

CED002 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

OVERVIEW

Brisbane Vision 2031 strongly articulates Council's intent to engage the community on major issues affecting the future of the city and activities that have significant impacts on neighbourhoods. For example:

"Residents actively and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives and the future of Brisbane, feeling confident in having their say"
New World City, Brisbane Vision, 2031

"Residents, students and businesses can work with Council to carefully plan for the future of Brisbane and its neighbourhoods."
Our well-designed, subtropical city, Brisbane Vision, 2031

Future Council Organisational Strategy builds upon this commitment to engage the community with an emphasis on delivering services that meet long term community priorities.

"We listen to and understand the needs of our resident and business customers and identify the best value approach for improving the way we deliver services."
Continuously Improve, Future Council Organisational Strategy

The *City of Brisbane Act 2010* (Qld) ("**the Act**") has an increased emphasis on community engagement. Under the Act, Brisbane City Council is guided by five key principles to ensure accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable governance. The principles that apply to community engagement uphold:

- transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
- democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement (*City of Brisbane Act 2010* (Qld), section 4(2)).

It is essential that Council has a consistent approach to community and stakeholder engagement and that it uses effective engagement practices. Any engagement undertaken by Council needs to be conducted in a meaningful way so that it encourages community members and stakeholders to increase their trust in Council generally and maintain their involvement in future Council engagement activities.

Meaningful community engagement is a process that:

- is planned, resourced and effectively promoted to those likely to be interested or affected;
- takes into consideration the diversity of the community;
- clearly articulates the level of influence the community has on the decision making process;
- provides a range of accessible opportunities for community and stakeholder participation, including 24/7 access via online engagement; and
- provides timely feedback to participants and the broader community showing how community input has been considered and what final outcomes have been determined by Council.

Under the Act, Council engages the community to augment its decision-making processes and to ensure that decisions are made in the public interest. Council is responsible for making the final decision.

Council's community engagement spectrum:

Community engagement involves different levels of engagement that sit along a continuum, depicted in the community engagement spectrum below:

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	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.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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The IAP2 Spectrum guides Council's engagement strategies through assisting officers to develop engagement activities that reflect the needs of the project. Where some issues that arise may provide little or no scope for the community to influence the outcome, the community should still be informed and helped to understand the background and the basis of the decision that has been made.

The community engagement guidelines support this policy.

POLICY STATEMENT

Brisbane City Council is committed to meaningful engagement with the community and stakeholders on issues affecting the future of the city, and on local issues, projects and initiatives that significantly impact on the community.

APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all Brisbane City Council employees (full time, part time, temporary and casual) and consultants or contractors engaged by or associated with Council, who are working on any project that:

- requires Council to engage with the community and stakeholders;
- may impact directly or indirectly upon members of the community and other stakeholders;
- may be improved by community and/or stakeholder input.

PURPOSE

Council's Community Engagement Policy predates the legislative requirements of meaningful community engagement. This policy update reflects the inclusion of two governance principles of the *City of Brisbane Act 2010 (Qld)* ("**the Act**"). The policy directs Council to engage the community meaningfully in decision making around major issues affecting the future of the city and on issues that impact on specific communities.

The policy responds to the principles of democratic representation and social inclusion expressed in the Act and guides Council to engage across a representative spectrum of socio-culturally diverse community members. Council is guided and supported through this policy by drawing on the expertise of its specialist officers to engage the community in processes that are relevant, equitable, and accessible.

Council's community and stakeholder engagement should address obstacles to participation. It should include specific strategies and opportunities that maximise the participation of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- young people (12-25 years);
- people with a disability;
- LGBTIQ+ community; and
- other communities or stakeholders that may be harder to reach.

Relevance is a key consideration for Council as it is not always practical or appropriate to engage the community on all Council decisions. Council's Community Engagement Guidelines (see CED001) provide greater clarity on when and how the community should be engaged.

Community and stakeholder engagement does not replace the decision making responsibility of Council. Rather the implementation of the policy (see the Guidelines) is designed to ensure that Council has access to a range of information about community and stakeholder needs, opinions and options prior to making decisions. Effective community and stakeholder engagement also increases the likelihood that Council decisions are understood and supported by the community.

In addition to the principles outlined in the Act, there are statutory requirements to engage with the community on environmental and planning matters.

DEFINITIONS

Communication - is the process through which a message is passed to a person or group of people external or internal to Brisbane City Council.

Community - the term community is used broadly and extends beyond the view of residents in a neighbourhood. A community can be defined as a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions. For example, with the community engagement for the upgrade of a traffic roundabout, the community could include the users (motorists and pedestrians), those in the immediate work zone (businesses, residents and schools) and those interested in the diversion of an associated creek/storm-water channel (fauna protection and property owners).

For each community engagement project there will be those who are more impacted or interested than most and these are identified as stakeholders.

Stakeholder – A stakeholder is anyone who has the ability to influence a project's outcomes. Stakeholders include identified subsets within the community. These subsets may comprise individuals and/or organisations or businesses from across the community that are directly involved in, or significantly affected by the project. Stakeholders may have an interest if the project has specific change implications or has lifestyle, social, environmental or economic impacts. For most projects there are likely to be a number of internal stakeholders across Council.

Community engagement- the many ways that communities and individuals connect and interact with Council in developing and implementing policies, programs and services. It involves a wide range of Council-community interactions, ranging from information to consultation and active participation.

- **Information and education** - a one way relationship. Council provides clear and relevant information to the community on the decision being made. The information should not only define the outcome, but will also assist the community in understanding the situation, the solution that has been selected and the potential impacts or changes that will result.
- **Consultation** - a two-way relationship between Council and community stakeholders, where community input and/or discussion can help Council make more informed decisions. Consultation generally occurs when options are limited and specific feedback is required from the community. Consultation may be further limited where Council has already made a decision and wants to consult on how the decision is implemented.
- **Active participation** – a partnering relationship. It is an interactive process that involves working with the community to develop options and solutions. Council works alongside the community to ensure that their needs and concerns are identified and seeks their input in solution development and decision making.

Market Research - a process of collecting information from external or internal customer groups in order to assist decision-making. The process may involve a range of research tools such as surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. Data is collected in a systematic and objective way utilising specialist techniques to enhance validity and reliability. (It differs from consultation and active engagement activities in that while it provides valid and reliable information it does not formally require providing feedback to respondents about the findings or decisions, though Council's market research policy requires the public release of Market Research reports).

Marketing - activities associated with the marketplace, linking customers with products and services. Marketing includes pricing, promotion, advertising and distribution. Modern marketing is customer focused, using technology and research to identify and connect with a target market.

Project - a planned undertaking (including strategy and policy development) that builds, enhances and maintains Council assets or enhances Council services in order to achieve a desired outcome, within a defined scope and funding requirements.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes sought through this Community Engagement Policy are:

- compliance with the *City of Brisbane Act 2010 (Qld)*;
- compliance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*;
- best practice community engagement that is transparent, effective, democratic, inclusive and meaningful;
- community engagement processes that maximise the participation of Brisbane's diverse communities;
- civic governance where elected representatives and council officers understand and are informed by the diverse views of constituents/residents;
- that Council gains the benefit of creative and innovative community and stakeholder input and local knowledge;
- community members impacted by Council activities recognise there are multiple opportunities to have their say and that their varied interests will be considered in planning, decision making and implementation; and
- Council follows a well planned and well publicised community engagement process that is accessible and clear in its purpose and objectives.

PRINCIPLES

Effective community and stakeholder engagement is built on trust, respect and goodwill. Council has a commitment to community and stakeholder engagement that is governed by a set of principles that underpin good engagement processes. The principles are described below.

Integrity and transparency – Engagement involves trust and transparency. The levels of community and stakeholder influence will be clearly communicated. Consultation and higher forms of engagement must be genuinely purposeful and not tokenistic. Council will carefully consider and accurately portray the community's role in the decision making process and reflect back how the community has influenced decisions.

Respectfulness – Council will value contributions made and time given. Timely feedback on the results and the influence of specific consultation and active engagement to the community is a critical part of the process. This information needs to be given directly to those who contributed and widely so those who may have an interest can access it.

Inclusivity – Council will use a range of opportunities and techniques to encourage participation and awareness of all people who may be affected by or interested in the outcome. It will ensure a diverse and representative range of stakeholders is engaged (e.g. age, gender, disability, culture, language, literacy and interest in the project).

Informative – Effective engagement requires all parties to understand the relevant legal, statutory, strategic and local context. Council will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.

Working together – Council will establish ongoing internal partnerships to share skills, knowledge and community engagement evaluation findings. It will develop and maintain a meaningful co-operative relationship between Council and the community by developing an understanding of mutual obligations and reciprocal responsibilities.

Well Planned – Engagement requires informed judgement and planning in its approach and implementation in order to be effective, practical and suitably resourced. If considered appropriate, Council will conduct project specific social impact assessments and collaboratively develop effective social impact contingency measures with those directly affected by Council activities.

Politically engaged - The Lord Mayor, relevant Chair and local Councillors have an integral role to play in all Council community engagement processes.

Meaningful – the community will have multiple opportunities to participate in community and stakeholder engagement activities that are relevant, interesting and clearly articulated in relation to project constraints, the scope of community and stakeholder influence, and Council's decision making process. Community members and stakeholders will understand their role within this process.

Feedback – Closing the loop on engagement is important in maintaining an open and transparent process. Council needs to ensure that the community and stakeholders understand how their input was considered and the reasons for the final decision. Council should also inform the community and stakeholders of the expected timeframe for providing feedback.

Efficiency and value for money – Community and stakeholder engagement planning and implementation will optimise internal and external linkages, resources and systems to minimise duplication and spending, and to reinforce public perceptions of effectiveness and good value for money.

Privacy – Council will take all reasonable and appropriate steps to protect the privacy of individuals as required by the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)* and the Queensland Information Privacy Principles contained in the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*. Project teams must ensure they use correct collection notices and privacy statements on all online and hardcopy consultation materials that capture any identifying personal information. The way information is collected, stored and used must also comply with the legislation.

AUTHORITY

Council (Resolution): 31/01/2011

POLICY OWNER

General Manager, Library and Customer Services, Customer Services

FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

Community Experience Manager, Library and Customer Services, Customer Services

RELATED INFORMATION

Content Manager container: 109/268/189/235

[City of Brisbane Act 2010](#)

[CED001 Community Engagement Guideline](#)

[Information Privacy Act 2009](#)

Future Council Organisational Strategy

[Brisbane Vision 2031](#)

[Your City Your Say Online](#)

REVIEW DATE

Due: 7 November 2027

Last reviewed: 7 November 2025