

Warrumbungle Shire Council

# Community Engagement Strategy

2020-2024



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# VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

## **Vision**

Excellence in Local Government

## **Mission**

Council will provide

- Quality, cost effective services that will enhance our community's lifestyle, environment, opportunity and prosperity;
- Infrastructure and services which meet the social and economic needs and aspirations of the community now and in the future;
- Effective leadership and good governance, by encouraging teamwork, through a dedicated responsible well trained workforce.

## **Values**

### ✓ **Honesty**

Frank and open discussion, taking responsibility for our actions

### ✓ **Integrity**

Behaving in accordance with our values

### ✓ **Fairness**

Consideration of the facts and a commitment to two way communication

### ✓ **Compassion**

Working for the benefit and care of our community and the natural environment

### ✓ **Respect**

To ourselves, colleagues, the organisation and the community listening actively and responding truthfully

### ✓ **Transparency**

Open and honest interactions with each other and our community

### ✓ **Passion**

Achievement of activities with energy, enthusiasm and pride

### ✓ **Trust**

Striving to be dependable, reliable and delivering outcomes in a spirit of goodwill

### ✓ **Opportunity**

To be an enviable workplace creating pathways for staff development

# MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL

Warrumbungle Shire Council shares the community's passion for the area we all call home. Council is committed to working together to make decisions as a community involved Council.

The *Community Engagement Strategy 2020-2024* is about the Warrumbungle community contributing to Council decision-making through community involved recommendations. It is about listening, asking and supporting the community to learn more about local government and how it can work for them.

The Strategy explains why, how and when Council will engage with the community.

It also reflects the legislation requiring Council to ensure communities have a say and participate in decisions that affect their future.

Community engagement is one of Council's key responsibilities. We strive to engage early and broadly and undertake to continuously improve and refine access to information.

We welcome the combined experience, imagination and common sense of the Warrumbungle community to guide Council decision-making. As a community, we will grow and learn from each other, and in turn Council decisions will be more aligned to community aspirations.

## **Warrumbungle Shire Council**

IMAGE – GROUP PHOTO OF COUNCILLORS (captioned with names)

**Executive Leadership Team:** General Manager – Roger Bailey; Director Technical Services – Kevin Tighe; Director Environment and Development – Leeanne Ryan; Director Corporate and Community Services – Kim Parker.

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# COMMITMENT TO AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

**This Strategy enshrines our partnership with the community. It sets out a whole-of-Council commitment to community engagement.**

The Warrumbungle Shire community will be:

- Encouraged to make recommendations to Council
- Informed about issues and decisions that could significantly affect their future
- Able to raise issues and have their say, in a way and at a time that suits them
- Confident that their views and advice have been considered and have access to feedback

This Strategy aligns with the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) core values for community engagement.

**“Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process”**

We have a responsibility to leave a legacy for future generations that will allow them to enjoy living, working and visiting the Warrumbungle Shire area. As a Council, we encourage all people and organisations in our community to help us make better decisions.

Effective community engagement has the power to bring about a change in Council’s culture and greater community cohesion. It builds mutual trust and closer working relationships between Council, the people, communities and organisations of the Warrumbungle Shire area.

Council wants to learn from the experiences and ideas of the community. The community provides the ‘ground up’ perspective that Council needs to improve its planning, services and performance. To ensure maximum community involvement, engagement must be based on the social justice principles of:

- Access – people have fair access to the economic resources and services essential to meet their basic needs and to improve their quality of life,
- Equity – there is fairness in the distribution of resources,
- Participation – people have opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives, and
- Rights – people’s rights are recognised and promoted.

Ultimately, Councillors must fulfil their role as elected leaders and make the final decisions. Our responsibility is to work in the best interests of the Warrumbungle Shire area as a whole, and to consider a broad cross-section of views.

Our goal is to achieve a broad consensus wherever possible, but engagement cannot always lead to complete agreement. From time to time Council will make decisions that some people may find hard to accept.

Council will do everything it can to ensure that its consultation is broad based and undertaken early in the process. We want to be a council that can be trusted, is transparent and accountable to the community.

Council business papers containing analysis and recommendations, and the minutes of Council meetings and decisions, will be available online, at town libraries and Council offices.

**Stakeholders** – the Warrumbungle Community

Warrumbungle Shire is a large local government area, and Council's efforts to engage with its constituents must respond to diversity.

Council's responsibility is to ensure the well-being of the community as a whole. Within that community, we identify different 'stakeholders' for this Strategy:

- Individual residents and ratepayers
- Non-resident ratepayers
- Businesses, industry and farming organisations
- Local resident, ratepayer and progress associations
- Community, sporting and environmental groups
- Visitors to the Warrumbungle Shire area
- Neighbouring councils and regional organisations
- Government agencies and Members of Parliament (state and federal)

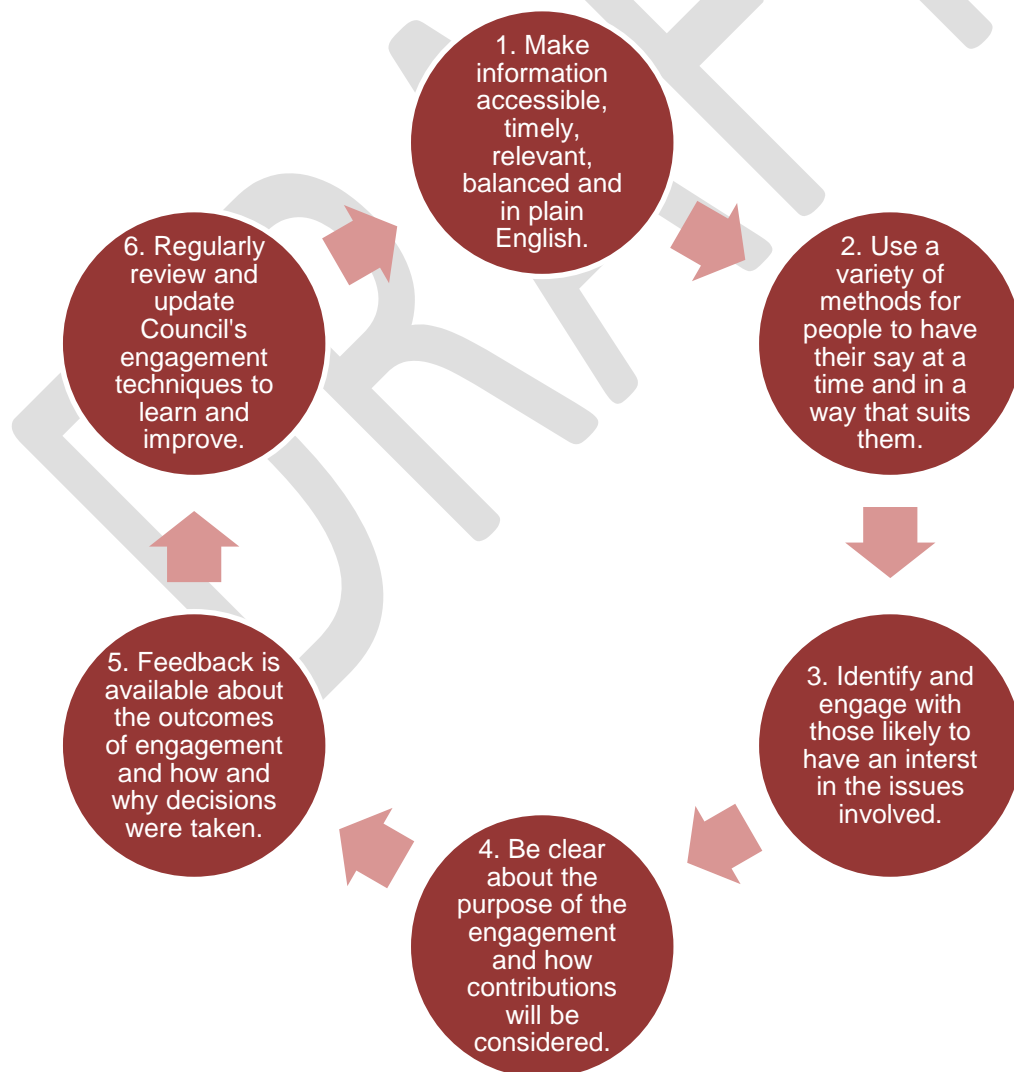
INSERT IMAGE – COMMUNITY BASED

# OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

**This Strategy has four main objectives. They are to:**

1. Be a council that is guided by community involved recommendations arrived at through deliberative, early and broad-based engagement.
2. Encourage the community to understand, be understood and learn from each other through a productive and inclusive exchange of views.
3. Ensure that people receive information that is timely, free of bias, easy to access and understand.
4. Be transparent, strengthen relationships and build mutual respect through ongoing engagement activities.

**Figure 1:** Warrumbungle Shire Council's principles of community engagement





# WHY WE ENGAGE

**It is about community involved recommendations through early, broad and ongoing conversations where the community contributes views and ideas that will lead to improved decision-making. We understand that the community values participation, having a voice and being involved.**

It is not feasible to engage in detail on every decision and every project. Community concerns and priorities vary considerably from one part of the Warrumbungle Shire area to another, and between different groups. As a result, the need for engagement may vary from place to place and group to group.

For more complex cases, a specific Engagement Plan will be prepared to ensure that the principles and requirements of this Strategy are met.

## **Legal Requirement for a Community Engagement Strategy**

Currently, councils in NSW are required to have a Community Engagement Strategy, based on social justice principles, when developing their Community Strategic Plan (CSP). This is part of the NSW Government's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

The CSP is for a minimum of ten years and sets out the community's needs, aspirations and priorities considered against the 'quadruple bottom line' of economic, social, civic and environmentally sustainable objectives. Linked to the CSP is a Resourcing Strategy comprising financial, asset management and workforce plans.

The CSP must be reviewed every four years by each incoming council. Warrumbungle Shire's current CSP covers the period 2017-2032. Incoming councils must also adopt a four-year Delivery Program to implement the CSP. Annual Operational Plans (budgets) flow from the Delivery Program.

In the near future, the requirement for a Community Engagement Strategy is to be broadened to cover all the Council's plans, policies and programs, and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters). This Strategy meets that new requirement.

## **Statutory Roles and Responsibilities.**

This Strategy reflects the various requirements for community consultation and engagement set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*. The Act defines the following roles and responsibilities:

- **Councillors** represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community, and facilitate communication with the community.
- The **Council** as a whole consults regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders, and keeps them informed of its decisions.
- The **Mayor**, as leader of the Council and as a community leader, promotes partnerships with key stakeholders, and together with the General Manager ensures adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between the Council and the community.

- The **General Manager** advises the Mayor and Council on appropriate forms of community engagement in different situations, and prepares a Community Engagement Strategy.

## WHEN WE ENGAGE

**This Strategy applies as a minimum to the following types of activity:**

- Strategic and corporate plans including the 10-year Community Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy, 4-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan.
- Council policies, programs and projects that will have significant impacts on local people, community life, the environment, business and the economy.
- Land-use and development plans, including the Local Environmental Plan, Locality Plans and Development Control Plans and any other matter that is specified in division 2.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.
- All other matters where legislation requires community notification or consultation (subject to any processes or limits imposed by the relevant Act).
- Any other issue that Council resolves to engage on.

Where possible, Council will seek to go beyond the minimum engagement requirements and timeframes set out in legislation and aims to engage broadly and early with projects of significance to maximise community participation and involvement.

Council will aim to extend timeframes for engagement over the Christmas/New Year period, during school holidays, and when there are special events.

## HOW WE ENGAGE

**This Strategy recognises the five different stages of community engagement, based on the International Association of Public Participation spectrum – *inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower*.**

In most cases a combination of techniques will be needed to ensure the engagement process is accessible, well-balanced and trustworthy.

Cohesion between the community and Council comes with understanding and being understood by others through broad-based, round-table, neighbour-to-neighbour, face-to-face discussions. This will deliver outcomes that better reflect the community's aspirations.

Online communication and engagement continues to grow, providing further opportunities for the community to engage and have their say.

Some sections of the community require more customised engagement approaches to ensure matters such as cultural sensitivity, venue and location accessibility and times of engagement are considered.

Engagement can never be a simple, 'one size fits all – tick the box' exercise. The scope, timing and type of engagement will vary according to the circumstances of each issue under consideration.

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# IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

**The *Community Engagement Strategy 2020-2024* builds on current practice around community participation. It incorporates a number of ideas to boost the quality of Council's engagement with the community.**

Ultimately, we aim to increase the number of people contributing to Council decision-making. We will be a Council that is led by community recommendations through early, broad-based deliberative consultation that will further community growth.

Successful implementation of the Strategy may require allocation of resources and professional development opportunities for staff and Councillors. The Strategy is able to be reviewed and updated as determined by Council but as a minimum in 2024.

## Engagement highlights

- Community Consultation Meetings provide an opportunity for local communities to meet with Councillors, Executive Council Staff and other community members to discuss the issues affecting the Shire.
- Have Your Say, Council's online portal supporting the community to have their say and be kept informed.
- Advisory Committees comprising Councillors, community representatives and subject matter experts who meet regularly to consider matters within their terms of reference.
- Training and skill development available for staff and Councillors.
- Greater use of Council's existing social media platforms to create engagement opportunities, input and feedback.
- Clear explanations and linkages between strategies on Council's website.

# DETERMINING THE ENGAGEMENT CRITERIA

The tables below outline how the community scale and impact of a project determines the engagement criteria, which influences the minimum level of engagement for a project. For example, construction of a toilet block in a rural village may be low scale and low impact – so *inform* is the appropriate level of engagement. A Locality Plan for a major town may have moderate scale and high impact – so *involve/collaborate* is the appropriate level of engagement.

<b>Community scale (population/geographical)</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The greater majority or entire Warrumbungle Shire population</li> <li>• Relevant to a large geographical area of the Warrumbungle Shire</li> <li>• High complexity including numerous stakeholders and community groups</li> </ul>	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant proportion of the Warrumbungle Shire population</li> <li>• Relevant to a town or village or a large specific group or user of a facility or service</li> <li>• Moderate complexity including multiple stakeholders and community groups</li> </ul>	Moderate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small component of the Warrumbungle Shire population</li> <li>• Relevant to a street, locality or small specific group or users of a facility or service</li> <li>• Low complexity including a relatively small number of stakeholders and community groups</li> </ul>	Low

<b>Community impact (effect on residents)</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for high risk of controversy or conflict with community values</li> <li>• Significant impacts to attributes, such as the natural environment, water supply, land use or heritage</li> <li>• Potential large impact on government strategies and directions</li> </ul>	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for some risk of controversy or conflict with community values</li> <li>• The loss or change to any facility or service to the locality</li> <li>• Potential moderate impact on government strategies and directions</li> </ul>	Moderate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low or no risk of controversy or conflict with local community values</li> <li>• A small change to any facility or service to the locality</li> <li>• Low impact on government strategies and directions</li> </ul>	Low

### Minimum level of engagement

The table below outlines the minimum engagement expectations for a Warrumbungle Shire Council project, as determined by the scale and impact criteria in the previous two tables.

Community Scale	Community Impact	Level of Engagement
Low	Low	<b>Inform</b>
Low	Moderate	Inform + <b>Consult</b>
Moderate	Low	Inform + <b>Consult</b>
Moderate	Moderate	Inform + <b>Consult</b>
Low	High	Inform + Consult + <b>Involve</b>
Moderate	High	Inform + Consult + <b>Involve</b>
High	Low	Inform + Consult + <b>Involve</b>
High	Moderate	Inform + Consult + <b>Involve</b>
High	High	Inform + Consult + Involve + <b>Collaborate</b>

# ENGAGEMENT METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The following tables identify the stages of engagement – *inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower* – and highlights some methods and techniques recommended for use. Other methods may also be used.

<b>Inform – assisting people to learn about Council services and programs</b>	
Experience shows that in many cases accurate information is all that people want, especially if they feel that they can trust Council to work in the community's best interests to prepare good plans, make sound decisions and deliver projects to an expected standard.	
Community eNewsletter	Launched in August 2019, Council's community eNewsletter provides monthly updates via e-subscription, social media and Council's website.
Direct mail/letterbox drop	Written communication specific to the household sent via addressed direct mail or bulk drop.
Customer Service	First point of customer contact located at the Coonabarabran and Coolah Council office buildings.
Presentations, workshops and information sessions	Opportunities for members of the public to hear about a Council program or service at a presentation, educational workshop or information session (planned or pop up).
Council website	<a href="http://www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au">www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au</a>
Have Your Say	<a href="http://www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au/our-council/have-your-say">www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au/our-council/have-your-say</a> - Council's online engagement portal, supporting the community to have their say and be kept informed.
Social and digital media	Council and its community facilities are active on Facebook and Council's website.
Media releases and traditional advertising	Regular media releases are issued to local media including newspapers, radio, town publications and community development coordinators. Advertising opportunities are used in publications such as newspapers, industry publications and radio.
Site signage	Permanent or temporary – information, education and historical signage, works projects, development proposals, and site and way-finding signage.
Community noticeboards and information hubs	Available at Council office buildings, Visitor Information Centre, libraries and some community centres and hubs such as local post offices.

**Consult – actively seeking people’s views and exchanging information between Council and the community**

These forms of engagement are necessary to ensure Council is kept up-to-date on issues that are (or may become) controversial, and that people can make their views known on matters of concern and be sure that those views will be fully considered.

Community Consultation	An opportunity for members of local communities to meet with Councillors, Executive Council Staff and other members of local communities to discuss the issues affecting the Shire and individual communities. Held twice a year in the six major towns of the Warrumbungle local government area, Community Consultation Meetings aim to provide a forum that promotes open sharing of information between Council and the community.
On Exhibition – Public Submissions	All items ‘On Exhibition’ provide the opportunity for any member of the public to make a submission to have their say on a particular matter.
Surveys and polls	Formal surveys are statistically representative and completed electronically or in person. Quick/opinion polls are also useful to provide a snapshot of a view at a point in time.
Community events, stalls, displays or site meetings	Opportunities for the public to speak one-on-one with council representatives about a specific project at a community event, a ‘shop-front’ display or a site meeting.

**Involve and Collaborate – bringing people into the decision-making process.**

In some cases engagement may need to go further and representative groups of people and organisations will be established to actively collaborate with Councillors and/or Council staff in the preparation of plans and policies, the design and implementation of projects, or the management of a Council program or facility.

Community Consultation	An opportunity for members of local communities to meet with Councillors, Executive Council Staff and other members of local communities to discuss the issues affecting the Shire and individual communities. Held twice a year in the six major towns of the Warrumbungle local government area, Community Consultation Meetings aim to provide a forum that promotes open sharing of information between Council and the community.
Advisory Committees	Formal committees comprising Councillors, community representatives and subject matter experts that meet regularly to consider matters within their terms of reference, and that may be given some delegated authority from Council under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .
Meetings by invitation/ personal briefing	Community stakeholders invited to meet with staff and/or Councillors for discussion and exchange of views.
Project reference groups	Groups of community/public representatives who operate under agreed Terms of Reference to consider a particular project, policy or plan, and provide this advice through the Project Officer to Council



**Empower – giving people the ability to make the decision**

There are key ways in which the community is empowered to make decisions affecting local government.

Election of Councillors	As per legislation under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> , Council elections are held every four years.
Polls and referendums	Under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> , Council may choose to seek the community's views on any issue through a non-compulsory poll of electors' opinions, or it may hold a 'constitutional referendum' on certain electoral matters (eg use of wards, the number of Councillors), in which case voting is compulsory and the result is binding.

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# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The following table identifies various ways that stakeholder groups may be engaged, meeting differing needs of different community members

Stakeholder/s	Methods of Engagement
Individual residents and ratepayers	Community e-Newsletter; direct mail/ letterbox drop; Customer Service; presentations, workshops and information sessions; Council website; Have Your Say; social and digital media; media releases and traditional advertising; site signage; community noticeboards and information hubs; community consultation meetings; On Exhibition – public submissions; surveys and polls; community events, stalls, displays or site meetings; Advisory Committees; project reference groups
Non-resident ratepayers	Community e-Newsletter; direct mail; Customer Service; Council website; Have Your Say; social and digital media; media releases and traditional advertising; On Exhibition – public submissions; surveys and polls
Businesses, industry and farming organisations; local resident, ratepayer and progress associations; community, sporting and environmental groups	Community e-Newsletter; direct mail/ letterbox drop; Customer Service; presentations, workshops and information sessions; Council website; Have Your Say; social and digital media; media releases and traditional advertising; community consultation meetings; On Exhibition – public submissions; surveys and polls; community events, stalls, displays or site meetings; Advisory Committees; meetings by invitation/ personal briefing; project reference groups
Visitors to the Warrumbungle Shire area	Customer Service; Council website; social and digital media; site signage; community noticeboards and information hubs; community events, stalls, and displays
Neighbouring councils and regional organisations; government agencies and Members of Parliament (State and Federal)	Community e-Newsletter; direct mail; Customer Service; presentations, workshops and information sessions; Council website; Have Your Say; social and digital media; media releases and traditional advertising; On Exhibition – public submissions; community events, stalls, displays or site meetings; meetings by invitation/personal briefing; project reference groups

The broad range of methods of engagement ensures there are plenty of options to access all members of the community.