



Greater
Hume
Council



Community Engagement Strategy 2025

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Acknowledgement of Country

Greater Hume Council acknowledges the Wiradjuri people as the traditional custodians of the land in which we live and work and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, culture, tradition and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that contribute to our community.



A Message from our Mayor, Lea Parker



It is my pleasure to introduce Greater Hume Council's Community Engagement Strategy (2025).

Greater Hume Council is committed to actively engaging with our community to better identify the areas that are important to them. It ensures that the community has an opportunity to have a voice on matters that are important to them.

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines the ways in which, we as Council will engage and consult with community. Community includes anyone that is affected by the project plan, and can include individuals, community groups, stakeholders, non-government organisation's and Government bodies.

Community engagement is the ongoing conversation between Council and stakeholders, built on transparency, collaboration and mutual respect. The aim of this strategy is to outline a variety of communication methods and strategies that Council will adopt to ensure the diverse communication needs of the community are met.

Successful engagement with our local community results in better outcomes for the residents of the community.

Thank you in advance for working in collaboration with Greater Hume Council and I encourage you to take part in this process and contribute to the future success of our local government area.

I. Introduction

We recognise our customer and community play a vital role in shaping our future, and only through engaging in meaningful conversations can we understand and achieve our mutual goals.

Council is committed to improving quality of life in Greater Hume Shire through the involvement of the community in development of policies, programs and services. Council is also committed to ensuring that all views are considered through consultation, collaboration and active involvement of the community.

Community engagement encourages communities to be informed and to participate in decision making processes that guide the development of the services Council provides and the projects Council delivers. Council also acknowledges that by involving a cross section of the community in a consultative process, it can make better decisions. Council also knows that strong relationships with the community is integral and is built on trust, goodwill and respect with the community.

It is intended that this Community Engagement Strategy will give the community a clear understanding of:

- Council's commitment to Community Engagement
- when Community Engagement will occur
- what level of engagement will occur
- how the Community Engagement process will be managed.

2. What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a term that covers all the ways a council and its community come together to improve decision-making, build relationships and partnerships, raise awareness and complement representative democracy. It is a way of working side-by-side and building support for the shared goal of making the community a better place to live. Community engagement is an outcome. Engagement covers a wide variety of Council/community connections, ranging from information sharing through community consultation to active participation in government policy development and its decision-making processes.

Engagement acknowledges the right of citizens to have a say and to get involved in the business of Council. It is not about public relations or marketing a particular viewpoint or issue, rather it involves assisting Council to fulfil its obligations to the community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions. Effective community engagement allows Council to tap into diverse perspectives and potential solutions to improve the quality of its decision making.

2.1 Why is it important?

Greater Hume Council recognises that people have a right to be informed and to have a say on projects that are important to them, or which have an impact on their daily lives. Community engagement provides Council with a better understanding of community views and values and helps us to make more informed decisions and deliver better services.

2.2 Why do we need a Community Engagement Strategy?

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines our approach to engage with the community and stakeholders. It provides transparency and clarity for all stakeholders so that they can understand their role in the decision-making process. The strategy outlines who, when and how we will engage on plans, policies, projects and service delivery.

2.3 Legislative requirements

The development of Community Engagement Strategy (CES) is a key component in meeting Council's legislative requirements for community participation under the Local Government Act 1993 and Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Council must comply with Section 406 of the Local Government Act 1993 Integrated Planning & Reporting.

Informed by the IP&R Framework, Greater Hume's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032 must be reviewed every four years in line with local government elections. Under the Local Government Act 1993, Council must prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles of access, equity, participation and rights.

The IP&R Framework includes Council's four year Delivery Program and one year Operational Plan. The Delivery Program details all actions required by Council to implement the Community Strategic Plan over the four year period and the Operational Plan identifies specific initiatives that will be completed each year. These Council plans are developed and adopted in consultation with our community.

A separate Community Participation Plan has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of Division 2.6 of the environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

The EP&A Act requires planning authorities to outline how and when the community will be engaged across planning functions like policy making and assessment.

The Plan is available on the Greater Hume Council website <https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/Your-Greater-Hume-Council/Building-and-Development/Planning-Guides-and-Tools>

3. Engagement

3.1 Social justice principles

Greater Hume Council believes that all members of the community have a right to contribute to their community and its prospective plans. The community engagement process is guided by the following principles of social justice:

- **Equity**

There should be fairness in decision-making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.

- **Access**

All people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

- **Participation**

Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.

- **Equal Rights**

Equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life.

3.1 Principles of Engagement

The following principles underpin Greater Hume Shire Council's approach to community engagement:

- **Information** - To provide the community and key stakeholders with accessible, balanced and objective information on decisions, policies, plans and strategies.
- **Consultation** - To obtain feedback from the community and key stakeholders on analysis and alternatives to inform a decision.
- **Involvement** - To work directly with the community and key stakeholders throughout a project to ensure community concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.
- **Collaboration** - To partner with the community and key stakeholders in each aspect of the decision process – including the development of alternatives and identification of a solution. Responsibility for the final decision rests with Council but may, in some instances as in the development of the Community Strategic Plan be shared with the community and key stakeholders.

3.2 Engagement Aims

These engagement aims are the 'characteristics of success' and will guide and inform how we design, implement and provide feedback on the outputs and outcomes of our community engagement activities:

- **The purpose of the engagement and how the input of the engagement will be used is clearly stated:**

The purpose of the engagement is to be stated clearly from the outset. Checking the understanding of the purpose should also be undertaken at the beginning of any interaction so there is no confusion or unrealistic expectations. Similarly, how the engagement input will be used should also be stated from the outset.

- **Activities are timely, held at the right time and given enough time.**

Input is sought before decisions are made. Engagement activities are held so they do not clash with other events or activities; at a convenient time for those participating and enough time is given to discussion, capture comments and agree to outcomes and actions.

- **Include all groups and organisation's that have an interest in the engagement topic or issue**

This will include demographic groupings, different cultural backgrounds, social economic groups and geographic representation.

- **Create safe space and a positive atmosphere**

Engagement should be seen as part of community life where people come together to discuss issues, opportunities and challenges. The atmosphere needs to be positive and welcoming, not combative. It should be a space where all alternatives can be explored in safety. Respect for one another and actively listening to understand the different points of view will help create 'safe space'. Just as community views and priorities are heard, so too are Council's views and priorities. It is a two-way activity.

- **Information is accessible**

Information is written in plain English so it is easily understood. The implications of the information are also explained.

- **Existing networks are used**

Communities are made up of different networks. Geographically based networks and communities of interest need to be understood and motivated to support engagement activities. Using this approach, you are building and working from what already exists.

- **The capacity and capabilities of community leaders is developed and strengthened**

The capacity of community leaders within these networks is developed and strengthened. Each community engagement activity is an opportunity to learn more about our community and the things that affect the Local Government Area. Engagement knowledge, skills and attitudes can be built both within Council and also with community leaders.

- **It is not a 'one size fits all'**

Different processes and mediums are used to engage different groups in the community.

4. Who are we?

4.1 Vision

Greater Hume Council's vision is "partnering to advance our rural communities in harmony with our natural environment".

4.2 Greater Hume Council Profile

Greater Hume Council is located in southern New South Wales, bordering Victoria and the local government areas of Wagga Wagga, Albury, Federation, Lockhart and Snowy Valley Councils.

The five towns and six villages dispersed across the shire play a key role in servicing traffic between regional and metropolitan centre's while also servicing productive rural industries of mixed farming enterprises, primarily grazing of beef, lamb and wool production, and grain production of wheat, oats, barley and canola.

There are forestry resources based mainly in softwoods plantations in the eastern sector of the shire. Boutique wine and small scale olive oil also feature as emerging industries.

There are continued opportunities to grow the shire population due to its location. Albury / Wodonga and Wagga Wagga have a major influence on the shire through employment, and access to higher level goods and services. There are a growing number of residents who work in Wagga Wagga or Albury / Wodonga but enjoy the relatively more affordable rural and community lifestyle available in the shire.

The figures below are as at 1st September 2024



5. Roles and Responsibilities

Delivery

The roles and responsibilities of internal stakeholders are outlined below:

Mayor

The Mayor is to:

- act as the spokesperson for the Council to promote engagement on key strategic plans including developing the Community Strategic Plan.
- together with the General Manager, ensure adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between council and the local community.
- promote partnerships between council and key stakeholders.

Councillors

Elected representatives are to:

- promote engagement on key strategic plans including supporting and participating in community engagement for the development of the Community Strategic Plan.
- participate in the development of Integrated Planning & Reporting component documents, including the Community Strategic Plan.
- as members of the elected body, endorse the CSP on behalf of the community and approve the remaining component Integrated Planning & Reporting documents.

General Manager

General Manager is to:

- oversee preparation of the Community Engagement Strategy and Integrated Planning & Reporting component documents and endorsement by the elected council.
- ensure that community members are given enough information to participate in the Integrated Planning & Reporting process in a meaningful way.

Staff

Council staff are to:

- work with and support the General Manager in the development of the strategy and plans to engage the community.
- implement the engagement strategy and provide timely advice to the General Manager on community views.

6. Levels of Community Engagement

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) developed an international framework for engagement which is considered a best practice benchmark worldwide. The Public Participation Spectrum Table below has been developed by the IAP2 and is designed to assist with the selection of the level of engagement in any community engagement process.

The level of community engagement will depend on the circumstances of the topic:

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternative, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	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 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 look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

7. Who will we Engage with?

A vital component of the community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key stakeholders who will be impacted by or who have an interest in a decision. Our engagement aims to reach the community to ensure a range of views are heard.

Council has identified the following stakeholders and will work proactively to seek opportunities to hear from:

- Ratepayers
- Residents
- Business/Industry
- Councillors and Council Staff
- Community Organisation's and groups including (but not limited to) section 355 Committees, Community Development Committees, Focus Forums and Community Forums
- Regional Organisation's and industry providers
- Health care and aged care providers
- Sporting groups
- Service clubs
- NSW and Australian Government agencies and NGO's
- Schools and education providers
- Tourists and people who come to our area to participate in short-term employment, sporting, cultural or leisure activities
- Riverina Water
- Neighbouring Councils

In recognition of the diversity of the group of stakeholders that Council wishes to engage with we are seeking to hear from all members of the Community. Through this process we hope the views of the following are represented:

- Children and young people
- Retirees and other people
- First Nations people
- People with a disability
- People with English as a second language
- People who work
- Unemployed people
- Parents and carers
- People who live in our towns and villages
- People who live in more remote and rural parts
- People of different genders and who identify as part of LGBTQIA+
- People who are students
- People who are volunteers
- People who live by themselves, as a family or in shared accommodation
- People who operate farms or represent agriculture
- People who operate businesses

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather be a starting point as the engagement approach is being developed.

8. When to Engage

Community engagement can be defined as “A planned two-way process to work with identified groups of people or individuals whose wellbeing may be affected by a particular decision or activity”. We utilise two main types of engagement at Greater Hume Council:

1. The first critical component to our engagement process is engaging early. This will identify and consider issues potentially affecting individuals or groups before decisions are made. Our people will undertake this engagement at the front end of any strategy, project or action through a range of engagement methods.
2. The second type of engagement is where we will seek feedback on drafts prior to finalising, or adoption of Council. This input on the final draft document is undertaken through ‘Public Exhibition’.

Closing the loop is a very important step in the engagement process, regardless of type. At the conclusion of the engagement period, our community will be informed as to how their feedback was used to reach the final decision and the outcome.

Council **must** consult when:

- It is required by legislation
- It wants to identify community issues, needs and priorities.

Council **should** consult when:

- Any proposed changes will impact on current users or customers of a Council service or facility
- Any proposed changes will affect the rights or entitlements of community members, including minority groups
- There is potential impact on surrounding neighbours
- It wants to monitor customer satisfaction with Council’s services facilities
- There is a level of controversy or sensitivity about a particular issue
- There is conflict among community members about an issue.

8.1 Council will engage the Community in the following areas:

- **Strategic Planning**

This refers to the development of strategic plans and projects that inform the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan and associated Integrated Planning and Reporting Documents

- **Policy Development and Implementation**

This includes any policy development that has a direct impact on the community.

- **Site Specific**

This refers to any changes to a site that may have impact on the community.

- **Service Planning**

This includes the development and/or improvement to a service.

- **Areas of improvement**

This refers to any improvement required to increase the quality of lifestyle for the community e.g. shopping areas, open spaces, etc.

- **Legislative Requirements, including planning issues**

This refers to all prescribed plans and projects under the Local Government Act (1993) and other relevant Acts.

8.2 Engagement Methods

Community engagement is a priority for Greater Hume Council. To deliver effective engagement it's important to consider the range of engagement tools available to maximise the reach across the community. The tools we use to engage must be fit-for-purpose, and appropriate to the issues on which Council are seeking to engage. We typically use a combination of methods to share information to ensure the greatest reach. Below are some of our common methods used across the IAP2 spectrum

		Level on IAP2 Spectrum				
Engagement Method	Description	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Council-specified activity						
Local Council elections	Voters in each local government area elect councillors to their local council.					•
Public forum	Provides an opportunity for a member of the public to provide a short presentation relevant to an item on the Council agenda			•		
Council Meeting	Occurs on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, commencing at 6pm. Community welcome to attend and listen.	•				
Public Exhibition	The final draft document is available for community to read and provide feedback.		•	•	•	
Community Forum	Occurs as required for items of significant community interest	•	•	•	•	
Public notices	Greater Hume Council website or newspapers. List the latest Council statutory notices and announcements	•				
General Engagement Methods						
Mail-out or letterbox drop	A simple representation of the project or issue. Neet to include contact details of relevant subject matter experts in case more information is requested. Can be used to ask for comment on issue.	•	•	•	•	
Letter						
-Fact sheet/Flyer						
Community meetings	Community are invited to attend an information session and ask questions of the subject matter experts.	•	•	•	•	
Media advertising	Advertising or promotion through traditional channels of radio, newspaper or television.	•	•	•	•	
EDM (electronic direct mail)	Electronic messaging using emails as a promotion tool direct to an inbox. Can be sent to individuals or established group databases but works best if segmented and targeted.	•	•	•	•	
Open house	Information is displayed in our Libraries/Customer Relation Centres, it can be visited at any time throughout the day over the	•	•	•		

	scheduled engagement period. Customer Relation Team Members are onsite to answer questions or alternatively, provide contact details for more information.					
Electronic and paper newsletters	Newsletters written and sent electronically e.g. the General Manager's Update, Holbrook Happenings.	●				
Social media	Electronic communication created to share information and ideas and seek feedback on ideas. Can use videos and photos and link to website content.	●	●	●	●	
Websites	A website can be used to communicate content, provide videos, photos and/or link to surveys for feedback.	●	●			
Survey	Hard-copy and /or electronic questionnaire to ask specific questions in relation to the issue or project. Engage consultants to undertake randomized surveying of rate payers and residents. For example, the Community Satisfaction Survey 2024.	●	●			
Focus Groups	A deliberately representative group of participants who are consulted about a particular issue or pending decision.	●	●	●	●	
Workshops	Groups of participants are invited to attend and provide feedback and direction on a particular issue. Workshops should be interactive and be facilitated. Can involve a presentation and break-out groups for deliberation.	●	●	●	●	
Advisory committees	The committee will represent a valid cross-section of the community. The committee meets regularly to discuss upcoming decisions and plans. Purpose is to offer opinions, constructive advice and solutions.	●	●	●	●	
Site signage	Site and project specific information.	●	●	●	●	

In addition to the above engagement methods, Greater Hume Council also intends to complete the following:

1. **Community Conversations:** Engage consultants to conduct further surveys and targeted communication with a cross section of community.
2. **Surveys and Questionnaires:** Use online and offline tools to collect structured feedback, including community satisfaction survey.
3. **Social Media Campaigns:** Such as Have Your Say?
4. **Public Exhibitions and Submissions:** Present plans, invite feedback, and enable formal submissions.
5. **ZOOM:** Sessions open to the community
6. **Radio Interviews:** with key Councillor officials including the Mayor
7. **Interviews:** With community leaders, business, people with disabilities, agencies and others relevant stakeholders
8. **Workshop:** With Councillor's and Council executive team

9. How We will Implement the Community Engagement Strategy

The Community Engagement Strategy ensures that engagement processes are inclusive, accessible, well-planned, and effectively resourced. Below is the proposed methodology for implementing the strategy, organised into clear steps with assessment and evaluation measures.

Planning and Preparation

Objectives

- Define the goals and expected outcomes for the engagement activity.
- Identify stakeholders and target communities.
- Work with your elected officials.

Steps

1. Determine the Engagement Level:

- Use Public Participation to determine whether the engagement process requires **Informing, Consulting, Involving, Collaborating or Empowering**.

2. Allocated Resources:

- Identify the manager responsible and allocate sufficient staff, financial resources, and tools for the engagement activity
- Combine efforts with other ongoing activities targeting similar communities to optimize resources.

3. Develop the Engagement Plan:

- Include timelines, communication strategies, and specific engagement methods (e.g., surveys, workshops, social media)
- Ensure inclusion of underrepresented groups such as youth, people with disabilities, and culturally diverse communities.

Community Engagement Activities

Engage – Participants should have multiple opportunities and avenues to provide feedback – consider this when planning.

- Use diverse communication methods to reach a broad demographic.
- Actively include marginalized groups such as ATSI communities, women, and young people.
- Address cultural, language, and special needs to foster inclusivity.

Reporting and Feedback

Collate the data, acknowledge the input and close the communications loop.

Reporting

- Develop a comprehensive report summarizing: Engagement activities conducted. Community feedback and key insights. Recommendations based on feedback.

Feedback to Participants

- Share outcomes and next steps with participants and the wider community.
- Use multiple channels (emails, public notices, social media) to ensure transparency.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Evaluation Criteria

1. **Community Representation:** Was there sufficient diversity among participants?
2. **Engagement Methods:** Which methods were most effective in reaching and engaging the community?
3. **Timing and Promotion:** Were activities promoted and scheduled at convenient times?
4. **Outcomes:** Did the engagement provide actionable insights?

Feedback Loop

- Conduct post-activity evaluations to identify successes and areas for improvement.
- Use insights to refine future engagement strategies.

Integration and Alignment

- Align community engagement outcomes with Council strategies and regional goals.
- Ensure continuous integration of community feedback into decision-making processes.

By adhering to this methodology, the Community Engagement Strategy will facilitate effective, inclusive, and meaningful participation, enhancing trust and collaboration between the Council and its community.

10.1 Reporting on Engagement Activities:

The Community Engagement Strategy is a principal activity detailed in Greater Hume Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (will it be part of the Delivery Program). As such, progress in implementing the strategy's key activities and achieving its key objectives will be reported as part of progress reports and Annual Reporting.

By following our engagement principles and strategy Greater Hume Council will move closer to achieving its Community Strategic Plan.