

## Section 3

# Culturally responsive engagement

### 3.1 Commitment to culturally responsive engagement

*Engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape the decisions or actions of the members of the community, stakeholders or organisation in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome.*

(Source: IAP2 Australasia Certificate of Engagement 2014)

When considering the need and approach to engagement on a topic or activity, it is critical to ensure that significant policy, program, or service decisions that affect Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not made without their full involvement. It is also important that engagement is culturally responsive to ensure equity and respect, ensuring that people feel they are able to have a voice in matters that affect them.

It is important to recognise that Indigenous communities are very diverse and an understanding of the relevant Indigenous communities' culture, worldview, language, communication preferences and cultural protocols is critical for effective engagement. What works well for engaging with one community may not be appropriate for another.

Council is committed to culturally responsive engagement, which means that council will:

- Treat Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with respect and dignity.
- Recognise Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique relationship to the land, sea, and waterways.
- Ensure engagement practices and approaches are culturally sensitive, respectful, and flexible.

- Ensure the Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are informed and receive timely responses about potential, existing and future engagement processes; and the right to be actively engaged in decision-making.
- Ensure engagement practices empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make informed decisions about all options available to them.
- Maintain respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, inclusive of the Traditional Owners with community privacy and confidentiality by all stakeholders involved in collecting and storing information.
- Provide appropriate timeframes for Engagement Representative Groups to take information back to their Family Groups for consideration, collaboration and decision making and then to provide council with a response.

### **3.2 Outcomes of culturally responsive engagement**

Engaging with the Representative Engagement Groups (outlined in Section 4) using culturally responsive engagement methods will ensure:

- Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are recognised as the primary guardians and interpreters of their cultures.
- That representation of Traditional Owner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities reflects their cultural values and respect their customary laws.
- When writing about Traditional Owner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues (or choosing images to accompany text), ensure there is appropriate consideration on how the work affects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, inclusive of the Traditional Owners who are subjects of the story.
- Ensuring material published does not depict or expose confidential, personal and/or sensitive information or reinforce negative stereotypes. Additionally, ensuring the material empowers Indigenous peoples and reflects their cultural identity.
- Permission is always sought from the person who owns the story and any potential issues discussed with them prior to publishing.
- Processes are in place to ensure materials that are unsuitable for public scrutiny remain hidden from public disclosure. "Indigenous people have the right to keep secret their sacred and ritual knowledge in accordance with their customary laws."
- Secret and sacred material refers to information that is restricted under customary law and so is unsuitable for publication.
- Privacy and confidentiality concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's personal affairs is respected. That Consultation with Elders and/or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in authority to identify any sensitive, sacred, or religious issues that might prevent use of the material. Some types of personal information may require special attention.
- Relevant protections of images and knowledge that may be gender-specific and may only be seen by initiated men and women. Gender-based works may require the publisher to follow special communication

procedures which should be discussed with the community via the appropriate Representative Engagement Group prior to publication.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given proper credit or appropriate acknowledgement for their achievements, contributions, and roles in the development of media stories and/or use of cultural material.
- Encouragement for Traditional Owner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Especially with story-gathering and interviewing, as it is important to select Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for comment on Indigenous issues rather than relying solely on self-appointed non-Indigenous spokespeople, as worldviews can differ.
- The correct acknowledgements and attributions, on how they want to be described or identified — ie some may wish to be known by their clan group or by their place of origin and/or occupation — as this will ensure accuracy for the purposes of establishing an interviewee's authority to speak and avoid stereotyping.

### **3.3 Approach to culturally responsive engagement**

The following strategies can help you be prepared for culturally responsive engagement:

1. Know your stakeholders: get to know the people you are engaging with, check in with them and work to understand their perspectives.
2. Be aware of your own personal biases: unconscious bias can exist in many forms and can influence decisions or contribute to flawed thinking. Being aware of biases will not change them, but it may help make more informed decisions and value differences from various perspectives to avoid perpetuating inequality.
3. Transform your engagement materials: materials should be clear, meaningful, and available in multiple forms to reflect the diversity and culture of stakeholders.
4. Respect: everyone has their own set of behaviours, beliefs and characteristics that make them unique and contribute to their self-identity. Valuing and respecting another person's culture reinforces and validates their culture.

There is one thing to always do, particularly if there is uncertainty about what to do or how to proceed, and that is:

#### **ASK FIRST!**

Councils Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer and/or Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer can provide guidance around the principal of 'Ask First'.

Making assumptions and taking action without consideration of the needs and interests of others will lead to poor outcomes, particularly for relationships between Representative Engagement Groups and Council. Every engagement activity will be different, but the following information is to be considered in the early planning and revisited regularly, to ensure engagement is culturally responsive. It is not a comprehensive how-to guide, but gives direction to how engagement should be considered and delivered to achieve the best outcomes.

There are three key ways to engage with the Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Ipswich. These include:

1. ***Scheduled regular engagement*** through the Representative Engagement Groups for particular topics or activities as outlined in Section 4. Further advice on consulting through scheduled engagement activities is provided in Section 3.4.
2. ***Targeted engagement*** for specific activities, events, projects, or programs, through the Representative Engagement Groups, using Council's engagement process. Further details of this are provided in Section 3.5.
3. ***Informal engagement***: from time to time Council Representatives (Mayor/Councillors) will receive enquiries directly from the Traditional Owner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, not dissimilar to any other direct enquiries received from members of the public. Further advice for informal engagement between Councillors and community is provided in Section 3.6.

### **3.4 Scheduled engagement with the Representative Engagement Groups**

The processes for the regular scheduled engagement with the Representative Engagement Groups will be established in each Representative Engagement Group's Terms of Reference (ToR) upon formation of each Representative Engagement Group. When the Representative Engagement Groups are developing the ToR, the Council officers should be aware of the following.

- Cultural protocols
- Appropriate timeframes
- Relationships and communication
- Dealing with disputes
- Closing the loop

#### **3.4.1 UNDERSTANDING AND ESTABLISHING CULTURAL PROTOCOLS**

**Cultural protocols are ethical principles which are an important part of all cultures and provide guidance on how to treat and work with people in a respectful and useful way.**

Since European arrival, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subject to extreme discrimination, and their interests, rights and concerns have often been dismissed or ignored. Acknowledgement and implementation of cultural protocols demonstrates understanding, respect and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their views and rights.

The best approach is to seek advice on protocols directly with each Representative Engagement Groups and formalise these when establishing the Terms of Reference for each Group. This will show appropriate respect and set the foundation for building a good relationship.

Cultural protocols may cover the following:

- establish any issues that cannot be discussed in an open meeting of all stakeholders
- establish if there are any requirements in relation to the disclosure of sensitive information or particular traditional customs
- ensure that sensitive information disclosed in the course of engagement is protected from unnecessary further disclosure

- do not assume that one person speaks for all
- be mindful that it may not be appropriate for engagement to occur during Sorry Business
- ensure both men and women with rights and interests are identified because men and women may be responsible for different places and values
- determine whether separate reports should be produced for male and female Traditional Owners and another that is open access (has restricted information removed)
- apply the precautionary approach when there are differing opinions among people about the importance of a place; do not allow use of a place that is incompatible with one group's understanding of the heritage values of a place.

### 3.4.2 APPROPRIATE TIMEFRAMES

Understanding of time is subjective, and not everyone sees time in the same way. Recognising that there are other perspectives allows us to see that our view is not necessarily superior to others and enables us to reduce the conflict associated with these differences. In the context of culturally responsive engagement with the Representative Engagement Groups, it is important to acknowledge and incorporate the following considerations:

- allow time for the Representative Engagement Groups to decide whether they wish to be engaged on a particular topic or issue
- allow sufficient time for the Representative Engagement Groups' members to take the information back to their families for consultation between meetings (i.e representative engagement groups meet bi-monthly, members are to take the information back to their family groups for discussion and then return with outcomes – this process can take a few months, depending on the type of decision required and complexity of project)
- provide appropriate timeframes for consultation, as decision making can involve many people and Representative Engagement Groups may need time to reach a consensus on appropriate advice or input
- understand that the Traditional Owners and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities often have a broad range of issues and cultural responsibilities that they need to address, and council's project or activity may not be an immediate priority
- allow the group members to set the pace of meetings.
- To provide guidance on the points above and to ensure adequate and appropriate timeframes are developed into a project schedule, Councils Project Officer should notify the Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer, the Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer and the Community Engagement Team as soon as a project is received (i.e in the early planning a development phase of a project).

### 3.4.3 RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION

Establishing a good relationship through mutual respect, understanding, clear communication, transparency and provision of feedback is crucial to meaningful engagement for positive outcomes. From the outset:

- provide clarity on the purpose of the engagement
- mutually agree the manner, timing and level of consultation and involvement

- provide regular clear communication (including feedback post scheduled meetings)
- genuinely seek input and expertise from the groups
- agree on processes for consent from groups to display any information gathered, including publishing on the Internet, to avoid any culturally inappropriate disclosure
- outline any prior discussions and agreements with third parties (eg State agencies) and other stakeholders (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) that are being consulted
- understand and accept that people may not articulate the reasons for opposing a project or activity
- involve groups in developing Terms of Reference for any relevant consultancies, include groups in selection processes for consultants, and seek their agreement to the appointment of specialists employed
- look for opportunities for support to train and equip people to take on leadership roles and take part in decision making; for example, this could involve providing background training in the topic being discussed
- using the hand to point can sometimes be seen to be disrespectful
- some people may not make eye contact due to previous strict rules in culture; not making eye contact may be used to show respect
- non-verbal introductions, eg nod of the head may be the first contact until more familiar.

#### 3.4.4 DEALING WITH DISPUTES

Disputes may arise over time, and may involve disputes between groups, and/or disputes between Indigenous stakeholders, other stakeholders, and council. It is important to realise that disputes between groups can be longstanding and may influence engagement processes and activities.

- Disputes between Indigenous groups:
  - council will not become involved in disputes between groups
  - allow time for the dispute to be resolved
  - do not try and impose unrealistic timeframes for resolving community disputes
- Disputes between Indigenous groups, other stakeholders, and council:
  - at the commencement of consultation, reach agreement on processes for mediating and resolving disputes
  - identify and consider using culturally appropriate forms of dispute resolution (for example, meeting on country)
  - identify and agree formal and informal dispute resolution processes
  - encourage everyone to use informal processes
  - do not try and impose unrealistic timeframes for resolving disputes.

3.4.5 CLOSING THE LOOP

In addition to seeking and using feedback and input from the Representative Engagement Groups, always provide a copy of the feedback to the groups, any analyses undertaken (eg to identify trends in responses), and demonstrate how it was taken into account in decision making by council.

Also provide groups with the opportunity to assess and provide feedback on whether the engagements have been fair, transparent and open, and celebrate the achievements together!

3.5 Engagement process for projects, activities, and events

This section outlines the process for Council officers to undertake community engagement with Ipswich’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for projects, activities, and events. It builds upon council’s Community Engagement Framework and five-step engagement process - Understand, Plan, Deliver, Report and Evaluate.



Council’s community engagement process

Table 1: Culturally Responsive Engagement process

	<b>Stage 1 Understand</b>
<b>ICC’s Existing Community Engagement Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the project from council’s perspective</li><li>• Explore the community’s perspective</li><li>• Decide if it is appropriate to proceed with community engagement</li><li>• Define engagement purpose and objectives</li><li>• Identify the potential risks involved and the resources available to engage.</li></ul>

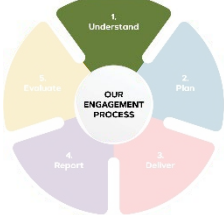


## Stage 1 Understand

### Supplement for Culturally Responsive Engagement


- Community Engagement Team, Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer and Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer to be notified and included when Project Officer receives project work to ensure sufficient engagement time is developed into the entire project schedule.
- Project schedule will incorporate enough time for the representative engagement groups to speak to their family groups, taking into consideration the representative engagement groups meet on a bi-monthly basis, this process could take a minimum of 2 - 4 months – noting timeframes may need to be adjusted throughout the project
- Identify responsible Council Officer for Representative Engagement Group (i.e Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer or Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer – refer to table 4)
- Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer and the Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer will inform which Representative Engagement Groups is relevant for the project and seek confirmation whether the identified Representative Engagement Group is interested in being involved and their preferred level of involvement (i.e. keep informed or more active involvement)
- Ensure that all Representative Engagement Group members receive the same information and that it is sufficient and appropriate for deciding their involvement
- Ensure communications are clear and provide sufficient information for the Representative Engagement Groups to understand the project, the purpose of the engagement and their potential role
- Allow time for Representative Engagement Groups to discuss and decide whether they wish to become involved in the activity or project, including sufficient time for the Representative Engagement Groups' members to take the information back to their families for consultation
- Seek advice from the relevant Representative Engagement Groups on things to be mindful of before commencing engagement
- Do not assume that one person speaks for all
- Identify the resources required to maintain community involvement (for example arranging travel to venue, meals, engagement material and advertising)
- Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer and/or Indigenous Australian Community Development Officer will advise whether there is a need to





**Stage 1 Understand**

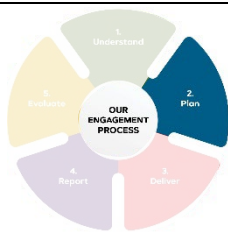
engage a facilitator with cultural awareness training and experience to guide the consultation process for complex projects / programs / events.

	<p><b>Stage 2 Plan</b></p>
<p><b>ICC's Existing Community Engagement Process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse stakeholders and decide who you should include in the process</li> <li>• Develop engagement questions</li> <li>• Choose and plan your engagement activities</li> <li>• Develop a clear engagement message and communications/media plan</li> <li>• Establish reporting and evaluation methods.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supplement for Culturally Responsive Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement Officer and Project Officer, in consultation with Native Title &amp; Cultural Heritage Officer and/or Indigenous Community Development Officer, carry out relevant work to set up engagement delivery</li> <li>• Community Engagement Officer and Project Officer may be required to attend Representative Engagement Meetings to discuss the proposal, being mindful to provide information in a suitable language or format, and to obtain peoples' views after a sufficient time period for consideration has passed (ie. in between the bi-monthly representative engagement meetings).</li> <li>• Seek advice from the Representative Engagement Groups on the appropriate protocols and things to be mindful of</li> <li>• Formalise any protocols and agreements</li> <li>• Establish any issues that cannot be discussed in an open meeting of all stakeholders</li> </ul>



## Stage 2 Plan

- Establish if there are any requirements in relation to the disclosure of sensitive information or particular traditional customs
- Seek direction from Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer to ensure both men and women with rights and interests in the project / program / event are identified because men and women may be responsible for different places and values
- Seek guidance from Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer on protocols around taking Representative Engagement Members to project locations as certain areas and cultural sites are only for men or women, which must be respected
- Seek guidance from Native Title & Cultural Heritage Officer as to whether separate reports should be produced for male and female Traditional Owners and another that is open access (has restricted information removed)
- Agree on processes for consent from Representative Engagement Groups to display any information gathered, including publishing on the Internet, to avoid any culturally inappropriate disclosure
- Engagement may require flexibility – some consultation processes may need to include sessions outside normal business hours, it may not be appropriate for engagement to occur during Sorry Business etc
- Provide appropriate timeframes for consultation, as decision making can involve many people and Representative Engagement Groups may need time to reach a consensus on appropriate advice or input
- It may be appropriate for consultation to occur in smaller groups rather than large meetings and to require multiple meetings
- Depending on the community's and project's needs, a range of different engagement methods may be appropriate, for example interviews, meetings, drop-in sessions, workshops, conversation circles (Yarning) and/or written methods (online through Shape Your Ipswich or paper based)
- Provide multiple ways in which people can participate, to increase the cross-section of those providing feedback and input; not all people are comfortable speaking in meetings and some people need time to process information before being able to respond



## Stage 2 Plan

- Budget - Identify the resources required to maintain community involvement (for example arranging travel to meetings, meals, consultant, advertising)
- Plan for liaising and consulting with relevant Representative Engagement Groups throughout the ongoing development of projects / programs / events, not just at the beginning or end
- Establish agreed check points during the development of the project / program / event, to seek input and/or consensus
- Reach agreement on processes for mediating and resolving disputes between Representative Engagement Groups and other stakeholders / council, including formal and informal dispute resolution processes



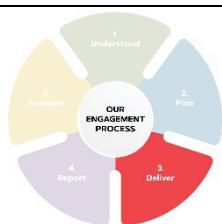
## Stage 3 Deliver

### ICC's Existing Community Engagement Process

- Implement the engagement plan by taking a transparent, respectful, and authentic approach.

### Supplement for Culturally Responsive Engagement


- Provide clarity on the purpose of the engagement activity from the outset
- Provide regular clear communication
- Genuinely seek input and expertise from the Representative Engagement Groups
- Provide people with any relevant documentation, including maps of the area being discussed, in advance of meetings where possible, to enable participants to be aware of the topics, information and issues being discussed
- Provide meeting agendas in advance, including a list of invitees and their affiliations (plus meeting chair and minute taker), topics for discussion, timings for the meeting, agenda papers, copies of presentation slides, any forms being used to seek input or feedback, a participant evaluation



### Stage 3 Deliver


form, and copies of any protocols or agreements which have been already established

- Ensure that all members from the Representative Engagement Groups receive the same information and that it is sufficient and appropriate for meaningful engagement
- Ensure that sensitive information disclosed in the course of engagement is protected from unnecessary further disclosure
- At meetings, ensure the role and authority of each council representative is explained
- The first speaker at a forum should recognise cultural or historical sites of significance when an organisational event is held on or near such a site; Elders should be consulted for advice on how best to make such an acknowledgement
- When addressing the group, ask the group how they would like to sit
- Always begin by thanking the group for allowing you to speak
- Allow the group members to set the pace of the meeting
- Apply the precautionary approach when there are differing opinions among people about the importance of a place; do not allow use of a place that is incompatible with one group's understanding of the heritage values of a place
- Outline any prior discussions and agreements with third parties (eg State agencies) and other stakeholders (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) that are being consulted
- Understand and accept that people may not articulate the reasons for opposing a project or activity
- Do not assume that one person speaks for all
- It is important to realise that disputes between groups can be longstanding and may influence the consultation process
- Disputes between Indigenous groups:
  - council will not become involved in disputes between groups
  - allow time for the dispute to be resolved
  - do not try and impose unrealistic timeframes for resolving community disputes



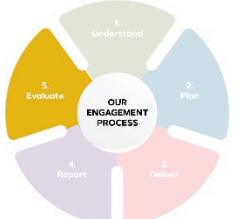
### Stage 3 Deliver

- Disputes between Indigenous groups, other stakeholders and council:
  - implement agreed processes for mediating and resolving disputes
  - identify and consider using culturally appropriate forms of dispute resolution (for example, meeting on country)
  - encourage everyone to use informal processes
  - do not try and impose unrealistic timeframes for resolving disputes.
- Important not to segregate members of the Representative Engagement Group by speaking to them privately, as this could be misinterpreted and have negative connotations to the engagement process. Always address all Members in a group.



### Stage 4 Report

ICC's Existing Community Engagement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all the data collected during the engagement process and document the findings</li> <li>• Provide feedback on the engagement process and findings to decision-makers and participants.</li> </ul>
Supplement for Culturally Responsive Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a copy of the feedback to all stakeholders (i.e Council, Representative Engagement Group and any persons who participated &amp; registered at workshops or on the Shape Your Ipswich community engagement page).</li> <li>• Provide a copy of the feedback received on the Shape Your Ipswich community engagement page for participants to review (i.e. engagement report, statistics)</li> <li>• Demonstrate how feedback was incorporated into the project / program / event or taken into account in decision making by council</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Stage 5 Evaluate</b></p>
<p><b>ICC's Existing Community Engagement process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the engagement process and outcomes to learn and improve.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supplement for Culturally Responsive Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Representative Engagement Groups with the opportunity to assess and provide feedback on whether the engagements have been fair, transparent and open</li> <li>• Where projects / programs / events include future monitoring, evaluation, recommendations, and reporting, ensure the outputs of these are provided to the Representative Engagement Groups</li> <li>• Celebrate the achievements together!</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Engagement between Councillors and Community

Free and open access to Councillors, and Council itself, is vital to efficient and effective local government.

Contact with Councillors is undertaken by many people in the community in relation to a broad range of matters.

All community members are welcome to yarn with our Mayor and Councillors on topics or issues relevant to Council's operations and within Council's jurisdiction.

When yarning with members of the community, councillors:

- Must make clear that they can provide general information but cannot give definitive advice about any likely decision
- Should suggest that the community member consider seeking independent professional advice where appropriate
- If applicable, must encourage community members to utilise established processes
- Must not in any way represent the Council's possible attitude to any potential decisions.

It is expected that contact which relates to projects, decisions, development, and other matters which have the potential to affect the broader community, is carried out ethically and transparently. In this instance, there are a number of mechanisms for engagement:

- For matters identified in Table 4, refer the matter to the next meeting of the relevant Representative Engagement Group.
- For matters outside the scope of Table 4:

- Utilise existing customer service channels of Council or via administrative support resources.
- Make a petition or deputation to Council in accordance with relevant procedures.