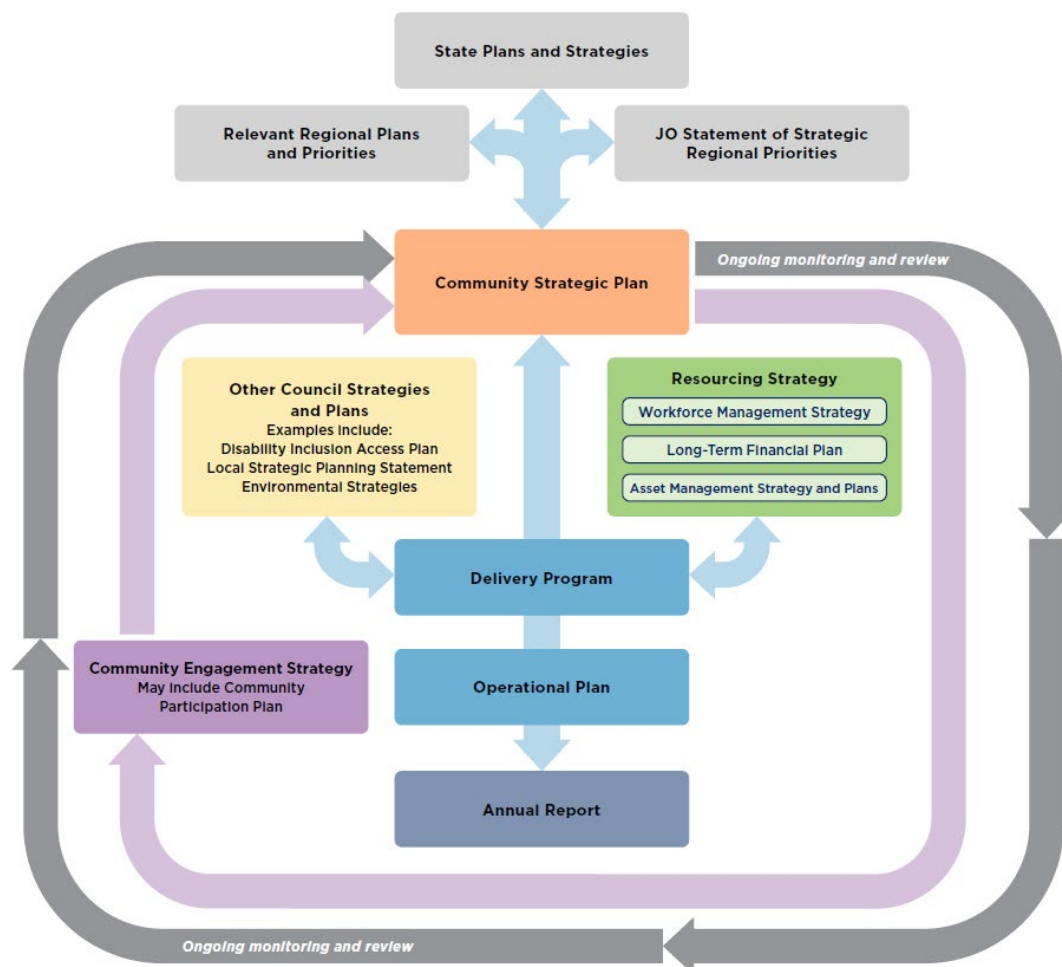
Section 402A of the *Local Government Act 1993*, which relates to the IP&R framework, requires all NSW councils to have a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles.

As a minimum, the Community Engagement Strategy must identify relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outline methods that will be used to engage each group.

A priority of the IP&R framework is promoting better transparency in decision-making processes. This strategy plays a key role by ensuring that our community is aware of not only opportunities to participate in these processes but how and when decisions have been made and how their input was considered.

A core principle of the strategy is openness; that we will be transparent about the reasons a decision was made and let our community know how their feedback influenced the outcome.

Community engagement requirements encompass the entire IP&R process, as shown in the diagram below.



## Our Community

Located in the New England Northwest Region of NSW, the Liverpool Plains extends across the traditional lands of the Kamilaroi people.

The Liverpool Plains Shire Council comprises of 5,086 square kilometres and is located on the north-west slopes and plains region of New South Wales. The townships of Quirindi and Werris Creek are located at the heart of the Shire and are supported by several smaller villages and hamlets including Blackville, Caroona, Currabubula, Pine Ridge, Premer, Spring Ridge, Wallabadah and Willow Tree. Liverpool Plains Shire is home to an estimated population of 7,655 people according to 2022 ABS data.

Data from the 2021 Census reveals a snapshot of our current population. The data tells us that:

- The median age is 47
- 49.8% of residents are women and 50.2% are men
- 14.8% are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- 83% were born in Australia
- 3.5 % speak a language other than English at home
- 53.9% have completed tertiary education
- 13% assisted a person with a disability, health condition or due to old age
- 17.4% are single-parent families

Source: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA14920>

Median weekly household income in 2021 for the region was \$1165: 58.3% residents were employed in full-time work, 29.3% in part-time work and 5.8% unemployed.

The top five employment sectors recorded for the Liverpool Plains region were:

- Beef cattle farming
- Grain Sheep and Grain Beef Cattle Farming
- Hospitals
- Other grain growing
- Primary Education.

Population growth in the Liverpool Plains is forecast to show low growth to 2040, with projected 7,900 residents by 2040, 29.7% of which will be aged 65 and over (DPE Population Projections).

The age structure of the Liverpool Plains Shire provides key insights into the level of demand for age-based services and facilities.

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## Our stakeholders



Liverpool Plains Shire Council acknowledges the right for all stakeholders to participate in decision making that affects their future. We aim to engage with all citizens, ratepayers, businesses, employees, visitors, community and local area groups, special interest groups and State and Federal Governments to achieve positive outcomes for our community.

Our strategy is inclusive, offering all stakeholders the opportunity to participate, so that all sectors of the community are represented. With this aim in mind, our strategy seeks to engage older people, youth, Indigenous people, people with a disability, carers, low socio-economic groups and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Our goal is to provide meaningful engagement with all stakeholder groups to ensure that the whole community has a say in decisions that affect their community.

### **Public participation principles**

Council believes that all citizens should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives. Council implements best practice guidelines developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) to ensure that engagement is genuine. The IAP2's core values are public participation:

1. Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process
2. Includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
3. Promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
4. Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
5. Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
6. Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
7. Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision made.

(Source: [iap2.org.au](http://iap2.org.au))

### **Social justice principles**

The Local Government Act also stipulates that the Community Strategic Plan should reflect the principles of Social Justice and that these social considerations are adequately addressed in the planning and development process. The principles for social justice are:

<p><b>Equity</b></p>	<p>There should be fairness in decision making, prioritizing and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.</p>
<p><b>Access</b></p>	<p>All people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.</p>
<p><b>Participation</b></p>	<p>Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.</p>
<p><b>Rights</b></p>	<p>Equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.</p>

**Including all members of our community**

Liverpool Plains Shire Council seeks to improve opportunity and accessibility for all members of our community.

We want to know how we can assist people to feel more included in the community and improve the way we deliver services and communicate with them.



Liverpool Plains Shire Council is committed to actively listening to our community’s needs and expectations so that they may be understood and considered. This includes groups of people that can be more challenging to engage with effectively.

### How we engage people in hard-to-reach groups

Liverpool Plains Shire Council will use a variety of strategies to engage hard-to-reach groups. The use of Plain English in all communications is particularly important as is going out to conduct engagement sessions in our local communities and communicating directly with members of the community.

Group	Engagement strategies
People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Plain English, both to promote community engagement and during community engagement</li> <li>• Avoid using assumptions, generalisations, or culturally insensitive language.</li> <li>• Create documents in easy read format</li> </ul>
Indigenous people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct communication with and through local Indigenous groups and Lands Council</li> <li>• Follow appropriate cultural protocols and ensure that the person/s involved in engagement has the authority to speak on behalf of their community or group</li> <li>• Avoid making assumptions,</li> </ul>

	<p>generalisations, or using insensitive language.</p>
Older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct communication with and through aged care services and seniors groups</li> <li>• Use age-appropriate communication methods to reach an older audience, e.g. newspaper, flyer, radio</li> <li>• Create documents in larger print format</li> </ul>
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct contact with schools and local learning centres, sports and community groups</li> <li>• Use age-appropriate communication methods to reach a younger audience, e.g. social media, website, QR codes</li> </ul>
People with a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct communication with and through disability support services and groups.</li> <li>• Using Plain English, both to promote community engagement and during community engagement</li> <li>• Avoid making assumptions, generalisations, or using insensitive language.</li> <li>• Create documents in easy read format.</li> </ul>

<p>People with low levels of literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using Plain English, both to promote community engagement and during community engagement</li> <li>• Avoid making assumptions, generalisations, or using insensitive language.</li> <li>• Create documents in easy read format</li> </ul>
<p>People from disadvantaged socio-economic background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct communication with and through agencies that provide support services to families</li> </ul>
<p>People who live further away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of engagement activities through a number of different media channels e.g. newspapers, free publications, radio, Council website, social media</li> <li>• Conduct public meetings and information sessions in outlying villages</li> <li>• Communication with and through local advisory groups; seek feedback by phone, email or online surveys.</li> </ul>

## Our Objectives

Liverpool Plains Shire Council is committed to providing opportunities for meaningful community engagement that **Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate** and **Empower**.

We are committed to reaching as many members of the community within the Liverpool Plains Shire as possible, empowering them to put forward their ideas and visions for the Liverpool Plains of the future.

A considered approach to community engagement will:

- give us a better understanding of community and stakeholder needs and expectations;
- help us identify issues and perspectives which would not otherwise be known;
- assist in building positive relationships with the community and our stakeholders;
- increase understanding of our projects or plans;
- ensure that the community is informed about our responsibilities and actions;
- enable community ownership of outcomes, and
- increase awareness in regard to the responsibilities of Council, the community and stakeholders.

## Our Community Engagement Strategy

The Liverpool Plains Shire Council (LPSC) Community Engagement Strategy outlines the process for involving the Liverpool Plains Shire community in Council's strategic planning and decision-making processes. Council supports the right of citizens to participate in decision making that affects their future.

The strategy outlines community engagement and identifies the methods of engagement Council will use to **inform, consult, involve, collaborate** and **empower** the community.

IAP2 Spectrum		Our commitment	Example techniques
Inform	Council is providing information to the community to assist them in understanding the problem and potential solutions.	We will keep you informed using a range of communication techniques.	Council website Social Media Public notices Local media
Consult	Council is seeking feedback from the community to assist in the decision-making process	We will keep you informed, listen and acknowledge your concerns and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.	Have your say – Survey (paper and online) Council website Social Media Listening Posts
Involve	Council is seeking the community's involvement in designing possible solutions.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are incorporated in the decision-making process and provide feedback on how your input	Pop up activities Listening Posts Coffee with Council

		influenced the final decision.	
Collaborate	Council is seeking to collaborate with the community to make a decision together.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into any final decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Focus Group Local Advisory Group meeting Yarning Circle
Empower	Council is seeking to place final decision making in the hands of the community	We will implement what you decide.	As above and Community Forum

## Our Plan

The aim of our community consultation process is to collaborate with the community to help guide Council's direction and operations.

An engagement plan has been developed by Liverpool Plains Shire Council to consult with all members of the community in a variety of ways.

### ***Community Engagement Plan***

Action	Description
Flyer	A flyer encouraging residents to give feedback on the community engagement strategy will be provided in key locations throughout the community such as the library, supermarket, Council customer service and visitor information centre. Links to online version will be provided on Council social media channels and library and visitor information screens.

Have Your Say – Community Survey	Council’s website and social media platforms will invite the community to provide feedback online.
Pop-up activities	Pop up engagement stalls at shops, markets and agriculture shows in local area to engage with the community and invite them to have their say.
Coffee with Council / Listening Post	The community will be invited to ‘drop in’ for a coffee with Council at key locations in Quirindi and surrounding villages. The community will be able to provide feedback and discuss relevant issues with staff directly.
Social Media	Social Media will be used to direct users to engagement opportunities, for example, upcoming community engagement events, survey links to website feedback form. Council’s social media pages will also be used to promote positive images of community engagement from the activities that are being carried out.
Newspaper editorial	Council will produce editorial content for publication in local newspapers to provide background information, engage with the community and promote the Community Engagement Strategy.
Community Forum	Council will conduct community forums in accessible locations and times to inform the community, collaborate with them and empower them to be involved in decision making.
Focus Group	Council will conduct focus groups on key issues or projects as required to obtain community input and assess future direction of projects.
Meeting with Local Advisory or other community groups	Local Advisory Groups and community groups will be consulted with, specifically on issues relating to communities in outlying villages and locations in the Liverpool Plains Shire.

## Engagement Matrix

INFORM	What to do?	When you are dealing with ...			
	1 = every time	Shire-wide/High Impact	Shire-wide/Low Impact	Locality Based/High Impact	Locality Based/Low Impact
	2 = in most circumstances				
	3 = on specific occasions				
	4 = on rare occasions				
CONSULT	Customer Service Centre	1	1	1	1
	LPSC Website	1	1	1	3
	Social Media Post	1	1	1	3
	Newspaper/Features	1	1	2	3
	Media Release	1	1	2	3
	Publications	1	2	2	4
	Council facilitated events	4	4	4	4
	Letterbox drop	4	4	3	3
	Targeted Direct Mail	2	2	2	3
	Presentation	2	3	3	4
	Community Noticeboards	3	3	3	3
	Site Specific Signage	3	3	3	3
	INVOLVE	Community Forum	3	3	2
Public exhibitions/submissions		1	2	3	4
Community displays/information sessions		2	2	3	4
Surveys		3	4	4	4
Site meeting/tour		2	3	2	4
Personal briefing		1	1	2	2
	Meetings by invitation	1	2	2	4



Meetings with Council advisory groups	1	3	3	4
Large group/stakeholder collaboration	2	2	3	4

Engagement tools in the involve/collaborate stage will vary depending on the nature of the project.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

Following the implementation of an engagement project, Council will evaluate the effectiveness of the program in reaching the desired audience and achieving the required outcomes.

Council will then provide feedback to the people who participated in the program to increase their understanding of how the input gathered during the program was considered and utilized in the decision-making process, and what direction was ultimately taken.

By providing open and timely feedback to participants, Council will demonstrate openness and transparency in its decision making and further strengthen its relationship with the broader community. Feedback will also improve future engagement programs through a greater understanding of the engagement process.

### ***How we provide feedback***

Following community engagement activities, we will evaluate and communicate with the community so that all stakeholders are informed about how their input was considered and influenced any final decision making.

Feedback will be:

- Timely
- Specific
- Impactful
- Considered.

All staff consulting with the community will adhere to the social justice principles of **Equity, Access, Participation and Rights** and operate in accordance with our Inclusion Policy.

The purpose of feedback will be to:

- Provide opportunities during the decision-making process to incorporate community input and make adjustments as necessary
- Share the results of community engagement
- Explain how decisions have been informed by community input.

### ***How we evaluate our engagement***

We will evaluate all feedback received through community engagement to gauge how effectively we have:

- identified and addressed key outcomes of engagement
- engaged with all key stakeholders
- identified and addressed any key concerns and issues
- communicated with the community during the engagement process
- shared results of engagement
- communicated how we will use community input to inform decision making.

Above all, we will show the community that their input and participation is valuable and is conducted in a way that encourages mutual trust.

## Principles

Was engagement delivered in line with Council's engagement principles?  
Was engagement clear, timely, tailored, inclusive, accessible, meaningful, open and evaluated?

## Reach

Did we engage the community affected by the decision or outcome?  
This may be a particular target group or a representative sample of the broader community.

## Implementation

How well was the engagement tool or activity implemented?  
This includes consideration of the scope of engagement, time available and resources used.

## Outcomes

Did we achieve our desired results?  
This may include providing information to impacted residents, connecting with target groups, or gathering feedback or ideas.

## **Engagement in Action**

### ***Quirindi Aquatic Centre***

*Inform, Involve, Collaborate*

Throughout July 2023 Council undertook community consultation on three concepts for the new Quirindi Aquatic Centre.

### **Why we engaged**

The goal was to gain feedback on the preference for three concept options, but also to gain an understanding of what is desired in the splash pad design with three different philosophies provided.

### **Who we engaged**

Invitations were sent to the following groups to participate in this consultation, with every group that responded having time made to meet with them:

- Two swimming clubs
- 11 local schools
- Four early childhood carers
- Five local community representative groups
- Two aged care providers

### **How we engaged**

The consultation consisted of:

- Two meetings with school kids
- Two meetings with local swimming clubs
- One meeting with Quirindi Public School P&C Committee
- One meeting with community representative group (one was cancelled by the group on the day of the meeting)
- Three town hall meetings
- One meeting with school kids' parents
- One meeting with Council operators

- Online survey

At the close of the consultation period, Council had received:

- 67 online survey responses
- 15 submissions to Council
- Feedback from the 10 meetings

### **Feedback received**

A recurring theme within the consultation was the lack of a wading pool included in any of the options. There was a strong sentiment from the community that this is an important feature for the facility to help build confidence around water for our youth.

From the online survey, there was a clear preference for Option 3 as the choice for the concept, with 49% of respondents identifying that as their preferred option. It is worth noting that the online survey didn't identify the intention for the splash pad area to be open year round. When that information was provided to those we met in person, it did have an effect on their preference.

There was also a clear preference for the splash pad to be an adventure zone with big splashes and lots of activity, with 53% of respondents identifying that as their preference. From the meetings with the school kids, 37 of them included buckets as a key item, more than any other item.

Regarding the dry play area, from the four options provided, 41% of respondents preferred an Accessible play area, with 37% preferring a Modular style play area.

### **How feedback influenced decision making**

A report was prepared for Council's consideration outlining the results of the community consultation. Based on the feedback received, it considered changes to the concept design, and prioritising of features within the budget to enable the design phase of the project to commence.

## **Section 2: Community Participation Plan**

This section of the strategy relates to our Community Participation Plan (plan) which includes information about how and when you can expect us to engage with you on planning and development related issues.

We recognise that community participation in planning and development helps to achieve better outcomes for the Liverpool Plains Shire.

The level of engagement we undertake depends on a number of factors, including but not limited to, the nature, scale and likely impact of the strategy, plan, policy, proposal or project being considered or assessed.

### **Who this plan applies to**

Our Community Participation Plan applies to our planning functions and meets our requirements for engagement set out in Division 2.6 and Schedule 1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

### **What are our planning functions?**

We have two key land-use planning functions.

#### **Strategic planning**

Strategic land-use planning is setting the vision and direction for land across the Liverpool Plains. This may include planning for individual areas, precincts and/or specific parcels of land within the LGA to ensure any development and change aligns with our strategic vision.

We produce several strategic planning documents to guide our planning. We play various roles when it comes to the development and delivery of strategic planning in the Liverpool Plains Shire.

#### **Development assessment**

Decisions on development are made through a formal Development Assessment application process. This process varies depending on the type of development proposed by the applicant.

The Development Assessment staff, are responsible for assessing, range from small scale residential modifications to major regionally significant development projects.

In addition, we formally consider 'Reviews of Environmental Factors' to ensure that community engagement is a key consideration.

## Why is community participation important?

We believe that involving the community, organisations and groups in Council’s decision-making processes is crucial to achieving better outcomes. Council’s Community Engagement Strategy describes the principles of equity, access, participation and rights. These principles are reflected throughout this Community Participation Plan reinforcing how community input into planning improves and strengthens the relationship between Council and the community.

## How can the Liverpool Plains community participate in the planning functions of Council?

### Community Participation Objectives

The table below describes the types of actions we will undertake to deliver our community participation objectives. These objectives have been developed having regard to the community participation principles set out in Section 2.23 (2) of the EP&A Act and in consideration of Council’s existing Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032 social justice principles.

Objectives	Actions	Processes
Information – the community has a right to be informed about planning matters that affect it.	Facilitate open communication by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping the community informed about planning matters which may directly or indirectly affect the wider community and/or specific groups or individuals.</li> <li>• Actively promoting participation opportunities and seeking community input in order to facilitate effective and on-going partnerships.</li> <li>• Actively encourage development proponents to engage with the community</li> </ul>	Council’s CPP tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council provides information on developments at all stages of the determination process.</li> <li>• Council provides opportunities for Preliminary plans/proposals to inform the public prior to submission.</li> <li>• Council provides access to DA information and DA processing statistics.</li> <li>• Council’s website and social media are used as effective communication</li> </ul>

	<p>at the earliest possible stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring community engagement accurately captures and responds to the relevant views of the community.</li> <li>• Ensuring community engagement is an integral component of Council's planning functions and processes.</li> <li>• Using plain language when providing planning information and facilitating ease of access.</li> </ul>	<p>tools in relation to planning functions and specific projects at the early conceptual or preliminary development phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print and electronic media are utilised widely by Council as a means of informing the regional community about issues and developments happening in our community.</li> <li>• Updates to ongoing developments and projects are provided to the community at key points in the development assessment or strategic planning process.</li> </ul>
<p>Participation</p>	<p>Encourage community participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking community participation in strategic planning as early as possible.</li> <li>• Conducting community engagement opportunities in a safe and accessible environment.</li> <li>• Tailoring engagement activities to match the context, scale and nature of the proposal, level of community interest and preferences for participation.</li> <li>• Early engagement must be undertaken where major developments have the potential to impact members of the community and/or individuals or groups in a significant way.</li> <li>• Adjust engagement activities in response to community feedback or input, if necessary.</li> </ul>	<p>Council's CPP tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community participation opportunities are advertised through Council's existing media platforms such as email, social media, media releases, advertisements, editorial features and Council's website.</li> <li>• New or proposed potentially contentious or significant developments in the early discussion or preliminary development phase will be advertised on Council's website and in local media with the aim of informing and encouraging feedback.</li> <li>• Advertising and notification will support early engagement undertaken by the proponent.</li> <li>• We facilitate community meetings and information sessions as an important platform for direct engagement and provide opportunities for developers and community</li> </ul>



		members/groups to engage face-to face.
Access to Information	<p>Community access to information will be facilitated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly setting out the purpose of any engagement and how and when the community can participate in respect of a planning function.</li> <li>• Preparing information for the community that is relevant, concise, written in plain English and easy to understand.</li> <li>• Promotion of equal rights of access with opportunities for people from diverse age, linguistic, cultural or religious backgrounds or people with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p>Council's CPP tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning staff prepare for community engagement and delivery early in the assessment and review process.</li> <li>• Planning staff regularly engage with community groups to ensure that plans and/or proposed developments are understood by all members of the community and equal right of access to information and opportunities is facilitated to the best of our ability.</li> <li>• We facilitate a formal planning education program, targeted at industry groups or community interest groups that the general community can access.</li> <li>• Council provides a range of mediums for communicating planning matters such as online engagement via Council's website, print media, meetings, one-on-one interviews, visual media such as photos and maps and site visits.</li> </ul>
Transparency	<p>Transparency in decision making is reinforced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping accurate records of engagement activities and community input.</li> <li>• Regularly reviewing the effectiveness of community engagement.</li> <li>• Integrating community input into the evaluation process.</li> <li>• Giving genuine and proper consideration to community</li> </ul>	<p>Council's CPP tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to documentation.</li> <li>• Development applications which are to be determined at Council meetings will be advertised in The Quirindi Advocate and available for viewing on Council's website.</li> <li>• Publishing determinations &amp; decision summaries where appropriate.</li> </ul>

	input and providing reasons for planning decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members who have provided formal submissions to a development application are invited to attend the relevant Council meeting whereby their view or opinions may be heard in a public forum.</li> <li>• Issues raised during the decision making process are addressed separately and clearly in Council reports with Council's response to the issue.</li> </ul>
Timely feedback on decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the community is given appropriate time to respond or provide input to planning matters.</li> <li>• Ensure responses are attended to in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where potentially contentious or large-scale developments are proposed Council will consider extending exhibition timeframes as appropriate.</li> <li>• Council's Customer Service Charter ensures that submissions and enquiries are responded to within appropriate timeframes.</li> </ul>

## What is our approach to community participation?

In line with the community participation objectives defined by the legislation, we encourage open, inclusive, easy, safe, relevant, timely and meaningful opportunities for community participation in our planning functions and individual proposals.

To achieve this, we design our engagement approach so that in the event of disagreement in relation to proposals Council's processes aim to ensure that fairness and the consideration of all relevant views and concerns are acknowledged and acted upon where appropriate.

To achieve the benefits of community participation in the planning system, we will tailor the following community participation approaches for all our planning functions:



## Our Community Participation Approach

What	Where	How
<b>INFORM</b>		
<p>We notify the community of proposed developments, at the earliest stage, where relevant.</p> <p>We provide information on the context of the proposal and update information as proposals progress through the planning process.</p>	<p>Preliminary development applications, development applications and planning proposals which have the potential to impact individuals, groups or organisations will be notified/exhibited/advertised as early as possible.</p> <p>Proponents are expected to undertake pre-lodgement consultation as appropriate. Feedback will be sought and updates provided on relevant proposals as they make their way through the planning system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print media releases</li> <li>• mail-outs</li> <li>• Council's website</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Emails, newsletters</li> <li>• On-site meetings</li> <li>• Public notices</li> <li>• Information sessions</li> <li>• Forums</li> </ul>
<b>CONSULT</b>		
<p>We consult with the community and invite them to provide their views and concerns regarding a proposal.</p>	<p>Exhibition of draft plans and proposals are undertaken in accordance with either mandatory or non-mandatory exhibition timeframes. Where necessary consultation periods will be extended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public exhibition</li> <li>• Online surveys</li> <li>• Community meetings</li> <li>• One-on-one engagement with proponents and community members.</li> </ul>
<b>ENGAGE</b>		
<p>We engage with the community and respond to the community's views by conducting targeted engagement to seek specific input depending on the scale, nature and likely impact of the proposal.</p>	<p>Through submissions and feedback, we identify key issues and concerns and conduct tailored engagement activities to find solutions to determine the way forward.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meetings and exhibitions</li> <li>• Feedback sessions and workshops with proponents, interested community members and other relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>DETERMINE</b>		
<p>We notify the community of decisions on proposals and describe how their views were considered in reaching the decision.</p>	<p>In reaching a decision we consider your views and concerns, notify you of the reason for the decision and how community views were considered.</p>	<p>Updates to websites, publication of submissions summaries, exhibition reports, decision notices and Council reports.</p>

## Exhibitions

The key method utilised by Council to encourage participation in planning functions is by way of public exhibition and/or notification of the application or proposal. During an exhibition we make available relevant documents that may include a draft of the plan or proposed development that we are seeking community input or comment on.

We receive and record submissions and adhere to our Privacy Policy and defamation and discrimination laws. In reaching decisions on proposals, a wide range of factors including formal submissions and community input are considered along with regulatory requirements, Council's strategic plans and applicable policies and guidelines.

### Exhibition timeframes

Section 2.23 (2) of the *EP&A Act* describes the types of proposals that must be considered in the CPP and Schedule 1 sets a minimum exhibition timeframe for most of these proposals. We will always exhibit a proposal for at least the minimum mandatory timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe for exhibition based on the scale and nature of the proposal.

### How can you get involved in a public exhibition?

Make a formal submission on an exhibition or individual development application by going to the Council website [www.liverpoolplains.nsw.gov.au](http://www.liverpoolplains.nsw.gov.au). Or you email or post a written submission or submit it in person at the Liverpool Plains Shire Council Administration Building at 60 Station St, Quirindi. You may also connect directly with the relevant Council staff working on a proposal, plan, project or development application. Contact details are typically provided with the exhibition documentation or on Council's development portal.

Please note that exhibition timeframes vary in length. Some timeframes are prescribed in legislation and others are at our discretion. Details of typical and minimum mandatory timeframes are provided in the following table.

## Minimum Mandatory Exhibition Timeframes

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS	TYPE OF DEVELOPMENTS
No Public exhibition or notification	Single storey dwelling house & extensions
	Single Storey and double storey dwellings, attached dual occupancies and worker's dwellings in the Rural Zones.
	Minor dwelling additions such as: open carport, pergola, verandah
	Private swimming pools
	Detached garage, shed or storage containers associate with residential use
	Farm Buildings
	Subdivision creating less than 5 lots
	Commercial or industrial development within the <i>E1- Local Centre Zone</i> <i>E4 - General Industrial Zone</i> <i>MU1 - Mixed Use Zones.</i>
	Demolition of buildings
	Home Occupations
Modification applications for minor changes	
14 Days Notification	Variation of Building Envelope Controls in the <i>Liverpool Plains Development Control Plan</i> i.e. variations to building line, side boundary setbacks, building heights, maximum floor areas
	Double storey dwellings, dual occupancy, duplexes & secondary dwellings
	Home Industries
	Modification applications that potentially impact on adjoining owners
14 day Notification & Advertising	Demolition of buildings identified as a Heritage Item under the <i>Liverpool Plains Local Environmental Plan.</i>
	Use of a heritage item for a purpose prohibited in the Zone
	Any multi dwelling (3 units) or accommodation developments
	Animal boarding or training establishment
	Non-residential uses in or adjacent to the <i>R1-General Residential Zone</i> <i>RU5 - Village Zone</i> <i>R5 -Large Lot Residential Zone</i>

	Significant traffic generating uses in RU1 Primary Production Zone
	Subdivision creating 20 or more allotments
	Any development identified by Senior Council Staff that may be of public interest
28 Days Advertising	Draft Community Participation Plans Draft Local Strategic Planning Statements Draft Planning Proposals Draft Planning Agreements
Other Legislative Notification processes	To be determined according to development type and legislative requirements.

### **Advertising and notification periods for development assessment.**

Development applications which require advertising will be advertised in the newspaper, in Council offices and written notice will be provided to adjoining landowners. Notified development applications will be notified, via mail, to all relevant adjoining, adjacent or potentially impacted landowners.

### **Key points about public advertising and exhibitions**

- A public authority is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication would, in the opinion of the public authority, be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason.
- Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends. The period of exhibition for advertised development will be a minimum of 14 days from the date the notice is advertised (plus an additional 7 days of exhibition where the period of exhibition coincides with Public School Holidays, or additional day/s for a Public Holiday).
- If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday exhibition will be extended to finish on the first available business day.
- The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

### **Review of determinations and decisions**

Where Council has refused a development application or imposed conditions considered by the applicant to be unsatisfactory, the applicant may request a review. Applications for review are permissible in accordance with Section 8.2 of the EP&A Act and must be completed within 6 months from the date of determination of the development application.

DRAFT

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The following acknowledgements are made, recognizing institutions and documents that informed and influenced the development of this Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan:

- NSW Division of Local Government 'Integrated Planning and Reporting Manual for Local Government'
- International Association for Public Participation 'Foundations of public participation'.
- The Uralla, Tenterfield, Tamworth Regional, Willoughby, Penrith and Blacktown Councils' Community Engagement Strategies and Community Participation Plans.
- [ACS Community Engagement Tips.pdf \(advocacyandcommunication.org\)](#)
- [Microsoft Word - Community Participation Plan for adoption 9 Dec 2019 \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- [Community Participation Plan \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)