



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATION STRATEGY





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Dungog Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians of Country in the Dungog Shire, including the Gringai, Geawegal/Geawal, Wanaruah/Wonnarua, and Worimi peoples. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging.

Document History

Status	Version	Adopted Date	Authority	Next Review
Adopted	1.1	19/02/2025	Council	2028

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1. FOREWORD

1.1 A Message from the Mayor

I am pleased to present the Dungog Shire Community Engagement & Participation Strategy.

Community engagement is a vital part of local government, with the community being the heart of our Shire.

This Strategy has been developed to implement engagement processes ensuring community voices are heard on important matters. It gives guidance on how and when Council will engage with the community and how the community can participate in a meaningful way.

I encourage you, as a member of our community, to participate in engagement activities whenever possible, which will assist in strengthening Council's understanding in planning and delivering better outcomes for our community.

As the Mayor of Dungog Shire, I am excited to continue collaborating with you to shape the future of our Shire.

Cr Digby Rayward
Mayor



1.2 A Message from the General Manager



The Community Engagement & Participation Strategy details Dungog Shire Council's dedication to offering valuable engagement opportunities for the community to keep them well-informed, connected, and involved in Council's activities and decision-making processes.

As the level of government closest to the community, the Council has an important role to play in advocating for and addressing the community's needs. This involves understanding the people we serve and making choices that benefit our Shire now and into the future.

Our dedication to engagement involves creating a more inclusive Council through open and transparent communication with our local community and stakeholders.

We look forward to achieving this commitment by working together with you, guided by this Strategy.

Gareth Curtis
General Manager

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Community Engagement Strategy

The Local Government Act requires all Councils to prepare a Community Engagement Strategy to support the development of their plans, policies, programs and key activities. This includes those relating to Integrated Planning and Reporting, as well as strategic plans and programs required under other legislation.

Where a council has community engagement requirements under other legislation or regulations, those requirements should be included in the Community Engagement Strategy.

Community Participation Plan

Councils have a responsibility to deliver the objectives of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), and to promote orderly and economic land use, ecologically sustainable development and the facilitation of social and economic wellbeing. The Community Participation Plan requirements prescribed by the EP&A Act, for mandatory public engagement for all of Council's planning functions have been included in this Strategy.

This combined approach to community engagement provides one overarching Strategy to cover all community engagement activities.

2.2 Context

This Community Engagement & Participation Strategy incorporates requirements from the Local Government Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

Legislative requirements

The Local Government Act 1993 (the LG Act).

Section 402A of the LG Act.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (the EP&A Act).

Schedule 1 Community Participation Requirements and Division 2.6 Community Participation.



2.3 Guiding Principles for Community Engagement

The following principles underpin Council’s approach to all community engagement activities. Our principles are consistent with the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights prescribed by the LG Act.

Social Justice Principles

Equity – there is fairness in the distribution of resources.

Access – people have fair access to the economic resources and services essential to meet their basic needs and to improve their quality of life.

Participation – people have opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

Rights – people’s rights are recognised and promoted.

2.4 Community Engagement Objectives

Council’s engagement objective is to empower our community to participate and contribute to the decisions that council makes. We will achieve by ensuring:

- We are responsive to our community;
- Our staff have the skills, tools and resources to engage effectively;
- Our community has a variety of methods and opportunities to contribute to Council’s decision making process; and
- Our community has the necessary information to make an informed contribution.

2.5 Barriers to Engagement

There are many factors that could make it difficult for people to participate in the engagement process including, but not limited to physical health, language, social and geographic isolation, digital access, distrust, lack of time and lack of awareness. Council acknowledges these barriers and is committed to making engagement opportunities inclusive and accessible by adapting our methods to suit community needs within our resourcing capacity.



2.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Community

The community is responsible for making themselves aware of engagement opportunities, ensuring they consider the information provided, participate in activities, provide personal views, be respectful of other views and provide timely feedback to Council.

Participation from the community is critical for the Council to understand the community's vision for the future and priorities to feed into the strategies and plans that help council deliver that vision.

Role of Councillors

The role of Councillors is to represent the interest of ratepayers and residents, facilitate two way communication between the community and Council and consider the results of community engagement in their decision making at Council meetings.



Role of Council Staff

The role of staff is to engage with seek the community and stakeholders, seek out views and consider feedback without bias.

Engaging with our community allows council staff to bring plans and strategies together in a way that supports a clear vision for the future and provides an agreed roadmap for delivering community priorities and aspirations.

Once the priorities and aspirations have been set it is council's responsibility to deliver and report progress, undertake resource planning, and ensure the community's vision ambitions become operational realities.

2.7 Privacy in Engagement

Participants personal information will be managed in accordance with the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPPA Act) and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act).

Submissions are subject to the provisions of the GIPPA Act and may be made public. We routinely withhold contact numbers, email addresses and signatures when we are required to release submissions by law.

Individuals that wish for all personal details to be withheld from the public must advise council in the submission.

3. ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

3.1 Who is the community?

Our community is the combination of residents, groups and organisations that have a vested interest in the Dungog Shire Local Government Area, including:

- Residents of our shire
- Visitors to our region
- Business owners and service providers
- Property owners, developers and investors
- Social, community and sporting groups
- Government agencies, other Councils and industry associations.

3.2 When we engage with the community

Council often seeks public participation during the planning stages of projects or initiatives; when a change in service, activity or infrastructure is considered; or when more information and evidence is required.

This may include:

- the development of a new project, plan or initiative;
- strategic planning and the assessment of development applications;
- amendments to the Local Environmental Plan, development control plans and contributions plans;
- planning for a major project such as new infrastructure or facilities;
- reviewing or developing strategic directions in the Community Strategic Plan; or
- when changing Council's policy or strategic planning documents.

In the engagement planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the optimal time needed for people to respond. Whilst legislation sets out minimum requirements for some consultations, each engagement process is considered on its merits.

3.3 When we do not engage with the community

Council may inform the community of decisions or actions without prior consultation under certain conditions.

This may include:

- Council responding to an emergency or natural disaster;
- public health and safety matters;
- changes in legislation;
- confidential or commercial information;
- a resolution of council of an urgent nature;
- exempt or complying development applications; or
- operational matters.

3.4 How we engage with the community

The principles of Community Engagement (developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)), forms the basis for how we engage. It ensures the community through the process is well informed, engaged and empowered to provide feedback that contributes to the decision making process.

	When you can have your say	Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public
Inform		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.
Consult	●	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Involve	●	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Collaborate	●	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
Empower	●	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.	We will implement what you decide.

***IAP2 Community Engagement Model**

To ensure a successful consultation, careful consideration is given to aspects of community and stakeholder interest, political sensitivity, opportunities for partnership, the level of social, economic and environmental impact, legislative requirements, accessibility, time, resources and funding constraints.



3.5 Planning how we engage

In order to achieve the desired outcome consideration must be given to the appropriate method, timeframe and resources required for the scale of the community consultation project.

We aim to keep the community informed and engaged via:

- Social media
- Council newsletters
- Mayoral or other Council representatives
- Council website
- Community events

When we seek feedback on projects, services and programs, we may:

- Organise community meetings, Town Halls and workshops
- Survey the community
- Publicly display proposals and plans by public exhibition
- Present via Council Meetings

4. EXHIBITION OF PLANNING MATTERS

4.1 Council Planning Functions

Council carries out two main planning functions including strategic planning and the assessment of development applications.

Strategic planning is a key function carried out by Council where in the planning focus is on the strategic direction of the Shire and the consideration of economic, social and environmental factors.

Strategic planning functions carried out by Council include planning proposals for amendments to the Local Environmental Plan (LEP), development control plans and contributions plans.

Assessments carried out by Council include development applications and applications proposing to modify a development consent pursuant to section 4.55 of the EP&A Act.

See Annexure 1 for details of the minimum public exhibition periods for development applications and other matters.

5. HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

Measuring the effectiveness of our community engagement allows us to understand what works well and how we can improve the way we engage with our community.

We may assess the effectiveness of our engagement by evaluating:

Process: How well was the engagement planned and implemented?

Relevance: Was the engagement appropriate and did the community accept the engagement process?

Reach: Did we reach those affected and/or interested in the outcome?

Outcomes: Did we achieve the objectives of the engagement process?

5.1 Community Satisfaction Survey

Dungog Shire Council measures community satisfaction by conducting an independent survey in the lead up to the review of the Community Strategic Plan to ensure we are focused on the issues that matter most to our community. The survey is designed to assess our performance across a range of council services and ascertain the long-term vision of the community. The results help to inform our Community Strategic Plan and drive the overall long-term direction of council.

6. STRATEGY REVIEW

This strategy will be reviewed within three months of local government elections, as part of the broader review of the Community Strategic Plan, or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements.

Document History

Version	Effective Date	Page(s) Affected	Changes
1.0	19/02/2025	All	Document Creation, incorporate pages from the Community Participation Plan, Public Submissions Policy and Community Consultation Policy
1.1	19/02/2025	Council Res No. 2025/25	Public Exhibition feedback resulted in minor amendments outlined in 19 February 2025. See Council Report 12.4



ANNEXURE 1: EXHIBITION AND NOTIFICATION OF PLANNING MATTERS

The key opportunity for the community to participate in the planning process is during the legislated exhibition period that is associated with strategic planning matters and applications proposing development. The community can respond to the nature, scale and likely impact of the proposal, strategy or application for development.

Exhibition Periods Relating to Planning Matters

The minimum timeframes for the public exhibition of strategic planning matters is identified in the table below.

Type of matter	Public exhibition timeframe
Draft community participation plan	28 days
Planning proposal for local environmental plan subject to a gateway determination.	28 days or as specified by the gateway determination which may find, due to the minor nature of the proposal, that no public exhibition is required.
Draft development control plan	28 days
Draft infrastructure contribution plan	28 days
Draft planning agreement	28 days
Draft local strategic planning statement	28 days
Re-exhibition of any matter referred to above *	As per the initial exhibition timeframe

*Subject to Council's discretion, based on the extent of any amendments proposed.

Exhibition Periods Relating to Applications for Development

A range of consent authorities are responsible for the assessment and determination of applications for development. Council is not the only consent authority responsible for this function in the Dungog Local Government Area. Regional development is determined by the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel; state significant development and infrastructure is determined by the NSW Minister for Planning or their delegate.

In addition, private certifiers can approve forms of development categorised as complying development.

Where Council is the consent authority, the minimum timeframes for the public exhibition of applications for development is identified in the following table.

Type of application	Public exhibition timeframe
Application for development consent: Local Development (other than for a complying development certificate, designated development, nominated integrated development, threatened species development or state significant development)	14 days
Application for development consent: Designated Development	28 days
Application for development consent: Nominated Integrated Development	28 days
Application for development consent: Threatened Species Development	28 days
Section 4.55(1) Application	Not required
Section 4.55(1A) Application	Not required
Section 4.56 Application (in relation to consents granted by the Land and Environment Court of NSW)	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application
Section 4.55(2) Application	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application
Section 8.2/8.3 Application to review the determination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An application for development consent by council or the regional planning panel An application for the modification of a development consent by council or the regional planning panel (other than for a complying development certificate, designated development and Crown development) 	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application or modification application
Council-related development	28 days
Re-exhibition of any amended application *	As per the initial exhibition timeframe

*Subject to Council's discretion, based on the extent of any amendments proposed. Re-exhibition is not required if the environmental impact of the development has been reduced or not increased.

Applications for Development that will not be publicly exhibited

Schedule 1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, allows Council to identify types of applications for development that do not require public exhibition.

With the exception of the applications for development outlined in Points (i) and (ii) below,

i. those proposing works in respect of a heritage item or within a heritage conservation area (as outlined within Schedule 5 of the Dungog Local Environmental Plan 2014).

ii. those proposing a variation to the building line setbacks contained within Part C.3 – Building Line Setbacks, of the Dungog Development Control Plan.

The types of applications for development prescribed in Points (a) – (m) inclusive, are considered by Council not to warrant public exhibition:

- a. Erection of a single-storey dwelling house and alterations/additions to a single-storey dwelling house.
- b. Ancillary development to a dwelling house, including but not limited to swimming pools, sheds, garages, outbuildings and retaining walls provided that the height of such development does not exceed the maximum height prescribed under the equivalent complying development standard.
- c. Erection of a secondary dwelling in a R1 General Residential Zone.
- d. Erection of a dual occupancy in a R1 General Residential Zone.
- e. Ancillary development to the rural use of land including but not limited to dams and farm buildings provided that the height of such development does not exceed the maximum height prescribed under the equivalent complying development standard.
- f. Demolition works.
- g. Advertising signs.
- h. Erection of a commercial premises within an employment zone, except if the site directly adjoins land in a residential zone or an existing dwelling.
- i. Erection of an industrial premises within an employment zone, except if the site directly adjoins land in a residential zone or an existing dwelling.
- j. Use of a premises within an employment zone, except if the proposed use involves sex industry-related activities; or the site adjoins land in a residential zone, an existing dwelling or other activity likely to be affected by the proposal.
- k. Internal alterations to any building.
- l. The temporary use of land under Clause 2.8 of the Dungog Local Environmental Plan 2014, provided the attendee numbers are less than 100 (other than council-related development).
- m. Subdivision for the purpose of
 - a boundary adjustment, or
 - strata subdivision.

Note: Notwithstanding any other provision of the CPP, Council may elect to publicly exhibit any application for development if, in the opinion of Council's Director Planning and Environment, it is in the public interest to do so.

Types of Exhibition

Opportunities to participate in the planning and assessment process are identified in the table below.

Type of matter	Written notice (letter to directly adjoining and adjacent landowners #)	NSW Planning Portal	DSC website	Site notice
Planning proposals	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Development control plan			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Infrastructure contribution plan			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Planning agreement	In conjunction with LEP/DA Exhibition	In conjunction with LEP/DA Exhibition	In conjunction with LEP/ DA Exhibition	

Type of matter	Written notice (letter to directly adjoining and adjacent landowners #)	NSW Planning Portal	DSC website	Site notice
Local strategic planning statement			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Application for development consent: Local Development *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Application for development consent: Designated Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Application for development consent: Nominated Integrated Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Application for development consent: Threatened Species Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Section 4.56 Application	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application			
Section 4.55(2) Application	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application			
Section 8.2/8.3 Application	Public exhibition will occur in the same manner as the original development application			

* Applications for Local Development that will not be publicly exhibited are listed on pages 14 and 15

Glossary of Planning Terms

Contributions Plan: A plan developed by Councils for the purpose of gaining financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public amenities and or services required to accommodate the new development.

Development Control Plan (DCP): A plan that sets the parameters in which development is to be designed to that aligns with the LEP.

Gateway Determination: A gateway determination is issued following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP that allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition.

Local Environmental Plan (LEP): An environmental planning instrument developed by Council, a local Planning authority. An LEP sets out the planning framework for a local government area.





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