

Ku-ring-gai Council

Community Consultation Policy

Policy Statement

Ku-ring-gai Council will provide all sectors of the community with a broad range of opportunities to participate in consultation activities which will inform decision making on both present and future issues affecting both Council and the community.

Purpose

This policy has been developed to support Council's willingness to actively engage the community of Ku-ring-gai in order to contribute to accountable and transparent decision making processes.

Context

Ku-ring-gai Council's commitment to community engagement and consultation reflects a growing trend towards participatory decision making by government. This is notable with leading international, Federal, State and local government agencies recognising the value of local democracy, inclusive participation and the important connection between elected representatives, staff and the community.

Ku-ring-gai Council has actively sought the involvement of all sectors of our community in contributing towards decision making including residents, interest groups, businesses, commercial property owners and others. The success of this has and will continue to rely on utilising a diverse range of consultation techniques both traditional and emerging to ensure that consultation with our community remains equitable and accessible.

Consultation is an integral part of the reality of community engagement. It is about engaging the community so that Council can better understand local needs and aspirations. It also provides the community with an opportunity to participate in and contribute towards better decisions and gives Council an avenue to accurately report on the decision making process and findings. Confidentiality, reliability and respect for privacy must be at the forefront of all consultation practices in order to uphold Council's reputation and ensure community confidence. This will guide what information can be reported, how it is reported and to whom it is reported.

Genuine engagement with the community underpins sustainable decision-making. Sustainable decisions should be technically feasible, economically viable, environmentally compatible, and publicly acceptable (within legal and legislative frameworks). As participation in consultation opportunities increases, the community through consultation will direct us toward a more sustainable society.

A commitment to continuous improvement in this area will help ensure that decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of both present and future generations.

One of the outcomes of this policy is to build the 'social capital' of the community. Bringing the community together to jointly share in the responsibilities of decision making can translate to an increased level of trust in public administration and help clarify Council's levels of responsibility.

Doc Distribution	Internal & Public Exhibition	Doc Status	Approved	File #	957475/S02090
Doc Owner	Mgr Corp Planning & Sustainability	APPROVED			
Approval date	22 July 2008	Approved by	Council		
Effective date	23 July 2008	Review period	2 years	Review date	23 July 2010

Objectives

Our objectives are to:-

- ensure that Council is informed of and able to respond to community needs and aspirations;
- provide all sectors of the community with opportunities to participate in decision making on both present and future issues;
- provide unbiased, objective and accurate research and subsequent reporting to our community, Councillors and managers on the results of relevant consultations, to aid decision making and priority setting for Ku-ring-gai;
- incorporate a range of engagement methods that identify and report on key issues and that allow for equitable and accessible opportunities to participate for all members of the community;
- ensure staff understand and effectively implement the Community Consultation Policy and Guidelines; and
- regularly review the Community Consultation Policy and Guidelines to ensure that these remain in line with best practice methods and continue to meet the needs of Council and the Ku-ring-gai community.

Associated Documents

Ku-ring-gai Council Community Consultation Guidelines 2008.

Others:

International Association for Public Participation (2005) *Planning for Effective Public Participation*.

NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (2006), *A Guide for Engaging Communities in Environmental Planning and Decision Making*. July 2006.

Definitions

In this policy:-

Community means residents, business owners, employees and visitors to and within the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area

Consultation refers to the act of consulting or conferring; deliberation of two or more persons on some matter, with a view to a decision.

Legislative Framework

The following policies and legislation affect this policy:

- *Local Government Act (NSW) 1993*
- *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act (NSW) 1979*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998*
- *Privacy Act (Cth) 1988*

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