

Council Policy NB-P-30

Community Engagement

Purpose

The purpose is to define our commitment to engaging with our community and stakeholders on Council led projects. This involves communicating with, and listening to, our community prior to, during and following decision making.

Policy Principles

- provide clear, accurate and easy to read information
- offer accessible and diverse ways for those impacted, or interested, to provide feedback
- transparently report back to our community to show how we considered the feedback received.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to all Northern Beaches Council projects that require planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation of community and stakeholder engagement.

Projects for this purpose may include, but are not limited to:

- policies, frameworks, strategies, studies and plans including plans of management
- environmental assessments
- open space, streetscape, facility and other infrastructure improvements
- service and operational changes
- fees and charges.

Community engagement on strategic planning matters [and development applications](#) is covered separately under the Community Participation Plan (Plan Making and Development Assessments).

Community Engagement Principles

There are seven community engagement principles that underpin our engagement practices. The principles are of equal importance. A full description of each is available in the Northern Beaches Community Engagement Strategy.

Principle 1: Prioritise community engagement

Principle 2: Plan thoroughly

Principle 3: Create open, accessible and diverse engagement opportunities

Principle 4: Communicate effectively

Principle 5: Build and maintain relationships

Principle 6: Listen and respond

Principle 7: Learn and improve

Considerations

- Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus.
- There are a number of factors that contribute to decision making including social, economic, technological, legislative and environmental constraints.
- Statutory and/or other legislative engagement requirements are considered a minimum.
- Our approach to community and stakeholder engagement reporting is based on emerging issues and themes to get better quality outcomes for the community.
- Engagement activities will be open for a minimum of 28 days with care taken to avoid key dates that may affect the ability of everyone to participate, e.g. school holidays, public and religious holidays, and other major social or community events, and where this is not possible, extensions of time will be considered.
- ~~Engagement activities will be limited prior to the December holiday period and where this is not possible, extensions of time will be considered.~~
- ~~Form letters and petitions will be treated separately to all~~ submissions received from the same person will be considered as a single submission and noted as such on community and stakeholder engagement reports.
- Petitions will be considered a single submission, irrespective of the number of signatories.
- Conduct an Acknowledgement/ or Welcome to Country for both online and physical events.
- Community feedback received is regarded as public information and may be published on websites and in Council reports. The collection or holding of personal information is legislated in the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIPA).
- Committees, advisory groups and panels also provide opportunities for the community to participate in strategic priority areas. The different types of committees and governance arrangements are covered in a separate document, Northern Beaches Council Committees Framework.
- When developing on Council owned and managed land, a community engagement process consistent with this policy and supporting strategy will be required in addition to any statutory requirements.
- In some circumstances, Council may encounter situations that impact community engagement timing and/or the ability to conduct certain activities including where:
 - Council is not leading the project (e.g. state government lead projects)
 - specific knowledge or expertise is required
 - work is commercial in confidence
 - work relates to critical operational matters
 - there is an unacceptable safety risk posed to our community if we do not take immediate action.

References and Related Documents

- Policy Framework
- Code of Conduct

- Local Government Act 1993
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIPA)
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Integrated Planning & Reporting for Local Councils in NSW - Office of Local Government Guidelines (September 2021)
- Northern Beaches Community Engagement Strategy (~~formally Matrix~~)
- Northern Beaches Community Participation Plan (Plan Making and Development Assessment)
- Northern Beaches Council Committees Framework

Community Strategic Plan

This Council policy relates to the Community Strategic Plan Outcome of:

- Good governance - Goal 19 Our Council is transparent and trusted to make decisions that reflect the values of the community
- Partnership and participation - Goal 21 Our community is engaged in decision making processes

Responsible Officer

Executive Manager Community Engagement & Communications

Review Date

Dec 2028

Revision History

Policy number	Date	Detail	TRIM #
	Feb 2017	Northern Beaches Council Community Engagement Policy	2017/012154
	Nov 2022	Northern Beaches Council Community Engagement Policy – Post exhibition	2022/225685
	Nov 2022	Northern Beaches Council Community Engagement Policy - Adopted	2022/759563
	Nov 2024	Policy review presented to Council and policy number allocated	2024/767939