

Community Engagement Policy



CITY OF
TEA TREE GULLY
Naturally Better

1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines Council's commitment to open, accountable and responsive community engagement that enhances informed decision-making through clear, timely and meaningful communication and engagement with the community. Effective engagement supports decision-making that reflects community needs, values and priorities, while appropriately balancing legislative, strategic, financial, technical and environmental considerations.

This policy ensures the City of Tea Tree Gully meets its legislative obligations for community engagement under the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter. It provides guidance on how and when Council engages with the community in relation to Council decisions and initiatives and establishes principles for a consistent, transparent and inclusive approach to engagement that supports community participation and strengthens trust and relationships between Council and the community.

2. POLICY

This policy applies to all decisions, activities and processes undertaken by Council, a delegate of Council, or a person exercising power on behalf of Council where community engagement is required under the *Local Government Act 1999*, the Community Engagement Charter or this policy. It also applies to any additional community engagement activities Council undertakes at its discretion. References to Council in this policy include Council delegates and authorised officers.

This policy does not apply where Council is exercising powers or functions under other legislation that prescribes separate consultation requirements, such as the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*. In such cases, the consultation requirements of the relevant legislation take precedence.

This policy, together with the community engagement principles set out below, underpins all community engagement processes and activities undertaken by Council and provides guidance for Elected Members, Council officers, contractors and external consultants acting on Council's behalf.

For this policy, Council's community includes people who live, work, study, own property, conduct business, visit or use Council services, facilities and public spaces. Council recognises that communities may be defined by a geographic location (community of place), shared interests (community of interest) or affiliation, practice or identity (such as industry, community groups or sporting clubs).

Council may alter or substitute this policy from time to time, following public consultation where required.

2.1 Community engagement principles

Council's approach to community engagement is guided by the principles of the Community Engagement Charter and Council's organisational best practice. These are:

1. **Inclusive and meaningful participation**
Provide reasonable, timely and meaningful opportunities for community members to be informed about and participate in decisions that may affect them.
2. **Clarity of purpose**
Clearly communicate the purpose, scope and intended use of community feedback through clear and transparent information.
3. **Accessible information**
Ensure information is provided in plain language, is easy to access and well-promoted, and offers a range of accessible ways for people to have their say.
4. **Appropriate and fit-for-purpose engagement**
Design and deliver engagement appropriate to the significance and potential impact of the decision or initiative.
5. **Consideration of feedback and closing the loop**
Consider community feedback alongside other relevant factors in decision-making and where possible, report back on how the community's contribution has impacted Council's decision.

2.2 Community engagement context

Community engagement is a deliberate and structured process guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. This recognises that engagement may range from informing the community through to consulting, involving or collaborating with the community, depending on the nature, significance and potential impact of the matter.

Community engagement supports and enhances Council decision-making but does not replace the final decision-making authority of Council, the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate. Engagement outcomes are considered alongside legislative, strategic, financial, technical and environmental factors and contribute to better decision-making by considering diverse perspectives, sound information and a range of views and alternatives. Council seeks broad and representative input from the community and stakeholders and acknowledges engagement contributes to decision-making rather than being an outcome or solution in itself.

2.3 Categories of community engagement

The Community Engagement Charter establishes five categories of community engagement to ensure engagement requirements are appropriate to the nature and likely impact of the decision or initiative. These categories define the mandatory minimum actions Council must follow where the Act requires public consultation to be undertaken.

Category	Definition
1. Significant - annual business plan and rating policy	Decisions related to a council's adoption of its annual business plan or proposed changes to the basis of its council rates.
2. Significant	Decisions that a council makes that have a significant impact on most or all ratepayers and residents, or the wider community or area.

3. Standard	Decisions that a council makes that benefit from community input across the council area.
4. Local	Decisions that impact an identifiable smaller group of residents/ratepayers or a local area.
5. Inform	Matters where councils provide information to a community impacted by a decision.

The minimum engagement standards applicable to each category and relevant matters of the Act are summarised in Appendix 1 and reflect the requirements of the Community Engagement Charter and the Local Government Act 1999.

2.4 Engagement beyond statutory and mandatory requirements

2.4.1. Non-statutory matters

Council recognises that some decisions and initiatives, while not subject to legislative community engagement requirements, may benefit from engagement with the community, undertaking such engagement at its discretion where it considers it will enhance decision-making or community understanding.

Non-statutory engagement may include matters such as policy and strategy development, service planning and reviews, development on Council land, customer satisfaction and performance evaluations, or projects with localised or emerging community interest. Decisions to undertake engagement beyond statutory requirements will be made on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the nature of the matter, its potential impact and the availability of resources.

2.4.2. Additional community engagement activities for statutory matters

Council may, at its discretion, determine to undertake activities in addition to those required under the Local Government Act 1999 and/or the Community Engagement Charter. Council is not required to consider or determine whether to undertake additional activities in every instance.

2.5 Other considerations when undertaking community engagement processes

All materials prepared for use in community engagement processes must be reviewed and approved by the Community Engagement Team and the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate prior to publication, printing or distribution to ensure consistency, accuracy and compliance with Council requirements.

Feedback provided by decision-makers, including Council management and staff directly involved in the matter subject to engagement, will not be included in community engagement outcome reports.

To maintain confidence in the integrity of Council's community engagement processes, all respondents participating in statutory engagement must provide a method of contact. For non-statutory engagement, the requirement to provide a contact method will be determined on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the nature and purpose of the engagement.

All personal information collected through engagement activities will be managed in accordance with Council's Privacy Policy, and personal details will be excluded from

Council reports or feedback summaries unless disclosure is required by legislation or consent has been provided by the respondent.

Council will manage feedback or comments that contain offensive, inflammatory or threatening content, in a manner that maintains the integrity of the engagement process. Constructive feedback will be retained with inappropriate language removed, while feedback that is unrelated to the matter or threatening in nature may be excluded from reports and summaries.

2.6 Council approval of community engagement plans

Community engagement plans required to meet statutory engagement obligations for matters categorised as Significant - annual business plan and rating policy or Significant must be prepared and submitted to Council for approval prior to the commencement of any engagement activities, unless Council has delegated approval authority to the Chief Executive Officer under the scheme of delegations.

Approval of community engagement plans for non-statutory matters will be determined by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate in accordance with Council's scheme of delegations, who may also determine whether Council approval is required where the proposed engagement is assessed as having a high level of risk or impact.

3. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions apply:

CEO

Refers to the Chief Executive Officer (including their delegate) of the City of Tea Tree Gully.

Community engagement plan

Is a document that outlines the intended community engagement process; detailing objectives and purpose of the engagement, key messages, stakeholders, consultation period, activities (methods of promotion and submitting feedback) and how feedback will be used for decision-making.

Council

For the purposes of these alterations **the Council** (in addition to the elected body) includes an officer or employee of the Council acting within the scope of that person's ordinary functions and duties except in circumstances where these alterations expressly require a matter to be considered at a meeting of the Council.

Council Management

Refers to Elected Members, the Chief Executive Officer, General Managers and Managers

Stakeholder

Is a person or agency/organisation that has an interest in a decision or proposal or may be directly or indirectly affected by a decision that has been made or is being proposed.

4. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The following legislation applies to this policy:

Local Government Act 1999

This policy fulfils Council's obligations under section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* and the Community Engagement Charter. Council will comply with the Charter's mandatory minimum engagement requirements for all matters where public consultation is required by legislation.

4.1 Other references

Council's document including:

- a. Privacy Policy
- b. Communications Policy
- c. Tree Management Policy

5. STRATEGIC PLAN/POLICY

5.1 Strategic Plan

The following strategic objectives in Council's Strategic Plan 2030 are the most relevant to this report:

Aspiration	Comments
Our Community	
Our programs, events and services are accessible, inclusive and adaptable to meet community needs	Each community engagement process will be accessible and inclusive, adapting where community need requires.
Our Leadership	
Our service provision is sustainable and adaptable	Community engagement processes undertaken will use best-practice techniques, with new techniques being implemented as they emerge
We have an innovative approach to customer service that provides a positive customer experience and adapts to changing needs	The use of varying tools to encourage engagement offers easy and innovative ways to engage with more community members, supporting a positive experience when having their say.
Our engagement is meaningful and we keep our community informed about Council initiatives	Community engagement processes will be meaningful, relevant and timely; providing opportunities for community members to have their say on issues that impact them.
Our planning and decision making is evidence based, consistent and focused on outcomes for the future	Using community feedback as part of the evidence used to make informed decision for future directions.

5.2 Organisation Plan

Our Strategic Plan is supported by an Organisation Plan which focuses on four key themes of customer care, trust, teamwork and growth. All themes are relevant to this policy.

6. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the implementation and application of this policy for the purposes of section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999*. This includes approving community engagement strategies where required, ensuring engagement is undertaken in accordance with legislative and Charter requirements, and reporting engagement outcomes to Council. The Chief Executive Officer may delegate responsibilities under this policy to officers or other authorised persons in accordance with Council's scheme of delegations.

Record number	D26/10646
Responsible Manager	Manager Community Connections
Other key internal stakeholders	General Manager Community Services General Manager Corporate Services General Manager City Operations General Manager Strategy & Finance
Last reviewed	
Adoption reference	
Resolution number	
Previous review dates	19/8/25, 17/08/22, 17/06/20, 28/4/20, 11/7/17, 15/03/14 (8/06/16 legislative changes), 08/08/11 (Previously called Public Consultation Policy), 23/1/07, 25/02/03, 13/03/01
Legal requirement	It is a requirement under section 50A of the Local Government Act to have this policy. Requires community engagement if changes are made (alteration or substitution)
Due date next review	2030

Appendix 1: Mandatory requirements as per the Local Government Act 1999 and the Community Engagement Charter and CTTG actions

	Significant Annual Business Plan (ABP) and rating policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform
Publish information on a Council website.	X	X	X	X	X
Publish information in a print or digital local news publication (not produced by Council).	X	X			
Consult with the whole Council area. Consider appropriate forms of notification.	X	X	X		
Invite community to make submissions.	X	X			
Explain decision making process (how community feedback will inform the Council's decision).	X	X	X	X	
Explain Council's proposal and what it seeks to achieve.	X	X	*	*	
Seek and consider feedback from community. Consider how best to invite feedback.	X	X	X	X	
Hold public meeting and invite verbal or written submissions (can be part of Council meeting or separate event).	X				
Invite people who have made a written submission to speak at a Council meeting before the decision is made.		X			
Include summary of community engagement feedback to Council ahead of the decision.	X	X	*		
Consult with local community within the area affected by the Council decision or action. Consider appropriate forms of notification.				X	
Provide information to the community (local or whole Council area) that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X

X Mandatory requirement/action

* City of Tea Tree Gully action (will consider where appropriate)

Refer to Community Engagement Charter for more detail

Significant Annual Business Plan (ABP) and rating policy (min. 21 days consultation period)	Significant (min. 21 days consultation period)	Standard	Local	Inform
- Adopting an Annual Business Plan - section 123(3)(b) - Changes to basis of rating, declaring differential rates, imposing a separate rate, service rate or service charge, or changing the basis on which land is valued for the purpose of rating - section 151(5)(e)	- Representation reviews - section 12(7) - Development and review of Strategic Management Plans - section 122(6) - Changes to use of differential rating - section 156(4a)(b) - Revocation of classification of land as community land - sections 194(2)(b) - Community Land Management Plans - adoption - section 197(1) - Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments - section 198(3) - Alienation of community land by lease or license - section 202(2)	- Opening hours and place of principal office - substantial changes - section 45(3) - Community Engagement Policy - section 50A(6)(b) - Council behavioural support policies - section 75F(6) - Access to meetings and documents - section 92(5) - Power to make orders - section 259(2)(b)	- Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available - section 223(1) - Proposed planting of vegetation on a road – significant impact - section 232(b)	- Opening hours and place of principal office – minor changes - section 45(3) - Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for less than 48 hours and the Council ensures that a detour is in place - section 223(1) - Election information - section 13A (2) of the <i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i>

Activities for promoting consultation opportunities and inform that may be considered (but not limited to):

- Social media platform maintained by Council
- Information made available at Council offices and/or Library
- Onsite signage/corflutes
- Targeted letters or leaflet drops in the area affected by the action or Council decision
- Council's monthly e-newsletter

Methods for providing feedback that may be considered (but not limited to):

- Online form or survey available on Council's Your Say website
- Written submission (email or letter posted to Council)
- Workshop, forum or focus group
- Verbal submission at a Council meeting or public meeting (Significant-APB & Rating Policy)