



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION POLICY

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## 1. STATEMENT

The Shire of Wandering recognises that community engagement and the opportunity for communities to participate in planning for the future are vital in ensuring we meet our strategic objective "Community Engagement" in Wandering's Community Strategic Plan: 2013 - 2023.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions which affect them and it is critical to the successful development and implementation of acceptable policies and decisions and for improving services by being responsive to the needs of the community.

Community engagement does not mean achieving consensus. However, it does involve seeking broad, informed agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this policy are to:

- develop strong and healthy networks between the residents and other stakeholders of Wandering and the Shire of Wandering by ensuring citizens are well informed about issues, strategies and plans that may directly or indirectly affect them.
- seek the views of all stakeholders, selecting engagement methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate by giving opportunities to be involved in Council's decision making processes.
- capitalise on the ideas, experience and information that residents and other stakeholders have in relation to the Shire of Wandering.
- improve service delivery and Council decision making by incorporating community views, information and aspirations.
- outline the parameters within which residents may, if they choose to, exercise influence over decisions that impact upon their quality of life and development of their community.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

The Shire of Wandering recognises that local democracy, community leadership, civic participation and the social capital of the Wandering community is enhanced by the process of community engagement in decision making and that people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Council endeavours to embody the following principles for public engagement which have been developed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet - Office of Citizens and Civics: Consulting Citizens Series.

### 2.1 Be Open and Inclusive

- we recognise community participation is an integral part of informed decision making;
- we promote and support opportunities for the community to actively participate;
- we encourage involvement from all stakeholders and will use engagement

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processes that are accessible and inclusive by initiating a range of processes which foster opportunities to optimise the current level of community engagement for residents and other stakeholders.

## 2.2 Create Mutual Trust, Respect and be Accountable

- we treat all stakeholders in the engagement process with respect and dignity whilst acknowledging of the scope of community knowledge.;
- we will approach engagement from an impartial perspective and it will be conducted with honesty, integrity and displaying an awareness of and respect for cultural protocols;
- we will be accountable, accessible and ethical in all dealings with the community.

## 2.3 Engage Early and be Clear

- we will seek early engagement and regularly involve the community in decision making;
- we will communicate clearly the objectives of the engagement process and provide community members with all available, relevant information as part of the consultation engagement process to ensure informed discussion;
- we will communicate the parameters of the engagement process to participants from the outset, including legislative requirements, Council's sphere of influence, conflicting community views, policy frameworks and context, budget constraints etc.;
- we acknowledge that planning is a critical process to deliver successful outcomes and are committed to developing and implementing community engagement plans.

## 2.4 Consideration and Feedback

- we are committed to demonstrating that we have considered all community contributions and relevant data prior to making any decisions that affect the local community;
- we are committed to providing participants with feedback at key stages throughout the project and upon completion and how community input influenced the decision.

## 2.5 Skills and Resources

- we recognise the skills required to undertake community engagement and will provide staff with opportunities for further skill development and training;
- we recognise that from time to time we may need to retain professional consultants to assist with certain engagement strategies.

## 2.4 Strategies

The Shire of Wandering is to implement this policy by:

- requiring staff to assess the impact or potential effect of their planning activities, program or project implementation and consider the appropriate level of community engagement required.
- employing the most cost effective and contemporary methods for providing information to the community.
- requiring staff to develop community engagement plans for major or complex long term planning and projects as well as contentious community issues.



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- providing staff with the resources to develop these plans and skill development where required to undertake community engagement.
- undertaking a review of existing community engagement mechanisms.
- report on the level and effectiveness of community engagement within the Shire of Wandering Annual Report, noting community engagement activities as a Key Performance Indicator.

## 2.5 Community Consultation Criteria

The following criteria may be used to determine which issues, projects or programs may benefit from community engagement:

- the issue affects the rights and entitlements of members of the community or a significant group in the community.
- the issue is likely to affect people's quality of life.
- the issue affects the natural environment.
- a significant number of people or particular groups are likely to have strong or competing views on the issue (both positive and negative).
- insufficient information is available on which to make a decision about an issue.
- the issue is technically complex.
- the Shire genuinely wants to find out the views of the stakeholders and community members.
- agreement or acceptance by the community is to be critical to the long term success of the project.

## 2.6 Communicating Outcomes of Consultation

The Shire is committed to keeping residents informed and following community consultation will endeavour to advise of the decision that is made, particularly for those stakeholders who have provided adequate identification.

## 3 REFERENCES TO RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Section 5.56 - *Local Government Act 1995*
- Shire of Wandering Community Strategic Plan: 2013 - 2023
- Department of Premier and Cabinet - Office of Citizens and Civics: Consulting Citizens Series.

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[Signature]  
Signed

[Print Name]  
Shire President

This Policy takes effect from the date of adoption by Council and shall remain valid until it is amended or deleted.

