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Thanks to our community

Thank you for sharing your ideas and reflections to help shape our communication and engagement approach.

We value your time and interest and look forward to fostering a deeper connection between Council and the community.









Introduction

We're committed to connecting with our community.

Like you, our staff and councillors live, and are part of, the community. We want to do the best job possible for you, the community – after all, it is your city.

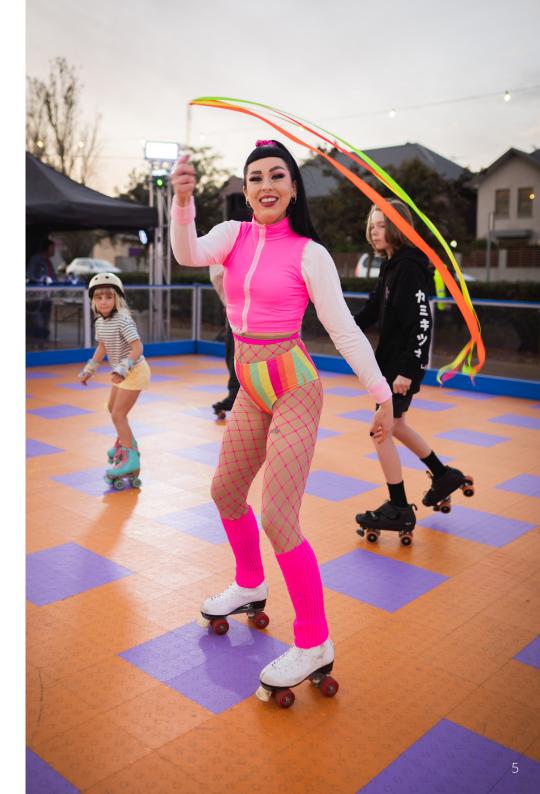
Maitland is where you live, work and play, so you should know what Council is doing. We understand that we get the best outcomes for the community when we connect with you at the earliest opportunity during the decision making process.

It's our job to let you know and get you involved in what we're doing. That's why we're continually working on getting better at keeping you informed and including you in conversations and decisions.

Over the years, we've made significant improvements, but we know we can always do better. That's why we have reviewed the way we communicate and engage with you to ensure the information we send out is relevant, is reaching you, and that you know we are listening.

To do this, we asked you to tell us what you want to know, how you prefer to get information, if you wish to be more involved, or if you're happy just the way things are.

Your input was invaluable and helped us to prepare this Communication and Engagement Strategy.





Executive summary

We know that communication and engagement are essential to keeping our community informed and included in our decisions. We've prepared this Strategy in response to your feedback, and it provides a roadmap for how we plan to communicate and engage with you.

Every Council is required to have a Community Engagement Strategy under State legislation. But we're committed to going above and beyond, so we identified the need for a Communication and Engagement Strategy as one of our Delivery Program objectives.

We know that having an informed community that provides genuine input into Council decisions improves community connectedness and wellbeing and makes Maitland a better place to live, work, and play.

We have taken on board the results of our recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and consulted with the community, staff and councillors in developing this Strategy. Your feedback told us that you don't always feel listened to or kept informed of Council activities, and we want to do better.

This Strategy is our commitment that we will honestly and transparently communicate and engage in a consistent, meaningful way to develop relationships with our community and customers to support decision making, planning, sharing information and connecting with communities.

Community Participation Plan

Attached to this Strategy is our Community Participation Plan (CPP) which is an extension of our Community Strategic Plan, Maitland +10 and is guided by the same core values as these strategies but with a singular focus on the planning process. It is an easy to use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority and ensures we meet our statutory requirements for notification and exhibition.

Legislative requirements

The Communication and Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Section 402A of the Local Government Act 1993, Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, our Community Engagement Policy and responds to the requirements of NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPR).

What is IPR?

IPR allows councils to bring plans and strategies together in a way that supports a clear vision for the future and provides an agreed direction for delivering community priorities and aspirations.

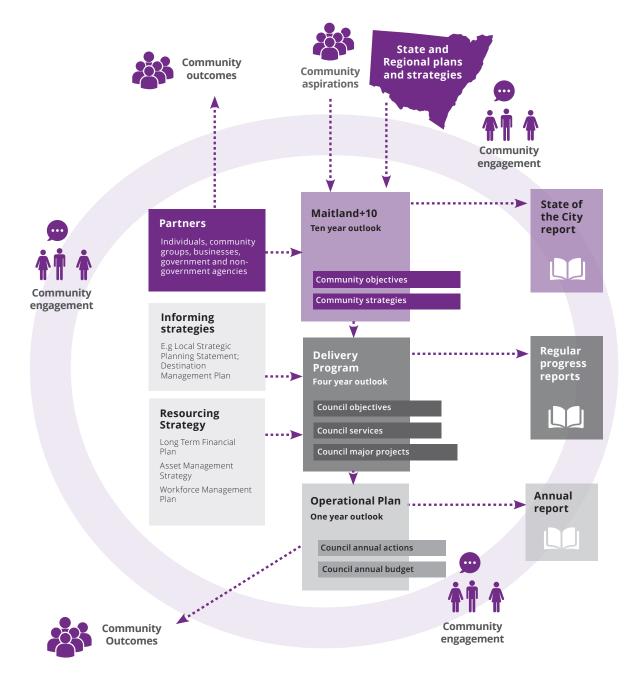
Communication and Engagement Strategy

Effective engagement allows communities to be active participants in shaping their own future and play a part in positive change.

We are required to prepare a Community Engagement Strategy to support the development of all plans, policies, programs and key activities. This includes those relating to IPR, as well as strategic plans and programs required under other legislation. The Communication and Engagement Strategy is reviewed in line with Council elections and IPR requirements.

Maitland +10

Maitland +10 is our highest level plan. This plan is developed with and on behalf of the community. Its purpose is to identify the main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals.



What is the current situation?

Reason for the review

Our key goal was to get a better understanding of your needs and wants to set a clear direction for our communication and engagement.

To achieve this, we have undertaken a range of activities to hear from local people and which has helped us identify:

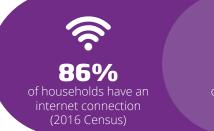
- The ways in which the community want to be kept informed on project works and news
- Topics and themes our community want to hear more about and have a say in
- What level of engagement residents currently have in Council projects
- The preferred ways in which the community want to be engaged
- Barriers that prevent the community from engaging more fully.



Who we are











How we engaged

To help develop this Strategy we held engagement activities across the City, which included phone surveys, online polling and surveys, workshops and focus groups, pop up events and meetings.

Here is a summary of our journey.

APRIL - MAY 2022

Community Satisfaction Survey phone polling 600 plus from a representative population sample

JULY 2022

Community Satisfaction Survey focus groups 25 participants across three workshops

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 2022

Over 500 community members contributed input or completed a survey, attended a pop up stand event or participated in a workshop.

AUGUST 2022

Councillor and staff workshops

SEPTEMBER -OCTOBER 2022

Draft Strategy developed

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2022

Public Exhibition

NOVEMBER 2022

Council endorsement of Strategy and action implementation

What you told us

Here's some key insights we heard from you.

'On social media we are very well informed.'

'When I look for information, I can find it but, it's not readily accessible.'

'The website is not mobile friendly.'

'Being young and tech savvy, I prefer text messages.'

'My husband and I watch Council meetings. Feeling heard and being able to have a say is really important to us.'

Over half our population **(54%)** have contacted Council in the last 12 months



86% of residents are at least satisfied with Council's level of communication



55% of those surveyed haven't participated in engagement opportunities because they didn't know they could or how to get involved.

Council's website is the most commonly used platform to seek information about Council (56%)



43% want to be more actively engaged with Council's projects





Preferred ways to provide input into Council planning are

via **surveys** and **social media quick polls**



Our stakeholders

We all have a role to play in shaping the places we live, work and play. There are roles for both Council and the community in initiating, leading, participating in, and delivering, engagement activities. A vital component of our community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key stakeholders who will be impacted by, or who have an interest in, a decision.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	EXAMPLES
RESIDENTS AND RATEPAYERS	Those who live and/or pay rates in the Maitland Local Government Area
COMMUNITY OF INTEREST	Those communities who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, such as a specific suburb or area
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES	Departments of local, state and federal government whom Council advises and seeks advice from about projects
COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS	Committees or organisations with a specific interest in, or knowledge of, a particular matter such as the Local Aboriginal Land Council, environment groups, the Access and Inclusion Reference Group, or sporting clubs
POPULATION GROUPS	Specific demographic groups such as age, background, ability, gender, cultural heritage
HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS	Specific groups within our community who are harder to reach, have specific needs or are generally less engaged. E.g young people
BUSINESS COMMUNITY	Individuals, associations or networks active in the business community
SCHOOLS	Local education centres including schools and TAFE
VISITORS/TOURISTS	Individuals or groups who visit Maitland



Roles and responsibilities



MAYOR

- Act as the spokesperson for Council to promote engagement on key strategic plans, including the CSP
- Together with the General Manager, ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between Council and the local community
- · Promote partnerships.



MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

- Promote and support community engagement on key strategic plans, including the CSP
- Participate in the development of IPR documents, including the CSP
- Endorse future plans on behalf of the community
- Participate in community engagement activities, alongside Council staff when possible.



GENERAL MANAGER

- Oversee preparation of the CSP and IPR documents and endorsement by the elected Council
- Ensure the community is well informed to participate in the IPR process in a meaningful way.



STAFF

- Work with and support the General Manager in the development of the Strategy and plans to engage the community
- Implement the Communication and Engagement Strategy and provide advice to the General Manager on community views.



What is the purpose of this strategy?

Effective and honest engagement is at the heart of local government and the IPR process. It helps communities shape their own futures and informs the vision and direction of council. Our Communication and Engagement Strategy will support the development of all strategies, policies and services, while keeping the community informed through quality and responsive communications.

Our Guiding Principles

Our approach reflects the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, as well Council's Guiding Principles which underpin everything we do.



MAKE THINGS EASY

We deliver communication and engagement opportunities that are accessible, relevant and easy to understand



BE WELCOMING

We're inclusive, encourage a diversity of voices to be heard, and make it easy for everyone who will be affected by a decision the opportunity to participate



BE OPEN MINDED

We embrace innovation and encourage new ideas



LOOK OUT FOR ME

We listen, value and respect community input as part of our decision making



KEEP YOUR PROMISES

We engage openly and honestly and build trust and understanding in our community, and use community input and feedback to deliver the best community outcomes



IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

We follow the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, which is an engagement framework that succinctly describes the different levels of engagement. The Spectrum guides our approach to selecting tools and channels for different stakeholders for all communication and engagement.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
Our role	We will keep you informed	We will listen, and consider your concerns	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the decisions made	We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible
Community's role	 Keep in touch E.g follow Council on social media Subscribe to newsletters Check Councils website 	Contribute ideas and feedbackRespond to surveysMake public submissions	 Actively participate in workshops and engagement sessions Share ideas, concerns and aspirations 	 Work together to develop solutions Join community panels, committees or advisory groups
What it might look like	Fact sheetsWebsitesNewslettersSocial media posts	Surveys Social media quick polls	Workshops Pop up stands	Advisory committees Ambassador programs

^{*} In most cases, decisions that will impact the community are made by the elected Council unless otherwise specified as part of the engagement project or by delegation to the General Manager or other nominated Council officer. There are a range of other factors that need to be considered and balanced during the decision making process such as budget, social, economic, and environmental impacts, legislation, governance, policies, and technical advice, therefore the Empower level of participation has not been included in Council's Community Engagement Framework.

Our key challenges and opportunities

Based on the community's feedback, we know we're doing pretty well but there is also room for improvement.

Council needs to overcome the following challenges when undertaking communication and engagement activities:

- Connecting with hard to reach groups: We need to reach certain groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and young people, and people from minority groups using unique methods to engage and inspire
- Engagement fatigue: Deliver engagement as an ongoing conversation, rather than project by project to allow all members of the community the opportunity to have their values and needs reflected in Council decision making, and stagger engagement opportunities to reduce the risk of engagement fatigue
- **Communications is inaccessible:** Communication needs to be easy to understand, easy to find, and easy to use. Engagement needs to take place in accessible locations and use both online and offline methods
- Lack of **awareness** of engagement opportunities: We need to let our community know how and when they can contribute to the conversation
- Lack of **trust:** We need to build trust with our community by being transparent, providing timely and accurate information, and close the loop on engagement projects so stakeholders know we're listening and how their information is used
- Families and other groups are **time** poor: Engagement needs to offer different methods for all members of our community to contribute.



Communication

Keeping our community informed is a key task in every objective and action included in our **Delivery Program** and **Operational Plan**.

We share information with our community to promote our services, programs and city experiences, so you know, and understand, what we do on your behalf here at Council.

While most of our customers feel somewhat informed about local projects and services and are accessing information through our website and social media, we understand others don't feel informed and want to receive information in other ways.

We're committed to providing the information you want, promptly, honestly and transparently. We want to be forward thinking and creative to ensure the content cuts through and reaches its audience.

To deliver customer focused communications





WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Producing high quality, timely and responsive communications that are engaging and un-council like
- Making information easy to find and understand, and consider varying accessibility and needs
- Continuing to grow and support trust in Council by using a variety of communication channels, both online and offline
- Prioritising topics that interest and affect our community
- Identifying impacted stakeholders and using appropriate tools to target audiences and measure responses
- Identifying promotional opportunities and share information transparently, supported by strong communication strategies and stakeholder relationships
- · Listening and taking feedback on board.

Engagement

Community is at the heart of local government. Listening and having community voices shape Council plans supports strong communities.

We are committed to ongoing and honest conversations with our community and engagement activities that are shaped by our Guiding Principles, social justice principles and best practice engagement.

Our engagement approach can vary depending on the need and impact of the project, and includes a range of online and offline tools including surveys, social media quick polls, event pop up's, forums and focus groups, workshops and meetings, committee and community ambassadors, online Q&A's, mapping and ideas walls. We are also committed to continuing to adapt and use new and emerging technologies to meet our communities needs.

WHEN WON'T WE ENGAGE?

There are times when we will only inform the community of our decisions and actions. These will occur in cases when:

- There is no scope for community input
- Public health and safety are at risk
- · An immediate resolution is required
- · An initiative involves confidential or commercial information
- We are developing or reviewing internal procedures and protocols
- Council is responding to an emergency
- There are legal constraints.

OUR ENGAGEMENT GOAL:

To facilitate honest conversations with our community and develop an approach built on best practice, which reflects our community's values.

WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Building awareness of what engagement is and how to have a say
- Making engagement opportunities easy to access, fun, interesting and relevant
- Committing to always 'closing the loop' by reporting back to our community on what we did and reasons for decisions
- Promoting a culture of best practice where community engagement is part of what we do every day
- Using a range of engagement methods and tools to increase diversity of voices in engagement activities and which include both face to face and online methods
- Creating an ongoing conversation with our community so that community values and aspirations are continually reflected in Council's decisions and services.



How will we measure success?

We'll know we're doing well by measuring:

- Number of people who engage and in what topics
- Website and Your Say webpage visits
- Social media engagement and followers
- E-newsletter subscriptions and click-throughs
- Level of satisfaction with our communication through the Community Satisfaction Survey
- Demographics and population representation.

An Action Plan will support this Strategy and allow us to monitor and report against our set goals.

Community Participation Plan

All Councils in NSW are required to prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) under Division 2.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* 1979 (EP&A Act).

In addition to our engagement processes and targets outlined in this Strategy, we have an ongoing commitment to our community specifically in relation to planning matters.

This CPP is based on the following Community Participation Principles:

- Our community has right to be informed of planning matters that affect it
- Planning information should be easily accessible and in plain language
- We engage in early, representative, and meaningful engagement with the community
- We engage in open and transparent decision making, including reasons for planning decisions.

The CPP sets out how and when we will engage communities across all the planning functions Council performs (strategic planning and development assessment).



Making a submission

Anyone can make a submission on a proposal or development application during an exhibition. Submissions are to be lodged with Council by the submissions close date. Council may choose to consider submissions received outside the exhibition period at its discretion.

A submission in the form of an objection should specify the planning grounds on which you are objecting and the impact the proposal may have on your property, the street or community.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered by Council. Where a petition is received the person who submits the petition to Council will be acknowledged as the point of contact for all future correspondence on the progress of the application. Petitions will not be counted as a submission.

Submissions may be made publicly available to other consent bodies as well as published in a Council meeting agenda, where applicable. Should you wish to keep your personal details confidential, you must request this in writing with your submission.

Should you wish to keep your personal details confidential, you must request this in writing with your submission.

Submissions can be made online via **maitland.nsw.gov.au**, dropped into the Maitland Administration Building, sent by email to **info@maitland.nsw.gov.au** or by mailing a written submission to:

The General Manager Maitland City Council PO Box 220, Maitland NSW 2320

Privacy

The personal information provided as part of submissions will be used for the purpose of considering the specific project or proposal on exhibition and will become a record of Council. All information will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the *State Records Act 1998*.



Political donations and gifts

Any person making a submission on a planning related matter (for example a development application, development control plans, local environmental plans, contribution plans etc.) must complete a *Disclosure Statement of Political Donations and Gifts* and submit this to Council with their submission. This is to minimise any perception of undue influence on decision making. For information on reportable donations refer to Section 10.4 of the *EP&A Act*.

Public access

Public access allows community members to address a Council meeting regarding an item on the agenda. All community members are welcome to attend Council meetings. Should a person wish to speak at a Council meeting, regarding an item on the agenda, they must lodge a **Public Access Speaker Request Form** by noon on the day of the Council meeting. Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 5.30pm.

Forms can be found on Council's website. For more information contact the Office of the General Manager on **02 4934 9711**.

Decision making

Council is required to notify the community about the decisions it makes on applications for development consent and applications for the modification of a development consent (where the application was exhibited) and include:

- · The decision that was made
- The date of the decision
- The reasons for the decision.

Decisions on applications can be viewed via Council's online **Application Tracker**.

Exhibition Timeframes

There are mandatory statutory timeframes for the public exhibition of planning related documents, planning proposals, planning agreements and development applications. These are set in Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act and in the below table.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK				
Planning Function	Exhibition Timeframe			
Draft community participation plans (CPP)	28 days			
Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)	28 days			
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination	28 days or: (a) if a different period of public exhibition is specified in the gateway determination for the proposal—the period so specified, or (b) if the gateway determination specifies that no public exhibition is required because of the minor nature of the proposal—no public exhibition.			
Reclassification of land	28 days and a public hearing scheduled for at least 21 days after the public exhibition occurs.			
Draft development control plans	28 days			
Draft contribution plans	28 days			
Draft planning agreements	28 days			
Draft works in kind agreements	28 days			
Planning strategies, structure plans or master plans	28 days			
ASSESSMENTS				
Planning Function	Exhibition Timeframe			
Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for State significant development)	14 days* or: (a) if a different period of public exhibition is specified for the application in the relevant community participation plan—the period so specified, or (b) if the relevant community participation plan specifies that no public exhibition is required for the application—no public exhibition.			
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days			
Application for development consent for State Significant Development	28 days			
Application for modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	Section 4.55(1) – Not required Section 4.55(1A) – Not required Section 4.55(2) – as per the EP&A Regulations Section 8.3 – as per the EP&A Regulations			
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1	28 days			
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for State Significant Infrastructure under Division 5.2	28 days			

^{*} Where Council is of the opinion that the proposed development is minor in nature and will not adversely affect the amenity of the adjoining land, exhibition of the development may not be required. For more information on discretionary and non mandatory notification, see Chapter A.4 of the MAitland Development Control Plan 2011.

Key points to note about public exhibition:

- Exhibition timeframes are measured in calendar days and include weekends. If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, we may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day.
- As outlined in Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

Exhibition Requirements

	LETTER TO AFFECTED LAND OWNERS	NSW PLANNING PORTAL	COUNCIL WEBSITE
Draft community participation plans (CPP)	No	Yes	Yes
Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)	No	Yes	Yes
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Reclassification of land	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Draft development control plans	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Draft contribution plans	No	Yes	Yes
Draft planning agreements	Yes ¹	No	Yes
Draft works in kind agreements	No	No	Yes
Planning strategies, structure plans or master plans	No	No	Yes
Exempt and Complying Development	No	No	No
Development Assessments	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Integrated Development or Threatened Species Development	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Designated Development	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes
Application for modification of consent	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹ Affected land owners and adjoining land owners are typically notified where practicable and where the amendment will directly affect their property. Minor amendments, or amendments that apply across a large area (such as an entire centre, or across the whole city) may not be notified through a letter to landowners.

Exempt and complying development

Some development, such as exempt and complying development under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008, does not allow opportunities for community engagement.



