

# Community Engagement Strategy

2025 – 2029



March 2025



The Bega Valley Shire Council acknowledges and pays our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands, waters and airspace of the Shire.

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# Overview



## Purpose

Bega Valley Shire Council is dedicated to fostering a culture of meaningful community engagement to achieve better and more sustainable outcomes for the community. We aim to strengthen local community networks and rebuild an engaged, positive, trusting, and respectful relationship with the community.

This Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for Council to interact effectively, ensuring that the voices of our residents are heard and valued in the decision-making process. It includes our engagement principles, an updated 2024 Community Engagement Handbook (previously known as toolkit; a separate document for use by Council staff that will be added to our website once finalised) for implementing community engagement, aligned with Council's Community Strategic Plan 2042 and legislative requirements, and a Community Participation Plan.

## Community Participation Plan

Council must also maintain a Community Participation Plan (CPP), which details the timing and methods of community involvement in statutory planning and development issues, including development applications and planning proposals. The Community Participation Plan is a requirement of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The CPP is embedded within this Strategy and contributes to Council's comprehensive approach to community engagement.

## Community Engagement Handbook

The Communication and Engagement team conducted an internal staff survey in February 2024 to determine which staff used the 2020 Community Engagement Toolkit, how useful they found it and how it could be improved.

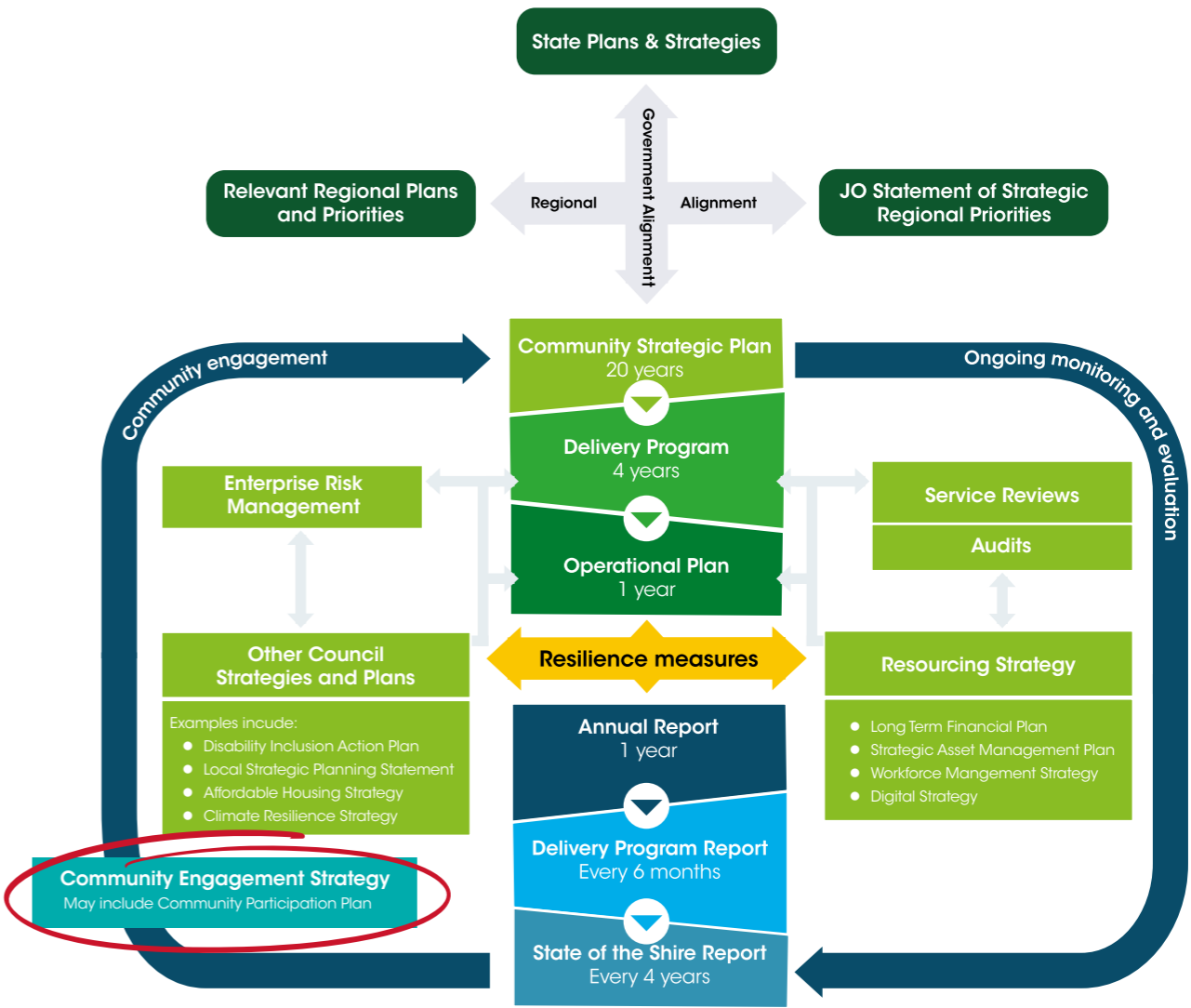
Respondents felt some of the content would be better contained in the Community Engagement Strategy and the 2020 toolkit be replaced with a handbook that staff can use in the development of their community engagement plan.

Based on this feedback, an updated 2024 Community Engagement Handbook has been developed. It is our intention to have Council project officers review this handbook and provide feedback on its usefulness. We are dedicated to investing in an online community engagement platform that streamlines communication, fosters improved participation and delivers evidence-based outcomes to enhance decision-making.

## Legislative requirements

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework provides structure for NSW councils when planning for their communities. Community engagement and ongoing monitoring and evaluation are fundamental to the performance of Council. The IPR Guidelines describe the requirements for Community Engagement Strategies, which must include:

- Adherence to social justice principles of access, equity, participation, and rights
- Recognising stakeholder groups in the community
- Detailing the approaches that Council will use to interact with each of these groups
- Ensuring an ample amount of time to execute engagement effectively.



# Community



## Our commitment

To ensure that members of our community can actively contribute to civic life.

## Our strategic guiding principles

### Accountable

We will act with integrity.

### Transparent

We will demonstrate clarity of purpose and show how community input influences decision-making.

### Equitable and inclusive

Our engagement will be accessible for all.

### Responsive

Our engagement will always be respectful.

## Social Justice Principles

The following social justice principles underpin our communication and engagement processes.

### Equity

Fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need.

### Access

Fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve quality of life for all.

### Participation

Genuine opportunities to participate in decisions which affect our community.

### Rights

Equal rights established and promoted, with opportunities available to people from all backgrounds to participate in community life.

## How we listen to the community

We hear from you through various engagement methods such as emails, phone calls, letters, petitions, project proposals, social media, community satisfaction survey, Snap Send Solve app, feedback forms, our website and Have Your Say surveys. Refer to the Methods of Engagement section on page 18.

## What is community engagement?

Community engagement can also be called public participation. It is about involving the community in decision-making and is at the very core of our democratic processes in local government.

## Why do we engage?

We engage to ensure we understand the diversity of views across the shire. We consider a wide range of options informed by community input and we deliver services that meet the needs of as many people as possible.

## How do we engage?

Council has adopted the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as a methodology for determining the required level of engagement and how decisions are made. This guides us to engage depending on the scope or impact of the project and if it is appropriate to either inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower the community in decision-making.

## Our commitment

This Community Engagement Strategy sets out a whole-of-Council commitment to community engagement.

### Bega Valley Shire Council will:

- ✔ encourage everyone with an interest in the shire to understand, be understood and learn from each other
- ✔ ensure people receive information that is timely, free of bias and easy to access
- ✔ be transparent, strengthen relationships and build mutual respect through ongoing engagement activities
- ✔ be open to responsive and respectful differing points of view
- ✔ articulate our commitments and deliver on them.

### We aim to ensure people are:

- ✔ informed of issues and decisions that could affect their current or future way of life
- ✔ encouraged to share their views with Council
- ✔ able to raise issues and have their say in a way and at a time that suits them
- ✔ able to be involved in decision-making processes if they wish to be
- ✔ confident their views and feedback have been considered
- ✔ able to get feedback on how their input has been reflected in Council decisions and actions.

## Our community engagement principles

Our approach to community engagement is guided by the following principles.

- **Integrity:** our engagement is genuine, meaningful and transparent.
- **Clarity of purpose:** we are clear about the purpose of the engagement and how contributions are considered.
- **Accessible and inclusive:** our engagement is accessible and balanced, capturing a range of values and perspectives by applying a variety of engagement methods that suit the purpose of engagement and the stakeholders involved.
- **Influence:** our engagement activities are reflected in our outcomes. The community should be able to see and understand the impact of their involvement, with feedback available about the outcomes of engagement and how and why decisions were taken.
- **Respectful:** we act in an honest, open and respectful way to build strong relationships, partnerships and trust with our stakeholders.
- **Timely:** we engage early and provide enough time for stakeholders to provide input.
- **Tailored:** we actively seek to identify and engage with those likely to have an interest in the issues involved using appropriate methods.
- **Informed:** we use existing research and findings of other consultations that Council or other organisations have conducted.
- **Learning from practice:** we regularly review and update Council’s engagement methods to learn and improve.
- **Meeting legislative requirements:** we meet or exceed all statutory engagement requirements.

## Our stakeholders

Our community is diverse, with people from a variety of backgrounds and a range of interests living, working and visiting our region. When planning community engagement, we analyse our stakeholders and seek those who might be interested in, impacted by, or benefit from a decision.

### Key Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Description
Rate payers and residents	Anybody who lives in or pays rates in the Bega Valley Local Government Area (LGA)
Children and young people	Bega Valley’s young people who will lead the area in the future
Communities of place	Location-based communities (towns, villages, neighbourhoods, streets)
Aboriginal communities	Aboriginal communities are diverse and have unique cultural traditions that have been passed down for generations
Communities of need	Residents most vulnerable to the impact of decisions such as those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, those with different abilities, CALD communities, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and those immediately impacted by disasters
Schools and education	Primary and secondary educational institutions, tertiary education providers and early learning providers
Business owners Business chambers Service providers	Bega Valley businesses, business and industry networks and associations, developers
Community organisations and groups, Council reference groups, committees and advisory groups	Council committees, precincts and associations, interagency networks, interest groups, religious and faith-based organisations, voluntary groups, not-for-profit organisations, sporting and recreation clubs
NSW and Federal government departments/agencies, State and Federal MPs	State and Commonwealth departments and agencies that provide services in our community or have impacting policies, plans or information
Neighbouring councils and representative bodies	Surrounding local government areas and joint organisations such as CRJO, NSW Office of Local Government (OLG), Local Government NSW (LGNSW), Country Mayors Association (CMA)
Councillors	Nine elected representatives of Council
Council staff	All employees of Council, including, contractors and volunteers
Media	Local, state and national media outlets
Visitors and tourists	Those who visit the Bega Valley LGA

# Engagement



Community engagement involves the community in decision-making and is at the very core of our democratic processes in local government.

We want to engage with the community to understand different points of view, clarify expectations and build trust. This helps us make better decisions and improve our services. Engagement is more than providing information. It involves two-way communication, listening and shared decision-making.

This strategy references a continuum of community engagement based on the International Association of the (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum - inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.



## International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

The IAP2 developed an international spectrum for engagement which is considered a best practice benchmark worldwide.

Council uses the IAP2 spectrum to guide our engagement. There are different levels of engagement that can be used depending on the situation.

If a decision has already been made, Council will inform the community. If we want to learn more about a topic, we will consult or involve people. Council can also collaborate with the community. An example of this are formal committees like Hall Committees who have delegated authority and work with Council to find solutions. At the highest level of involvement, local people are empowered to make decisions. An example would be the referendum in 2021 where our community voted on the option to vote for a popularly elected Mayor at the September 2024 Council elections.

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 1) assists with the selection of the level of engagement in any community engagement process. The spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. There may be different engagement levels during various stages of the one community engagement process.

## IAP2 Core Values

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

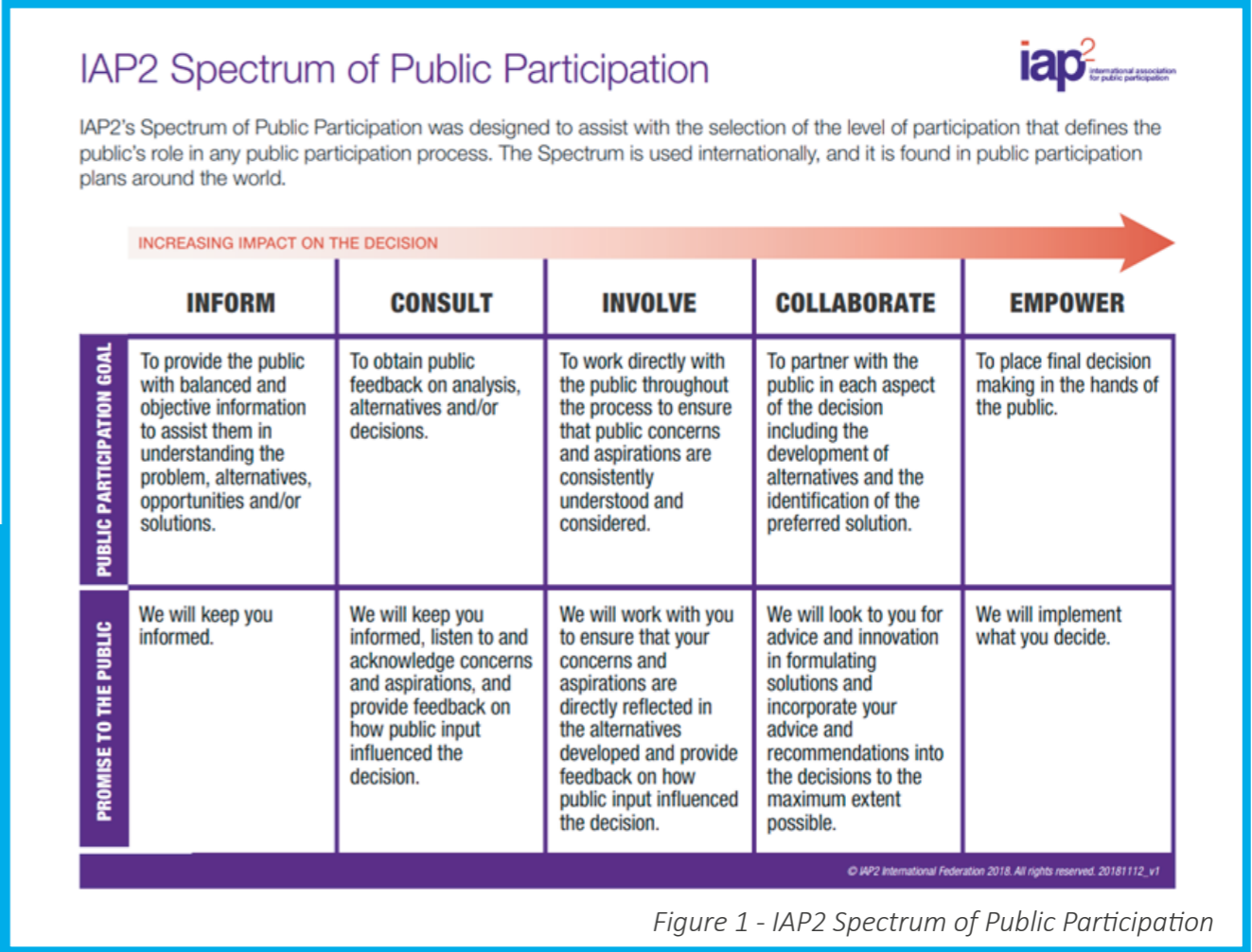


Figure 1 - IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

## How does engagement influence our decision-making?

We engage to ensure we understand the diversity of views across the shire. We consider a wide range of options informed by community input and we deliver services that meet the expectations of as many people as possible.

We will collaborate with identified groups or individuals who might be impacted by a specific decision or activity. By engaging with our community, we aim to provide those affected with the opportunity to contribute and be well-informed, leading to greater satisfaction with the final decision.

It is important to emphasise that while community feedback is a significant part of our decision-making process, it is not the sole basis for our decisions. We also consider other important factors. The input from our community must be carefully weighed alongside other factors, including:

- Legislation and case law
- Budget impacts
- Council policies and resolutions
- Subject matter expert advice (professional and technical)
- Social impacts
- Economic impacts
- Environmental impacts
- Adopted plans and strategies
- Council's Delivery Plan (adopted every 4 years) and annual Operational Plans. These outline Council priorities, projects, services and programs for the 4-year Council term.
- Previous decisions and precedents.

We will 'Close the Loop' and ensure our community understands how their contributions influenced the outcome or decision.

## How do we engage?

In line with the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, it is important for us to determine the appropriate level of engagement; inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower. To guide these decisions, we have developed a set of engagement criteria.

Our engagement criteria (Figure 2) consider the scale of a project and its community impact. These criteria inform Council's Community Engagement Handbook, used by staff to plan and implement engagement activities.

Throughout the life of a project, different levels of engagement may occur and these levels will be considered in the planning of projects.

## When do we engage?

Community engagement is a planned, two-way process of working with identified groups of people or individuals who may be affected by a specific decision or activity.

We have two primary stages of engagement:

1. Early engagement: Involves identifying and addressing issues that may impact individuals or groups before making decisions. We will carry out this engagement at the initial stages of any strategy, project, or program of work, using various engagement methods.
2. Feedback on drafts: The second type of engagement involves seeking feedback on drafts before they are finalised or adopted by Council. A 'Public Exhibition' process gathers feedback on final draft documents. Exhibition documents are available in hard copy at our customer service centre and online.

Regardless of the method used, 'Closing the Loop' is an essential step in the engagement process. At the end of the period, we ensure our community is informed about how their feedback contributed to the final decision and the resulting outcome.

## Barriers to engagement

Council recognises the importance of fostering an inclusive environment for community engagement, acknowledging that various barriers can hinder participation from certain groups. Our responsibility is to make the engagement process as accessible and inclusive as possible. We understand that numerous factors can influence an individual's ability to engage effectively, including:

- Lack of trust in government
- Language and literacy levels
- Digital literacy and access (i.e. social media, website)
- Location (towns and villages) and accessibility
- Mental or physical health issues
- Physical or intellectual disability
- Low literacy levels
- Time constraints.

This strategy addresses and reduces some barriers, making Council's engagement practices more accessible and inclusive.

## How can you help build community engagement and social cohesion

Building a strong, engaged community is vital for fostering social cohesion. Here are several ways you can contribute.

Exercise your civic right to vote - participate in local elections to have your voice heard and influence decisions that affect your community.

Attend Council meetings and public forums or watch the livestream - stay informed about local government and community issues by attending meetings in person or online.

Participate in public consultations - share your views during consultations to help shape policies and initiatives that reflect the community's needs.

Engage in Councillor forums - attend a Councillor's in the Community session to discuss community matters directly with elected officials.

Join the "Have A Say" conversation - contribute your thoughts and ideas on the BVSC website, where you can engage and have your say on Council-related topics.

Report issues with the Snap Send Solve App - use this App to notify Council about problems in your area, helping to ensure prompt attention and resolution.

Follow Council's Facebook page - keep up to date with community news and events to stay connected and engaged with local initiatives.

Participate in Council-led activities - get involved in events and projects organised by Council to strengthen community ties and promote local initiatives.

Engage with your local Councillor - reach out to your elected representative to discuss community improvements and advocate for local needs.

Volunteer with local organisations - support at least one of the 500 volunteer community organisations in the Bega Valley.

Consider checking Council's website's Community Directory for opportunities to lend your time and skills.

By taking these steps, you can actively enhance community engagement and foster a sense of belonging in your area.



# Our engagement impact and scale criteria

<b>Inform</b>	Assist the community to learn about Council services and programs
<b>Goal:</b> Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist the community’s understanding of the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. <b>Promise:</b> We will keep you informed.	
<b>Consult</b>	Actively seeking the community’s views and exchanging information
<b>Goal:</b> Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions. <b>Promise:</b> We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	
<b>Involve</b>	Bringing the community into the decision-making process
<b>Goal:</b> Work directly with the community to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. <b>Promise:</b> We will work with the community to ensure their concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback through Council meeting reports and feedback to contributors on how community input influenced the decision.	
<b>Collaborate</b>	Working with the community to design and draft
<b>Goal:</b> Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. <b>Promise:</b> We will look to the community for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	
<b>Empower</b>	Putting the final say in the community’s hands
<b>Goal:</b> To place final decision making in the hands of the community. <b>Promise:</b> We will implement what the community decides.	

- High

  - Potential for high risk controversy or conflict with community values.
  - Significant impacts such as natural environment, water supply, land use or heritage.
  - Potential large impact on government strategies and directions.
  - Potential impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage.
- Moderate

  - Potential for some risk of controversy or conflict with community values.
  - The loss or change to any facility or service to the locality.
  - Potential moderate impact on government strategies and directions.
- Low

  - Low or no risk of controversy or conflict with community values.
  - A small change to any facility or service to the locality.
  - Low impact on government strategies and directions.

Our Aboriginal Protocols and Guidelines

Describe how we work with local Aboriginal people to foster trust, respect and cultural awareness.

[begavalley.nsw.gov.au/community/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people](https://begavalley.nsw.gov.au/community/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people)

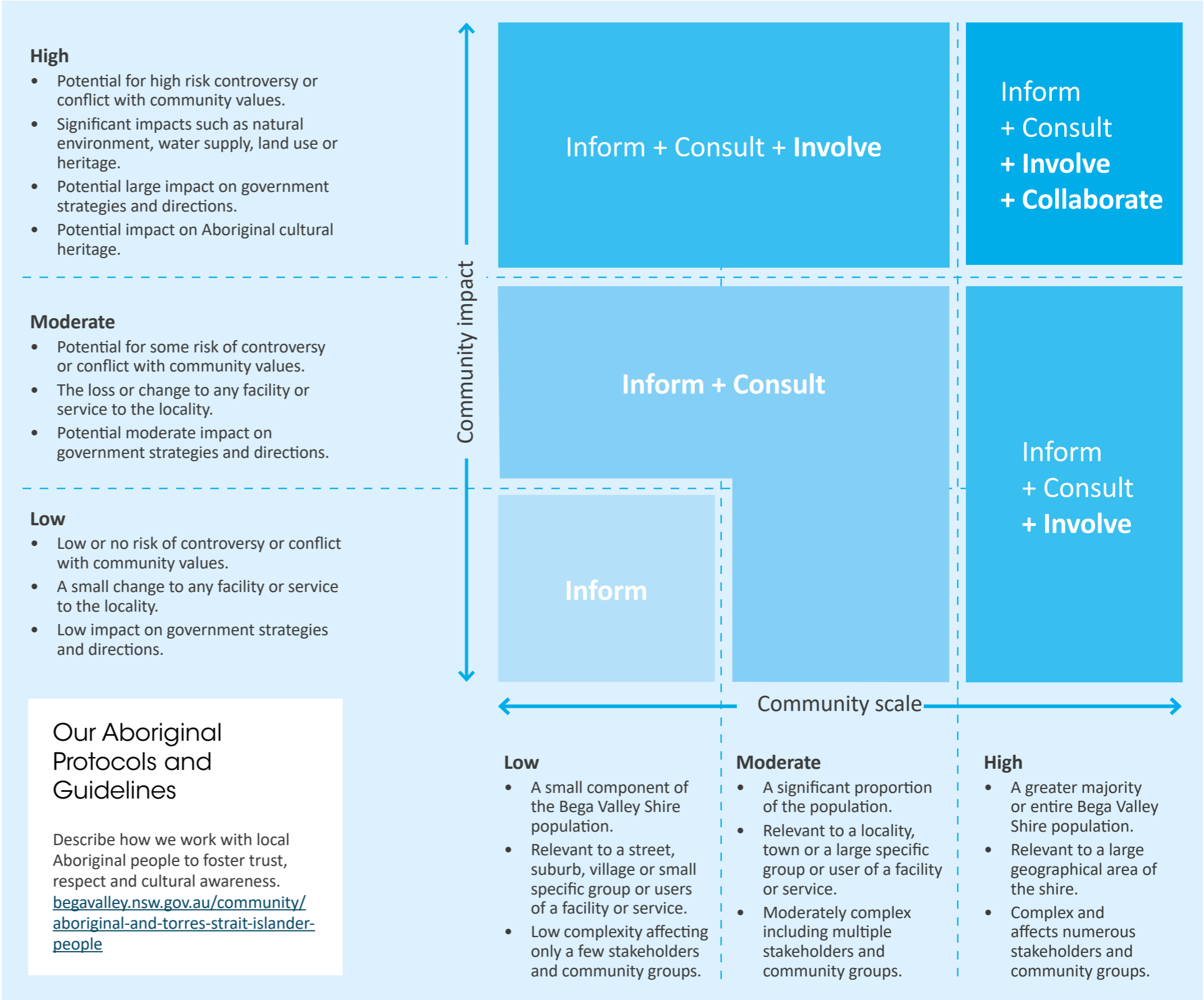


Figure 2 - Application of IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation relative to scale and impact of activity (adopted from Tweed Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy).

# Listening channels



We are here, listening, and genuinely want to hear from you

We are committed to fostering an open, inclusive community where every voice is heard and valued. Effective communication and active listening are the cornerstones of a thriving community.

We have numerous opportunities for you to share your thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Whether through public forums, surveys, feedback forms, by phone or in-person, we want to hear from you. Your feedback shapes our policies, projects, and initiatives to serve our community better.

Please let us know how we can work together to get better and make a positive difference.

Engagement method	How to contact Council	What happens next?
<a href="#">Have Your Say</a>	Our website has a Have Your Say section where you can leave your comments on a specific project or development application that is open for comment.	All feedback from the Have Your Say pages are collated into reports and presented to the elected Council.
Surveys	Anyone can complete an online or hard copy survey such as Have Your Say and our bi-annual Community Satisfaction Survey.	Survey feedback is collated and reported to Councillors at <a href="#">Council meetings</a> .
<a href="#">Feedback forms</a>	Feedback forms are available on our website.	Feedback forms are sent to the appropriate functional area within Council for action.
<a href="#">Snap Send Solve</a>	A free mobile phone app where you can photograph and report something directly affecting you.	The Snap Send Solve reports are directed to the appropriate area within Council for action.
<a href="#">Public Forums and Presentations</a>	There are two ways you can seek to address Council: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A request to speak at a Public forum about a matter included in the agenda for a Council meeting</li> <li>2. A request to make a presentation to Councillors about activities or items of community interest.</li> </ol>	Councillors listen and consider presentations and speakers at Public forums. This doesn't mean that a notice of motion will be initiated, or a recommendation is changed.

Engagement method	How to contact Council	What happens next?
Petitions	Anyone can submit a petition to Council for consideration. Information on <a href="#">How to Lodge a Petition</a> is on our website. Please note that petitions need to be in the correct format.	Upon receiving a valid petition, a report will be presented at the Council meeting, detailing the petition's nature and the number of signatories.
Letters and emails	All letters and emails we receive are documented and forwarded to a staff member to action.  You can write to: Bega Valley Shire Council PO Box 492, Bega NSW 2550 or email <a href="mailto:Council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au">Council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au</a>	Once correspondence has been received, it is allocated to a staff member or service area with a timeframe set for response.
Community projects	Council has a dedicated <a href="#">Community Projects Proposal</a> process to consider community projects.  You can also contact a staff member to talk about your idea by phoning 02 6499 2222.	Your Project Proposal is submitted to Council for consideration.  If your project receives in-kind support, we will start by creating a Project Plan for the next steps.
Phone calls	Customer service is open 9.00am - 4.30pm, Monday – Friday.  Our customer service phone line 02 6499 2222 is monitored 24 hours a day.  If you see a Council asset in need of attention, please let us know.	Matters that cannot be resolved over the phone, are centrally logged using our customer request management (CRM) system and sent to a staff member or area to action.
In person	Our customer service centre in Bega is open 9.00am – 4.30pm, Monday – Friday.	Matters and enquiries that cannot be resolved over the front customer service counter, are centrally logged using our CRM system and sent to a staff member or area to action.

# Methods of engagement



To deliver effective engagement, we consider the range of engagement methods available to maximise our reach throughout the community. We use methods that are fit-for-purpose and appropriate to the issues on which Council is seeking to engage to ensure the greatest reach.

Below are our standard methods used across the IAP2 Spectrum.

Level on IAP2 Spectrum						
Engagement Method	Description	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Council meeting	Typically occurs on the third Wednesday of the month, commencing at 2pm. Some month’s however, two Council meetings may occur. The community are welcome to attend and listen.  The meetings are also live streamed via Council’s website <a href="http://webcast.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/video.php">webcast.begavalley.nsw.gov.au/video.php</a>	●				
Public notices	A list of the latest Council statutory notices and announcements are published on Council’s website or in newspapers.	●				
Council Customer Service Centre	In-person Customer Service Centre and Call Centre to answer questions and provide face-to-face consultation with the public.	●				
Email	Individual or bulk emails directly to an inbox.  Can be sent to individuals or to established group databases but works best if segmented and targeted (i.e., Library, SECCA, E-notices subscribers).	●				
Direct Mail Letterbox flyer Fact sheet	To provide information about a service or project directly to impacted members of the community. Includes contact details of Council staff member in case more information is requested.	●				

Level on IAP2 Spectrum						
Engagement Method	Description	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
E-newsletters	Fortnightly e-newsletters sent electronically to a broad group of subscribers e.g., Business News and Bega Valley Together.	●				
Social media Media releases Media alerts	Electronic communication created to share information and ideas, using videos, photos and a link to website content. Channels include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.	●				
Media Briefings	Arranged briefings with media outlets to provide information about a Council decision. It provides media outlets the opportunity to ask questions and clarify important information.	●				
Media advertising	Advertising or promotion through traditional channels such as radio or newspaper.	●				
Community and library noticeboards	Prominent noticeboards used for providing information.	●				
Site signage	Site and project specific information provided at the location of the activity.	●				
Council-led official events and openings	Council organises events and official openings such as playgrounds and bridges, where community are invited and welcome.	●				
Presentation to Councillors	Community organisations, clubs and groups and/or individuals may apply to present to Councillors on their activities or items of community interest.		●			

Methods of engagement

Level on IAP2 Spectrum						
Engagement Method	Description	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community Satisfaction Survey	A community survey consisting of phone calls and an online survey, available for all shire residents to provide their views on Council's performance.		●			
Public forum	Provides the opportunity for a member of the public to provide a short presentation relevant to an item on a Council meeting agenda.			●		
Petitions	Members of the community can raise an item with Council by lodging a petition with a Councillor.			●		
Public Exhibition	During an exhibition or notification process, relevant documents are made available that may include a draft of a policy, plan, project or development application we have received.	●	●			
Website	The website begavalley.nsw.gov.au is used to communicate content, provide videos, photos and links to surveys for feedback. It also provides Council meeting agendas and minutes, and a website suggestions/feedback box.	●	●			
Listening posts	Pop-up information displays with representation from subject matter experts, inside or outside of Council. Can be used to inform and consult with the community about an issue, project or service.	●	●			
Have Your Say surveys	Hard copy and electronic questionnaires to ask specific questions in relation to an issue, project, strategy or plan.	●	●			
Town Hall style meetings	Formal events arranged to provide an update on a topic, issue or project, led by Council. Provides the community the opportunity to ask questions.	●	●			
Snap Send Solve	Mobile phone app used to submit an issue with accompanying photograph directly to the appropriate functional area within Council for action.	●		●		

Level on IAP2 Spectrum						
Engagement Method	Description	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Councillors in the Community	A pre-organised and promoted program featuring a mix of formal and informal sessions held in interactive environments such as markets and community halls. Opportunities for dialogue in comfortable surroundings, fostering trust and familiarity among participants. By leveraging hall networks and contacts, outreach efforts are enhanced, making communication more effective and accessible. Councillors, members of the Leadership Executive Group, and subject matter experts are available to listen and answer questions, creating an open space for discussion and engagement.					
Working Groups	Invited participants attend an information session, discuss issues and make recommendations on outcomes.	●	●	●	●	
Advisory or Implementation groups	A targeted representative group of participants with a clear remit who are consulted about a particular issue or pending decision.	●	●	●	●	
Workshops	Groups of participants invited to attend and provide feedback and direction on a particular issue. Workshops are interactive and facilitated. They can involve a presentation and break-out groups for deliberation.	●	●	●	●	
S355 Committees of Council	Provide an important opportunity for people with skills, knowledge and lived experience to engage in Council decision-making processes through delegated decision making under S355 of the <i>Local Government Act</i> .	●	●	●	●	
Local government elections or referendums	Empowers individuals and community groups to make their own decisions.					●

# Measuring our outcomes

## How we measure our engagement outcomes

Council provides updates on our engagement activities through various reporting methods. Feedback received through Have Your Says and written submissions will be published in public Council reports. We also include engagement reporting outcomes in our Annual Report and six-monthly Operational Plan progress reports.

Our key performance indicators include improvements in community satisfaction scores related to engagement and involvement in Council decision-making. This data is collected from our bi-annual Customer Satisfaction Survey.

We are dedicated to investing in an online community engagement platform that streamlines communication, fosters improved participation and delivers evidence-based outcomes to enhance decision-making.

### Our key measurement indicators are:

Key measurement indicators	Performance measurements
Interactions with our website	# of visitors and website page views
Interactions with Have Your Say (HYS) opportunities and submissions received	# of submissions received for HYS each engagement opportunity
E-newsletter subscribers – Bega Valley Together and Business News	Growth rate of subscribers Open and click-through rates
Media coverage	# of total volume BVSC mentions # potential reaches
Community awareness of council decision-making	% of residents, measured through community satisfaction bi-annual survey, who report being aware of council decision-making processes
Social media interactions	Growth in followers on official Council social media platforms
Community participation in engagement opportunities	# of participants attending forums, and other engagement activities.



Key measurement indicators	Performance measurements
Community satisfaction survey responses	Overall satisfaction score from community satisfaction surveys  Community's satisfaction with Councils consultation and community engagement
Public Forum attendance	# of attendees at public forums
Councillors in the community	# Face to face interactions and public attendance
Council meeting livestream viewing	# of livestream viewers

## Our decision-making process

Council is governed by nine elected Councillors. Collectively they are referred to as the elected Council. Councillors are elected to represent the interests of all ratepayers and residents. Our elected Council will ensure it effectively represents the diverse views of the shire community by adopting the principles of this strategy.

The *Local Government Act 1993* defines the following roles and responsibilities in relation to community engagement.

- **Councillors** represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community and facilitate communication with the community.
- **Elected Council** provides leadership and establishes policy and strategic direction for the organisation and the future of the shire.

The elected Council consults regularly with community organisations and other key stakeholders and keeps them informed of its decisions.

- **The Mayor** as leader of the elected Council and as a community leader, promotes partnerships with key stakeholders and together with the Chief Executive Officer, ensures adequate opportunities and mechanisms for engagement between Council and the local community.
- **The Chief Executive Officer** advises the Mayor and elected Council on appropriate methods of community engagement and prepares a Community Engagement Strategy.

Where an engagement activity is referenced in a report to the elected Council, this report will include:

- what consultation activities were undertaken
- feedback received
- online (website and social media) statistics and feedback.



# Community Participation Plan

# Community Participation Plan



The Community Participation Plan is an invitation to the community to participate in the planning process at a local government level. It provides guidance on how people can have a say on different types of planning matters including:

- ✓ assessment of development applications
- ✓ planning proposals and contributions plans
- ✓ strategic planning statements and strategies
- ✓ voluntary planning agreements
- ✓ Development Control Plans
- ✓ Local Environmental Plans.

## The role of public exhibition in the planning system

Opportunities to participate in the planning system vary according to the nature, scale and likely impact of the proposal being assessed or considered. A valuable way for community participation in the planning process is through a submission on a proposal during an exhibition or notification period.

## Exhibition and notification

The key methods we use to encourage community participation is through formal exhibitions or notifications of development applications or plan-making processes. During an exhibition or notification process, relevant documents are made available that may include a draft of a policy, plan or report, or information about development applications we have received. The planning process can be complex and Council is committed to ensuring:

- that planning information produced by Council is in plain language, easily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation in planning
- that the community is given opportunities to participate in strategic planning as early as possible to enable community views to be genuinely considered.

Council considers a range of factors when making decisions on exhibited proposals and applications to ensure those decisions are in the public interest. This includes considering the objectives of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, NSW and regional planning directions, the strategic priorities for the Bega Valley Shire, community views, and the land use priorities identified in strategic plans and applicable policies and guidelines.

Engagement level	
Exhibited Development Development that requires formal exhibition prior to determination (see Appendix A)	Consult
Notified Development Development that requires one or more adjoining landowners be notified about the development before it is determined (see Appendix B)	Consult

## Development excluded from exhibition or notification under this Community Participation Plan

Some types of development do not need development consent from Council or are of a minor nature with minimal impacts on neighbours and the environment. In these instances, there is no pathway for formal community participation. This type of development falls within the following categories:

- Development that is exempt development under the provisions of Clause 3.1 Exempt Development of Council’s Local Environmental Plan or any applicable State Environmental Planning Policy
- Development that is complying development under the provisions of Clause 3.2 Complying Development of Council’s Local Environmental Plan or any applicable State Environmental Planning Policy
- Development not listed as Exhibited or Notified Development in Appendices A and B of this document.

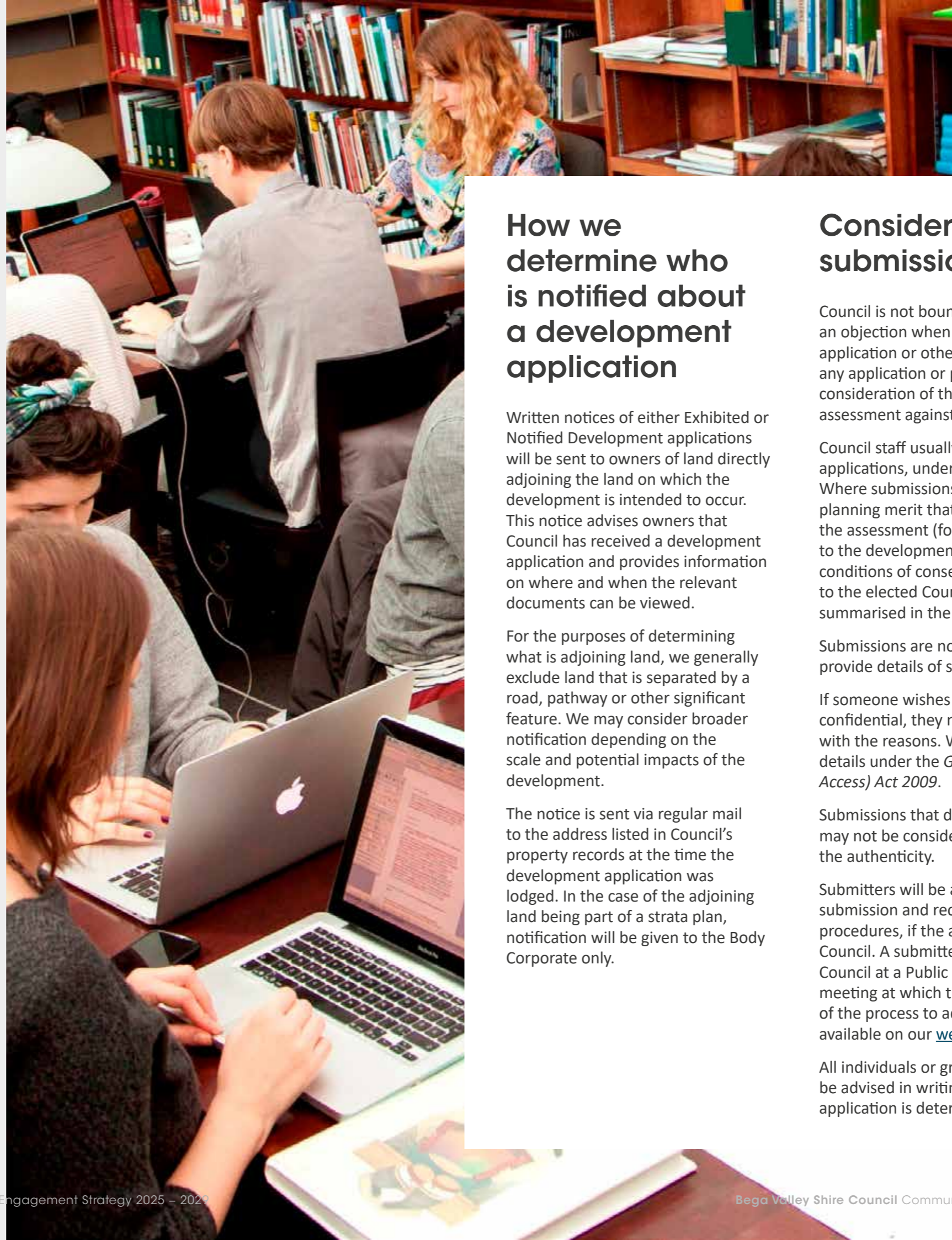
## Engagement methods

We communicate opportunities for participation in the development assessment process and strategic planning matters through any of the following methods:

- Letters to stakeholders
- Council's [website](#), particularly the [DA Tracker page](#)
- Newspaper notices in the Bega District News
- Notices on the land (if required by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021).

For strategic planning matters, such as strategies, policies and planning proposals, we provide opportunities for participation through methods most appropriate to the project. These may include:

- Social media posts
- E-newsletters
- Letterbox flyer
- Email
- Public displays in the Bega Valley Commemorative Civic Centre, libraries, shopping centres or other community venues or events.



## How we determine who is notified about a development application

Written notices of either Exhibited or Notified Development applications will be sent to owners of land directly adjoining the land on which the development is intended to occur. This notice advises owners that Council has received a development application and provides information on where and when the relevant documents can be viewed.

For the purposes of determining what is adjoining land, we generally exclude land that is separated by a road, pathway or other significant feature. We may consider broader notification depending on the scale and potential impacts of the development.

The notice is sent via regular mail to the address listed in Council's property records at the time the development application was lodged. In the case of the adjoining land being part of a strata plan, notification will be given to the Body Corporate only.

## Consideration of submissions

Council is not bound to adopt a suggestion or support an objection when making decisions on a development application or other planning matter. Assessment of any application or planning proposal involves careful consideration of the merits of the proposal and assessment against all relevant planning considerations.

Council staff usually determine development applications, under delegation from the elected Council. Where submissions are considered to raise issues of planning merit that cannot be addressed throughout the assessment (for example, by suitable amendments to the development) or by way of appropriate conditions of consent, the application may be reported to the elected Council. The grounds for objection will be summarised in the Council report.

Submissions are not confidential. It is our policy to provide details of submissions to the public.

If someone wishes for their personal details to remain confidential, they must clearly state this in writing along with the reasons. We may still be obliged to release details under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Submissions that do not contain a name and address may not be considered, as we will be unable to verify the authenticity.

Submitters will be advised in writing of receipt of their submission and receive information about Council procedures, if the application is reported to the elected Council. A submitter may request permission to address Council at a Public Forum held prior to the Council meeting at which the matter is to be considered. Details of the process to address the elected Council are available on our [website](#).

All individuals or groups that made a submission will be advised in writing of Council's decision after the application is determined.

Exhibition timeframes

Section 2.21(2) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* details the types of proposals where community input is sought. The minimum exhibition timeframes are listed below.

We will always exhibit a proposal for this minimum timeframe and will consider an extended timeframe for exhibition based on the scale and nature of the proposal.

Minimum exhibition time frames for planning and development assessment

Plan making activity	Time frame
Draft Community Participation Plan	28 days
Planning proposals for a Local Environmental Plan subject to a gateway determination	28 days or as specified by the Gateway determination (a Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure process)
Draft Development Control Plan	28 days
Draft Contribution Plan	28 days
Draft Local Strategic Planning Statements and land use strategies	28 days

Key points about public exhibitions

- Council is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement they believe would be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason.
- Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends.
- If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, we may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available weekday.
- The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

There may be other proposals not subject to mandatory exhibition timeframes we may choose to exhibit for at least 28 days to engage with our community.

Feedback

There are many ways for the community to provide feedback or raise questions outside of the formal exhibition process. We will always consider and respond to community views and concerns.

Minimum exhibition time frames for planning and development assessment

Development assessment activity	Time frame
Application for development consent (other than for a complying development certificate, for designated development, for nominated integrated development, for threatened species development or for state significant development)	14 days
Application for modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	14 days
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days
Nominated integrated development or threatened species development	28 days
Environmental impact statement obtained under Division 5.1	28 days
Application for development consent for category 1 remediation work under State Environmental Planning Policy No 55—Remediation of Land	28 days
Application for development consent for State significant development	28 days
Council-related development applications	28 days
Re-exhibition of any amended application or matter referred to above	Discretionary based on the urgency, scale and nature of the proposal

Reporting planning matters engagement outcomes

The outcomes of an engagement process for a planning matter will be published on our website. Where an engagement process has been reported to the elected Council, the outcome will also be published in the adopted Council minutes. Community members who provide a submission as part of the engagement process will be sent advice on the outcome of their submission.

Crown Land Community Engagement

Council manages a range of Crown land areas across our shire. When working on any Council-managed Crown land issues, we follow guidelines established by the Lands & Water Division of the NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/public/community-engagement-strategy](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/public/community-engagement-strategy)

Council will review the effect on the community's current use and enjoyment of Crown land to decide how much engagement is needed. We will also make sure that the engagement is fair and matches the expected impact or activity on the community's use of Council-managed Crown Land.

Glossary of planning terms

Planning term	Definition
Contribution Plan	A plan developed by Council's that determines financial contributions from new development towards the cost of new and upgraded public amenities or services required to accommodate the new development.
Designated development	Developments that are high- impact (e.g., likely to generate pollution) or are in or near an environmentally sensitive area (such as a coastal wetland).
Development Control Plan	A plan that provides detailed planning and design guidelines to support the planning controls in a Local Environment Plan (LEP).
Gateway determination	A gateway determination is issued by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure following an assessment of the strategic merit of a proposal to amend or create an LEP and allows for the proposal to proceed to public exhibition.
Local Environmental Plan (LEP)	An environmental planning instrument developed by a local planning authority, generally a council. An LEP sets the planning framework for a Local Government Area.



# Appendix A — Exhibited development

Exhibited development includes any of the following:

1. Air transport facilities; airstrips; amusement centres; biosolids treatment facilities; car parks; caravan parks; cemeteries; charter and tourism boating facilities; community facilities; correctional centres; crematoria; eco-tourist facilities; educational establishments; entertainment facilities; exhibition villages; extractive industries; freight transport facilities; function centres; funeral homes; garden centres; hardware and building supplies; general industries; hazardous storage establishments; heavy industry; heavy industrial storage establishments; helipads; highway service centres; home occupations (sex services); industrial training facilities; industries; intensive livestock agriculture; markets; marinas; open cut mining; mortuaries; offensive storage establishment; place of public worship; plant nurseries; port facilities; recreation facilities (major); recreation facilities (outdoor); registered clubs; restricted premises; rural industries; service stations; sewage systems; sex services premises; timber yards; tourist and visitor accommodation; transport depots; vehicle sales and hire premises; waste or resource management facilities; water recreation structures; water recycling facilities and water supply systems; wharf or boating facilities
2. Subdivisions of land resulting in 10 or more lots
3. The demolition of a work, relic or place within a Heritage Conservation Area or Heritage Item
4. The use of a building or land referred to in Clause 5.10 (10) – Heritage Conservation Incentives – Heritage Conservation Areas of the LEP for a purpose that, but for those clauses, would have been prohibited under the LEP
5. Draft community participation plan
6. Draft local strategic plan
7. Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination
8. Draft development control plan
9. Draft contribution plans.

Development listed in 3) and 4) above is not exhibited development if it involves the partial demolition of a Heritage Item or the demolition of a building or work within a Heritage Conservation Area if, in the opinion of Council, the partial demolition or demolition will be of a minor nature and will not adversely affect the environmental heritage of the Bega Valley.

**Note:** Where a development application includes elements that are both exhibited and non-exhibited, the whole of the application shall be exhibited development.

# Appendix B — Notified development

Development, other than Exhibited Development, that is required to be notified to one or more adjoining landowners is referred to as Notified Development.

Notified development includes any of the following:

1. Advertising structures; animal boarding and training establishments; agritourism; aquaculture; boarding houses; boat building and/or repair facilities; boat launching ramps; boat sheds; business premises; camping grounds; cellar door premises; centre based child care facilities; commercial premises; depots; dual occupancies; dwellings (greater than one storey); electricity generating works; emergency services facilities; exhibition home; forestry; flood mitigation works; food and drink premises garden centres; general industries; goods repair and reuse premises; group homes; health services facilities; home-based child care; hostels; industrial retail outlets; information and education facilities; intensive plant horticulture; kiosks; landscape material supplies; light industries; liquid fuel depot; local distribution premises; mooring pens; moorings; multi dwelling housing; office premises; passenger transport facilities; plant nurseries; recreation facilities (indoor); research stations; residential care facilities; residential flat buildings; respite day care centres; restricted facilities; retail premises; roads; rural industries; rural supplies; rural workers' dwellings; self-storage units; semi-detached dwellings; shops; shop top housing; seniors housing; specialised retail premises; neighbourhood shops; neighbourhood supermarkets; shop top housing; signage; storage premises; truck depots; vehicle body repair workshops; vehicle repair stations; veterinary hospitals; warehouse or distribution centres; water supply systems and wholesale supplies
2. Any development that seeks variations to setbacks established by Council's Development Control Plan
3. Subdivision of land resulting in 3 to 9 lots
4. Any development that seeks a Clause 4.6 variation to a development standard under Bega Valley Local Environmental Plan 2013 or a State Environmental Planning Policy.

# Appendix C — Committees of Council

For more information on our committees visit [begavalley.nsw.gov.au/council/committees-of-council](https://begavalley.nsw.gov.au/council/committees-of-council)

## Advisory Committees

- Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee
- Affordable Housing Implementation Group
- Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
- Bega Eden Merrimans Aboriginal Liaison Committee
- Coast and Flood Management Committee
- Bega Valley Disaster Relief Fund
- Bega Valley Local Emergency Management Committee
- Police Liaison Committee
- Central Waste Facility Community Consultative Committee
- Bega Valley Museum Advisory Committee
- Local Traffic Committee
- Saleyards Advisory Group

## Committees with delegated authority

- General Cemetery Advisory Committee
- Community Halls Advisory Committee
- General Sportsground Committee
- Montreal Goldfields Committee
- Bega Valley Shire Awards Committee
- Bega Valley Grants Committee

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