

SHAPE YOUR **IPSWICH**

Community Engagement Strategy

Shapeyouripswich.com.au



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Definitions	3
Why Engage?	4
Our Vision	5
Our Goals	5
Our Principles	6
Our Approach	8
Forms of Engagement	9
Our Community Engagement Journey and Priorities	10
What You Can Expect From Us	11
Review Periods	11
Acknowledgements	11

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

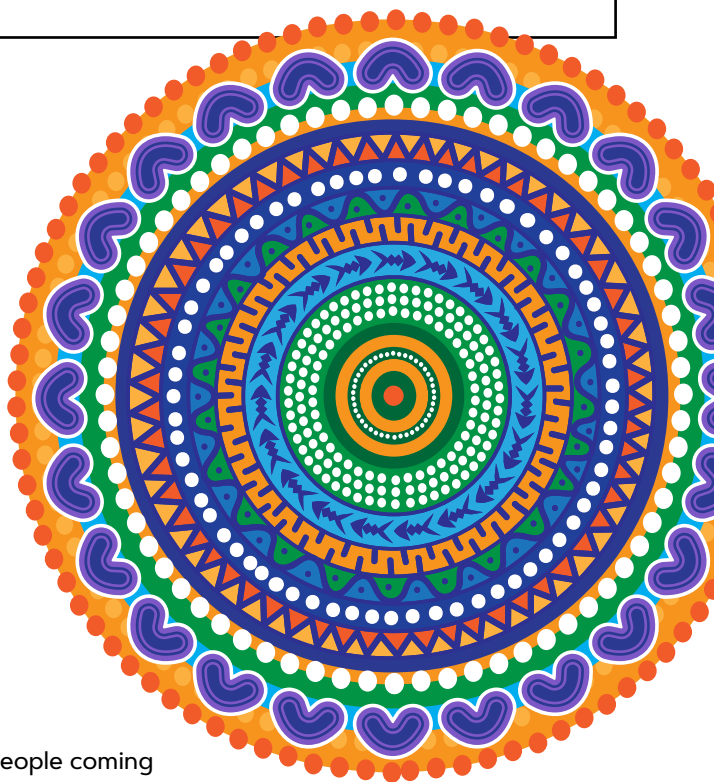
Ipswich City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners as custodians of the land and waters we share. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, as the keepers of the traditions, customs, cultures and stories of proud peoples.

The Ipswich City Council – Indigenous Accord Symbol Story

This symbol represents both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous People coming together, living and working towards a brighter future for the City of Ipswich and the greater Ipswich region.

Starting from the inner circle, these dots represent the Traditional Owners of the Land, the blue circle with fish represents the river and abundance. Moving outwards the landscape is represented including the rolling hills which surround the city. The triangular motifs represent a brighter future for Ipswich. The seated people around the outside represent members of the Ipswich City Council and members representing the Accord working together. **Riki Salam, We are 27 Creative.**

Check out the Indigenous Accord at ipswich.qld.gov.au



INTRODUCTION

Shape Your Ipswich is Ipswich City Council's Community Engagement Strategy and is our vision and commitment to meaningful engagement with the community on issues affecting the city, and on local issues that significantly impact on the community.

This strategy is based on the principle that community engagement is the foundation of sustainable decision-making, and is mutually beneficial to the community and council. It guides the delivery of community engagement processes across the organisation and builds a consistent, transparent and effective approach to engagement with the Ipswich community – placing the Ipswich community at the heart of everything we do.

DEFINITIONS

Community A group of any size whose members reside in the same locality, share common characteristics (e.g. age, sex, ethnic origin, faith), interests and/or causes. People can belong to several different communities at any one time.

Community Engagement The process by which community and council work together to facilitate community input into council decision making.

Community Engagement Framework The suite of council documents which outlines council's vision and commitment to engagement with the community, detail the community engagement roles and responsibilities across council and the various community engagement processes, tools and resources.

Council Ipswich City Council, being the local government area for the City of Ipswich, and includes all Councillors, employees of Ipswich City Council (full-time, part-time, temporary and casual) and consultants and contractors engaged by or acting on behalf of council.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) The prominent international organisation advancing the practice of public participation and community engagement.

Project/Initiative/Activity 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.

Stakeholder/s A person, group of persons, organisation or group of organisations that have or feel they have an interest, or can affect/be affected by an issue or decision.

WHY ENGAGE?

..... Irrespective of where you live in Ipswich, council believes that community members are best placed to identify and understand the challenges that affect them and potential solutions. Diverse perspectives help council develop a balanced understanding of community experiences and ensures that decision-making is well-informed.

Shape Your Ipswich is the start of a continuing conversation with residents and stakeholders in the community to further build a culture of high-quality community engagement at Ipswich City Council to achieve meaningful outcomes across the city. Ipswich is South East Queensland's fastest-growing city, with an estimated population of 242,000 which is projected to rise to 558,000 by 2041.

Our rapid population growth and new developments are helping to shape the dynamics of the city. While council embraces this, such growth and the physical size of our region brings its own set of unique challenges, and highlights the importance of communication and connection. Now, more than ever, it is critical for council to consistently and effectively engage with the community, and to provide the community with opportunities to engage with council.

Honest and respectful conversations are needed to debate and decide the best responses for Ipswich as we grow to a population of half a million people.

The rise of digital information and communication technologies makes possible a new environment for community engagement to occur. This strategy intends to harness the benefits of online community engagement whilst retaining the best of print and face-to-face consultation, purposefully engaging with as many people as we can, being inclusive and aiming to connect with those hardest to reach.

Community engagement is a legislative requirement under the *Queensland Local Government Act 2009*¹ to ensure *democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement* in government decision making. Further, in some instances, particular methods of community engagement are required in accordance with specific legislation² and the implementation of such methods will be aware of this Community Engagement Strategy.

This strategy defines community engagement as *the process by which community and council work together to facilitate community input into council decision making*. It outlines council's commitment to providing a process for transparent, respectful, representative and authentic communication between the community and council.

¹ *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)*, s 4(2)(c).

² For example, the *Planning Act 2016 (Qld)*.



OUR VISION

Ipswich City Council prioritises listening, leading and caring for our community. The community is well informed about the work of council, what projects council is seeking input on and how they are progressing. Community views are carefully considered and are always at the forefront of our minds.

The Ipswich community is at the heart of everything we do. We engage early and often to achieve outcomes that are community driven and enhance our city. Community members tell council about their local experiences because they are as passionate about Ipswich as we are.

OUR GOALS

- To increase community participation in important decisions that impact on the liveability, social and economic future of Ipswich.
- To involve communities and stakeholders early to define problems, identify opportunities and create options together.
- To be a leader in community engagement, exploring new ways to engage people in the decisions that affect how we live, work, play and connect in the future.

OUR PRINCIPLES

Each community engagement process will have a different purpose, be at a different time and place, with different people, and will involve different interests. Council will carefully consider these differences and tailor our engagement to suit each situation, to ensure that we achieve genuine two-way engagement with a clear purpose.

The guiding principles of council's community engagement approach are:

- We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly
- We deliberately include as many people as we can
- We aim to be inclusive and connect with those hardest to reach
- We are sensitive to history and know the context
- Whenever possible we engage early on challenges and not just solutions
- We genuinely listen at every stage and we keep coming back
- We are relevant and purposeful

1. We know why we are engaging and we communicate this clearly.

Community engagement is an integral part of all Ipswich City Council's work. We will be very clear with ourselves, our stakeholders and communities about why we are engaging, what we want to achieve and how people can get involved. We will be factual, understanding and very clear about the extent that communities can influence outcomes and what council will do with their feedback and ideas.

2. We deliberately include as many people as we can.

Showing respect for and knowing the community that council wants to engage with is essential to achieving quality outcomes. Council's aim is to hear the views and ideas of as many community members as is possible. This requires extra effort to build good relationships on the ground and using the right language for the right audience. Interested stakeholders may also include, among others, non-government organisations, advocacy groups, universities and think tanks.

3. We aim to be inclusive and connect with those hardest to reach.

Diverse perspectives help council to develop a balanced understanding of community experiences. For this reason, we reach out and adapt how we connect with diverse groups. Identifying possible alternatives to barriers that may limit the community's ability to participate in council activities is an important part of our community engagement planning.

4. We are sensitive to history and context.

When engaging, it is important to understand what has happened in the past, at all levels of government, to avoid any obvious pitfalls and to build trust. Knowing the history and background to previous engagements will also prevent going over old territory, while being aware of any future opportunities for collaboration.

5. Whenever possible we engage early and often.

Early engagement is essential for better outcomes because it brings more voices to the table to identify issues and ideas before options for solutions are developed. Engaging early on the challenges allows us greater opportunity to discuss, debate and decide on long term solutions. Providing the community with timely and accurate information about council initiatives is considered early in our project planning. While council may not always be able to engage as early as we would like, we can make it clear when there will be opportunities for the community to have a say and what we will do with their feedback.

6. We genuinely listen at every stage and we keep coming back.

Genuine engagement requires active listening. Council recognises that only communities who feel they have been genuinely listened to will be meaningfully involved. One of the most important elements of listening is considering what is said and responding in an appropriate and timely way by explaining what has happened as a result. This doesn't mean always agreeing but showing people how their ideas and participation have influenced outcomes and contributed to decision making.

7. We are relevant and purposeful.

Council realises that not everyone has the time to attend public meetings or participate in focus group sessions, so if we want people to take part in engagement activities we need to capture their imagination, have a clear purpose and reach the maximum number of interested people. Council will continue to explore new ways to engage diverse voices, in order to ensure that our engagement is both relevant and purposeful.

OUR APPROACH

Community engagement is a process of involving the community in decision-making. This ranges from informing and consulting, to involving and collaborating with the community.

Ipswich City Council has a clear process for designing and delivering community engagement. This process has five key stages: understand, plan, deliver, report and evaluate as shown in the below figure.

Council uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) – Spectrum of Public Participation to help identify the most appropriate form of engagement depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of impact in the decision to be made.

While different types of problems or projects will require different community engagement approaches, it is vital to engage with the community early in the process. By identifying community interests, issues and concerns from the outset, we can optimise the benefits and minimise impacts.

Different stakeholder groups might be engaged at different points of the community engagement process on any particular project, depending on their level of interest in a particular topic. Some people and organisations will want to work in partnership to develop solutions, while others may only want to be kept informed of developments. Further, multiple methods may be used throughout the individual life of a project.

What is vitally important is to determine what aspects of the project the community can influence and to ensure the various stakeholder groups are clear about their role in the decision-making process.

When projects are not circumscribed by other regulatory or legislative requirements, the community and stakeholders should have an opportunity to influence the shape and direction of the project within the engagement process.



FORMS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Recognising that no two issues are the same and that different issues will seek the input of the community and stakeholders to varying degrees, council uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) – Spectrum of Public Participation as a tool to determine the most appropriate level of community participation. The IAP2 Spectrum guides the level of influence that community and stakeholders will have in a decision-making process.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

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 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.

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In addition to the example forms of engagement outlined in the above table, council will use its online community engagement website *Shape Your Ipswich* (Shapeyouripswich.com.au) and other relevant and appropriate digital solutions to engage with the community.

OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY AND PRIORITIES

Building a community engagement culture for the shared benefit of the organisation and the community requires sustained and consistent effort by all staff across Ipswich City Council. In order to achieve this, council is focusing resources on the following priorities:

1. Organisational awareness and capability

Council has committed to building a culture of quality community engagement, working to build organisational awareness and capabilities through the implementation of early engagement with elected representatives, training programs, tools, standards, processes and systems.

2. Knowing our audience

Council is committed to ensuring that those who are interested or affected by a particular community engagement activity are included and engaged early. Considering our audience for each engagement activity, and how best to reach them, is part of our community engagement planning process.

3. Continual learning

Council is committed to a process of evaluation and improvement as part of our community engagement planning processes. We will share our learnings and remain agile to changing demands, technologies and environments. We will regularly review our Community Engagement Framework and work to ensure that we are operating in accordance with best practice community engagement principles and techniques.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

..... Wherever you live, work or play we will proactively engage with you so we collectively make the best decisions.

As part of this commitment you can expect to:

- Have a real say in how the city functions
- Have mistakes acknowledged and addressed
- Be able to see council's policy thinking on projects early in the pipeline
- Be given honesty around what is and isn't negotiable
- Be engaged on problems as well as solutions
- Be listened to, heard and provided opportunities to influence decisions that impact and/or interest you.

REVIEW PERIODS

This strategy will be regularly reviewed alongside other related council documents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In developing this Community Engagement Strategy, Ipswich City Council wishes to acknowledge the learnings we have received from other local councils and leaders in the field across all levels of government in Queensland and across Australia and internationally. We are grateful for the generosity of Mitchell Shire (VIC) and Northern Beaches (NSW) councils who shared their community engagement and digital transformation journeys with us.

In the process of developing this strategy a variety of guidelines were reviewed including the Queensland Government's Online Community Engagement Guideline and Community Engagement Toolkit and resources produced by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). This strategy also borrows heavily from Engage VicRoads.

The collaborative input from across all Ipswich City Council departments has been especially valuable to the development of this strategy. We will continue to share and learn from others to advance our practice of community engagement.



Ipswich City Council
PO Box 191, Ipswich QLD 4305, Australia

Phone (07) 3810 6666
communityengagement@ipswich.qld.gov.au
Shapeyouripswich.com.au

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