

## Communications and Engagement Policy

Policy type	Council
Function	Organisation
Policy Owner	Communications & Engagement
Effective date	22 June 2023

### 1. Purpose

This Policy affirms Council's commitment to our community and stakeholders to undertake communications and engagement in accordance with stated principles and obligations in our Customer Service, Engagement and Communications Framework and the *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)*. This Framework underpins Council's approach to the delivery of inclusive, consistent and meaningful engagement and positive communications with our stakeholders and community.

### 2. Principles

**2.1** The local government principles prescribed in the *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)* apply to this Policy.

*s4(2) The local government principles are—*

- (a) transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and*
- (b) sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and*
- (c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and*
- (d) good governance of, and by, local government; and*
- (e) ethical and legal behaviour of councillors, local government employees and councillor advisors*

**2.2** Council has additional principles underpinning our communications and engagement -

- Accountable – we take responsibility for our behaviour, actions and outcomes
- Collaborative – we value different opinions and skillsets and see strength in our relationships
- Consistent – we will provide consistent service with accurate information
- Evaluate and Measure – we have a clear purpose in what we evaluate and measure and how we use, communicate and implement the outcomes through our systems and processes
- Inclusive – we provide equitable access to council services within our capacity and resourcing, and strive to understand the diversity in our customers
- Keep it Simple – we do not deliberately try to over-complicate our messaging and we will strive to provide clear and consistent communication and find better, simpler ways to do things
- Respectful – we acknowledge the differences between people and treat our customers with civility
- Responsive – we respond within the time frames as per our Customer Service Charter and/or what we have committed to with a customer in a specific circumstance

- Transparent - we are open and honest
- Trust – through adhering to our guiding principles we build trust with our customers

**2.3** Council's engagement with our community and stakeholders is guided by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum. The Spectrum provides for levels of engagement that are dependent on the purpose of engagement and the level of impact on Council's decision-making processes –

- Inform – to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
- Consult – to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
- Involve – to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- Collaborate – to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution.
- Empower – to place the final decision-making in the hands of the public.

### 3. Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors, all Council employees and contractors engaged by Council.

### 4. Definitions

**Communication** – is the act of sharing and receiving information with customers and stakeholders through a variety of media and channels.

**Community Engagement** – is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioural changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilise resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices<sup>1</sup>.

**Council** – is the administrative arm of Cassowary Coast Regional Council, not the elected body.

**Councillors** – are elected members of Cassowary Coast Regional Council, representing constituents, and include the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

**Council Officer** – includes a permanent, temporary, casual or contract member of Council's staff.

**Customer** – is an individual, group or entity receiving a service or product from Council. A customer includes citizens, ratepayers, residents, constituents, businesses, government agencies, representative bodies and internal staff and councillors.

<sup>1</sup> CDC, 1997, p 9 – published in CDC, Principles of Community Engagement Second Edition, 2011, p. 3  
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**Engagement** – is a broad term that encompasses public participation, community, stakeholder or public relations, consultation, government and media relations. The level of engagement appropriate for each situation can range from a one-way transfer of information, to consultation and actively involving or empowering stakeholders in the decision-making process<sup>2</sup>

**Public** – are those stakeholders who are not typically part of the decision-making entity or entities<sup>3</sup>

**Public Participation** – and process involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and that uses public input to make better decisions<sup>4</sup>.

**Stakeholder** – is any individual, group of individuals, organisation or politics entity with an interest or stake in the outcome of a decision and includes those -

- directly involved and/or affected by the outcome of a decision of Council
- are likely to be affected or impacted by the outcome of a decision of Council
- and/or need a voice<sup>5</sup> to be heard by Council in the decision-making process.

**Value** – broadly means seeking the greatest possible benefit to the public within the available monetary or legal resources<sup>6</sup> across Council's Service Delivery.

## 5. Policy

### 5.1 Council will:

- i) Develop a Communications and Engagement Toolkit which includes guidelines, resources and tools to establish and implement communications and engagement standards and expectations, systems and processes..
- ii) Continuously review, monitor and evaluate the Communications and Engagement Toolkit to support the delivery of communications and engagement that is consistent with our principles and to identify and implement improvement opportunities.
- iii) Provide training and development opportunities to our employees to support our focus on continuous improvement and quality service delivery to our community.

**5.2** Council has considered the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) in the development and implementation of this policy and is committed to the application of this Policy in accordance with the objectives of the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* and through our Human Rights Policy. The main objects of the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* are s(3) -

- (a) to protect and promote human rights;
- (b) to help build a culture in the Queensland public sector that respects and promotes human rights; and
- (c) to help promote dialogue about the nature, meaning and scope of human rights.

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<sup>2</sup> Consult Australia Guide to Valuing Better Engagement 2015

<sup>3</sup> Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement. International Association for Public Participation Australasia.

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<b>Related forms, policies and procedures</b>	<p>Customer Service, Communications and Engagement Framework Statement</p> <p>Customer Service Charter</p> <p>Complaints Management Policy and Procedures</p> <p>Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy and Procedures</p> <p>Employee Code of Conduct</p> <p>Councillor Code of Conduct</p> <p>Human Rights Policy</p> <p>Information Privacy and Confidentiality Policy and Guidelines</p> <p>Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan</p> <p>Right to Information Policy</p> <p>Records Management Policy</p>
<b>Relevant legislation (Qld)</b>	<p><i>Local Government Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Local Government Regulation 2012</i></p> <p><i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Right to Information Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Human Rights Act 2019</i></p> <p><i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i></p> <p><i>Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011</i></p>
<b>Reference and resources</b>	<p>Customer Service, Communications and Engagement Framework Statement</p> <p>International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)</p> <p>Public Participation Spectrum</p>

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