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# Weddin Shire Council

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## Community Engagement Strategy

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### Special Rate Variation Proposal

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## **What is community engagement?**

Community engagement is about involving the community in the process of decision making on issues that affect the community.

This engagement strategy is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) model. This is outlined in the Division of Local Governments Planning and Reporting Manual. The IAP2 model identifies and defines various levels of community engagement. The IAP2 terminology has been adapted for use in this engagement strategy.

The levels of community engagement to be adopted by Council include;

- **Inform:** One way communication providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened.
- **Consult:** Two way communications designed to obtain public feedback about ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.
- **Involve:** Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making.

## **Principles of Social Justice**

The Division of Local Government's guidelines to Integrated Planning and Report state that any community engagement undertaken must consider the principles of social justice outlined in the Division of Local Government's *Social Justice Framework*. The social justice principles are:

- **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.
- **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.

## **Purpose**

This Community Engagement Strategy is designed to provide equal opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in the SRV process by utilising a variety of methods to engage.

## **Scope**

This Community Engagement Strategy is designed to aid Council in identifying the community's willingness and capacity to support an SRV.

## **Stakeholders**

A stakeholder is defined as someone who may be affected by or have a specific interest in the decision or issue under consideration. It is important to develop a consistent approach to ensure equitable inclusion of all potential stakeholders who reflect the demographics of the community. Not only will this ensure a credible process and equitable representation, but the approach will help to develop community trust in the process.

## **Overview**

In order to meet the requirements set out by IPART when applying for an SRV, an extensive community engagement strategy is to be developed and implemented. The suggested methods of community engagement are outlined below and summarised in Table 1.

Council currently employs various methods of engagement in its day to day operations and it is envisioned that these methods be utilised when consulting with the community about the SRV. The methods selected include:

## **Education programs**

Prior to commencing any public community consultation an internal education program is to be undertaken with all staff. The education information and sessions will provide staff with a general overview of what the SRV is and what is the intended use of the SRV. It is vital that our staff have a good understanding of what it is we are asking the community for and where the community can find additional information relating to the SRV. Fact sheet will be developed for staff to distribute to the community when asked about the SRV.

## **Advertising**

Advertising is a one way form of communication which will be utilised to inform the community on the SRV application and why it is required. Information relating to the SRV will be placed in newspapers, flyers and on Council's websites. These methods will be utilised across the LGA to increase awareness of the SRV and encourage people to participate in the engagement process.

## **Community exhibitions**

Exhibitions offer the opportunity to present easy to read information in a public place, such as the Community Hub/Library foyer. These unmanned information stations will help to build the profile of the SRV and raise awareness across the community.

## **Factsheet**

A mail out of a Factsheet to ratepayers in the LGA will be an effective way to provide information to every ratepayer in the LGA. The Factsheet will provide a detailed summary of the SRV proposal and provide information on how people could provide feedback in the process.

## **Telephone survey**

Telephone surveys provide an opportunity to engage a random sample of the community. The survey will be used to measure community support for the SRV within the LGA. This method of community engagement will be a key element in providing statistically valid information to IPART.

## **Technology**

Council's website is an important tool to engage with the community. Explanatory information on the SRV will be developed and Council's website will be utilised as a central hub and a point of reference to distribute this information. An online survey will be developed and made available on the website as part of the consultative process.

## **Timeframes**

The engagement process for the SRV will run during November 2014. The results will be presented to Council in December 2014.

**Table 1 - Community engagement table**

The following table highlights the Community Engagement Strategy approach to involving the relevant stakeholders. It describes the methods, stakeholders, resources\responsibility and timeframes that will be used to engage the community.

<b>Level of Engagement</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Resources/ Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe/ Notes</b>
Inform	Advertising	Newspaper Council Newsletters Council Website	Senior Management & Councillors	November 2014 – February 2015
Inform	Community Exhibitions	Library Art Gallery Grenfell & Village Post Office's	Administration Corporate Services	November 2014
Inform	Mail out to all ratepayers	Mail out to all ratepayers advising of proposal for SRV and associated information including ways they can contribute to the process	Administration/ Corporate Services	November 2014
Consult & Involve	Telephone Survey	IRIS Research to conduct telephone survey	Administration/ Corporate Services	November 2014 \$10,781 quote received is cost prohibitive – did not proceed with telephone survey.
Consult & Involve	Technology	Survey Monkey Online. Survey Form linked to Council's Website. SRV information to be included on Council's website.	Director Corporate Services & IT Officer	November 2014
Consult & Involve	Mail out Survey	Mail out to all ratepayers a survey on the SRV	Administration/ Corporate Services	November 2014
Consult & Involve	Open public forums	Hold public forums to facilitate ratepayers input into the SRV process and to discuss rating scenarios, service levels, results of the survey etc.	Senior Management	December 2014 & February 2015