

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2028





Wiradjuri COUNTRY

The Bathurst Regional Council Local Government Area encompasses part of the Traditional Lands of the Wiradjuri people.

The Wiradjuri people are the people of the three rivers – the Wambuul (Macquarie), the Calare/Kalari (Lachlan) and the Murrumbidgee.

Bathurst Regional Council would like to acknowledge and pay their respects to the Traditional Custodians of these lands, past, present and future.

In acknowledging the Aboriginal Community's deep and enduring connection to Country, it is also recognised that this Community is integral to the future of the special places and landscapes of the Bathurst region.

Artwork: Bubba Kennedy

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FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER & MAYOR



David Sherley
General Manager



Cr Robert Taylor
Mayor



The Bathurst Regional Council Community Engagement Strategy is our commitment to quality consultation and actively involving our community in decision-making and information sharing.

This Strategy ensures that we approach all our engagement activities consistently, especially for projects that need community input.

Our aim is to keep you well-informed about Council issues, strategies, projects, and plans, and to give you the chance to be part of the decision-making and policy development process.

We're committed to building meaningful, long-term relationships with our community by providing opportunities for you to get involved in decision-making.

We've heard from our community that you want Council decisions to reflect community opinions and to have opportunities to participate in these processes. This strategy outlines when and how you can be involved in Council's decision-making.

This document also provides a framework to support the development of our key strategies, particularly our Community Strategy Plan, which is our shared vision for the future of our community.

We welcome and encourage your feedback on Council's plans, projects, and activities. Together, we can continue to build a strong connection between Council and the community as we work towards our shared vision for Bathurst.



In 2021 our community helped build our Mission and Vision for the Bathurst Region.

OUR VISION

A vibrant regional centre that enjoys a rural lifestyle. The Bathurst Region achieves health and wellbeing through strengthening economic opportunities, planning for sustainable growth, protecting and enhancing our assets and encouraging a supportive and inclusive community. A region full of community spirit and shared prosperity.



OUR MISSION

The equitable development and maintenance of service for the general health and wellbeing of the citizens of the Bathurst Region and the adjustment of these services to meet the changing needs.



WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), the peak body for the community and stakeholder engagement sector, describes community engagement as “an intentional process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders, and communities to shape the decisions or action of members of the community, stakeholders, or organisations in relation to a problem, opportunity, or outcome”.

For Council it is an opportunity to work with the community to inform the decision-making processes of the organisation. Council seeks to listen to the views, aspirations, issues and needs of the community and balance these with other influences such as budgetary and legislative constraints to make informed decisions.

The Community Engagement Strategy provides Council with the framework for how we seek the community’s input and how it is used in our decision making by the elected Councillors.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

To guide our community engagement practices, Council is guided by the following five principles.

1. To provide genuine support for meaningful and effective engagement – by recognising consultation is a valued part of strategic decision-making.
2. To engage before making decisions – Council will ensure the right level of consultation is applied in any given situation to provide the community with an opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process.
3. To provide feedback – Council will commit to providing feedback on the outcomes of its engagement and consider that feedback in its decision-making process.
4. Be representative – Council will access relevant demographic and social data to ensure we engage with the right people at the right time.
5. Don’t over consult – Council will access relevant research, databases and information as part of the engagement planning process to reduce the risk of wasting valuable resources, staff and community time.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND THE INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The Bathurst Regional Council Community Engagement Strategy has been developed in line with with the *Local Government Act 1993* – Section 406 Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) the IP&R framework. The IP&R framework describes the system of integrated planning for local government in NSW. The aim of the framework is to ensure that Councils:

- Integrate community priorities into council strategies and plans
- Support community and stakeholders to play an active role in shaping the future of the community
- Articulate the community's vision and priorities
- Maintain accountability and transparency by regular monitoring and reporting.

Under the IP&R framework, Bathurst Regional Council's Community Strategic Plan, Our Region Our Future must be reviewed every four years in line with local government elections. Under the *Local Government Act 1993*, Council must prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles for engagement with the local community.

An updated Community Engagement Strategy must be adopted by Council within three months of the election of the new Council, and the Strategy will guide Council's engagement in developing a new Community Strategic Plan for the new term of Council.

The Community Engagement Strategy relates to many activities undertaken by Council. However, legislative requirements and other council policies regulate the procedures and outcomes of some Council activities and decisions, limiting the opportunities for public input and the scope of community engagement

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

Council has adopted a separate Community Participation Plan (CPP) under the requirements of Division 2.6 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). The plan is available on Council's website <https://www.bathurst.nsw.gov.au/Council/Future-Plans-Budget/Public-Documents/Community-Participation-Plan>

The CPP sets out how Council will engage with the community in our work under the EP&A Act, including legislative reform, plan making and decisions on proposed developments.

The level and extent of community participation will vary depending on the community, the scope of the proposal under consideration and the potential impact of the decision.

The CPP sits alongside Council's engagement strategy and is referenced accordingly on planning matters governed by legislation.



AREA
3,818km²

84 SUBURBS

POPULATION
44,612

52,072 POPULATION BY 2041
(DPHI PROJECTION)

38 MEDIAN RESIDENT AGE

25.4%
RESIDENTS AGED UNDER 20

26.3% COUPLES WITH CHILDREN

3,861
LOCAL BUSINESSES

\$3bn
GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT



1815
AUSTRALIA'S FIRST EUROPEAN
INLAND SETTLEMENT

1,243,914
ANNUAL VISITORS

86.2%
OF WORKFORCE ARE
LOCAL RESIDENTS 2024

LARGEST EMPLOYER
**HEALTH CARE
AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE**

CENTRE OF EDUCATION
CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY
TAFE
5 HIGH SCHOOLS
18 PRIMARY SCHOOLS
2 SPECIAL SUPPORT SCHOOLS

MANUFACTURING SECTOR
THE LARGEST ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTOR

18,463

DWELLINGS

23

SPORTING FACILITIES

30

PUBLIC CARPARKS

APPROX. **147km**

CYCLEWAY & FOOTPATH

9

COUNCILLORS

16%

OF DWELLINGS ARE MEDIUM OR HIGH DENSITY

10

FITNESS STATIONS

28

PUBLIC E-VEHICLE CHARGERS

548

COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES

4 COUNCIL MUSEUMS

109

PLAYGROUNDS & PARKS

845kW

TOTAL CAPACITY OF COUNCIL'S SOLAR GENERATION

7.2% OF OUR POPULATION IDENTIFY AS ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

13

CEMETERIES

2

COUNCIL RUN CHILDCARE SERVICES

20

COUNCIL OWNED BUILDINGS WITH SOLAR POWER

280km

OF DRAINAGE PIPELINE

226

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN COUNCIL'S CHILDCARE SERVICES

102

GENERAL COMMUNITY PARKS

5 TOP LANGUAGES SPOKEN

ENGLISH | NEPALI | PUNJABI | TAGALOG | ARABIC

829km

SEALED ROAD PAVEMENT

19,074ha

OF LAND ZONED NATURE RESERVES, NATIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION

35,673 DOGS

358km

UNSEALED ROAD

11,474 CATS

MICROCHIPPED

WHO DO WE ENGAGE WITH?

Our Community

Identifying and understanding key stakeholders is vital to the community engagement process.

Stakeholders are people who will be impacted by or have an interest in a decision. Council aims to reach those who are relevant to the project as well as the broader community wherever possible.

We understand that some members of the community may find it challenging to participate using standard engagement methods and techniques. Council will continuously explore new ways to talk to our community and offer a variety of opportunities to cater for and include those individuals and groups.

In seeking a range of perspectives, our engagement process ensures that the community is informed about projects, plans and initiatives.

Our Stakeholders

Our stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- People who live in the Bathurst region
- Businesses and industries
- Community, sporting, cultural, volunteer and environmental groups
- Council reference groups and committees
- Schools and educational services
- Health and wellbeing services
- LGBTQIA+ community
- People with disability
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils, Elders and other representative bodies
- Neighbouring Councils and regional bodies
- Government agencies such as Transport for NSW, Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure
- Local Members of Parliament (State and Federal)
- Visitors to the Bathurst Region
- Local Media
- Our employees
- Bathurst Regional Youth Council





Inclusive Engagement

Council recognises that some people face barriers to participating. It is our responsibility to make the engagement process as accessible and inclusive as possible. Future engagement activities should include a focus on targeting traditionally 'hard to reach' members of our community. These groups are typically children and youth, aged and residents living with a disability, indigenous residents and other minority populations such as the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD).

Engagement methods should look to include targeted processes to ensure these groups can have input into engagement processes.

These may include:

- Working with local aged and disability service providers when engaging
- Working with local schools, pre-schools and youth bodies when engaging
- Work with indigenous health, service providers and community groups when engaging
- Promote the accessible features of Council's website/s including language translation and the Userway accessibility app.

When don't we consult?

There are some instances where the community and stakeholders may not be involved in decision-making processes. This may include operational matters where public input is not able to influence an activity or where Council is legally or contractually obligated to take certain action. It may also include matters where consultation or research has already occurred, and further engagement is not considered necessary. Despite this Council will keep the community informed wherever possible.

In designing and delivering community engagement, Council will ensure the selected process is fit for purpose and considers the level of impact of the project.

Where community feedback is sought, consultation is generally avoided during the traditional Christmas/New Year period from around 20 December to 10 January. Where consultation is unavoidable, additional time for lodging comments or providing feedback will be considered.

How does the community want to be engaged?

Our community has told us through our Community Surveys that they want to see Council decision-making reflecting community opinion and have opportunities to participate in Council decision-making.


Council has a dedicated online engagement portal, YourSay Bathurst, and also develops engagement activities including in person information and consultation sessions. Council continuously reviews these activities to ensure they reflect the community's needs and listen to feedback on how engagement should be undertaken.

Council will promote and raise awareness of its engagement activities via its social media channels, website and other communication tools.

Our engagement framework

Council is committed to delivering community engagement activities in line with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and the NSW Government's Social Justice Principles.

The IAP2 framework for engagement is considered a best practice approach. The IAP2 Public Participation spectrum is designed to help select the level of engagement in any community engagement process taking into account the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of concern in the decision being made. Any one community engagement process may have different levels of engagement during different stages of the project.

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 provide the public feedback on analysis, alternative 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 work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provided 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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Social Justice principles

The following social justice principles underpin Council's communication and engagement processes:

EQUITY Involving fairness in decision-making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need.

ACCESS Fair access to service, resources, and opportunity 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 will we engage with the community?

Engagement activities are tailored to individual projects and different levels of engagement will be appropriate at different times.

The following table provides an overview of what types of engagement reflect the various engagement levels identified in the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

IAP2 Spectrum Level	Communication Tool	What We Do
Inform	Website, social media and e-newsletters, advertisements, public notices, signs, letters, BRC News Bites (rates) newsletter, media releases	Information is provided on Council's website , the YourSay Bathurst website Social media platforms including Facebook , Instagram , LinkedIn , YouTube and e-newsletters This information could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting the community to participate in engagement, and how to make a comment or get involved • Describing the matter, project or issue • Describing how people can find out information • The timeframe for consultation.
	VMS boards, roadside signage, direct mail outs, letter box drops	Information is provided in localities impacted by a council project or activity. This information is likely to include dates and times for the activity or project to occur and contact details for further information.
	Civic Centre and/or Library	Information relating to key strategic public exhibitions can be accessed at the Civic Centre and Library.
	Council & Policy meetings	Occur on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month, starting at 6.00pm. The community can attend and listen or stream via our YouTube channel.
Consult and Inform	YourSay Bathurst	YourSay Bathurst is Council's online engagement platform where the community can provide feedback on a range of projects via a tools including surveys, polls, submissions.
	Community meetings and workshops	Meetings with community members and stakeholders to provide an opportunity to outline projects and activities and to gather feedback on aspects of a project.
	Public Forum	Community members can address the Council on items before Council meetings.
	Public exhibitions	The exhibition process seeks online or written community and stakeholder feedback on a plan, development application, policy, strategy or project.
	Surveys	These include the Community Survey usually undertaken every two years by an independent market research company, or surveys via our YourSay platform.
	Drop in sessions	Provide a face to face opportunity for the community to gather information and provide feedback on an issue, project or policy related decision.
	DA tracker	Council's DA (Development Application) tracker provides access to property, planning and development information.
Collaborate and Empower	Community & stakeholder reference groups	Groups of community and stakeholders that meet with staff, Councillors, or others to work through an issue, determine a decision for a project, policy or plan and provide advice.
	Local council elections	Voters in each local government area elect Councillors to their local council.

Closing the engagement loop

We want to ensure the feedback of people we engage with is considered when decisions are made. Once feedback has been considered, Council staff will recommend next steps or outcomes.

When an item has been placed on public exhibition or has been out for communication consultation, any report to Council will present the findings of the community engagement undertaken. The report will include a high-level summary of the engagement including

- What engagement and communication methods were used
- Statistics of participation and promotion
- Information about submissions/feedback received

This is usually reported back to Council and uploaded to Council's website.

Evaluation and measurement

To measure and evaluate the effectiveness of our engagement, we will assess:

- Participation levels in engagement activities, considering the nature of the project
- The quality of responses in terms of relevance to the project or program
- Assessment of relevant engagement methods appropriate to stakeholders

Council will also continue to monitor and report on:

- Community sentiment via our Community Survey
- Interactions with the Bathurst Regional Council website
- Interactions with our social media platforms
- Interactions with the YourSay Bathurst engagement portal
- E-newsletters subscribers for the Bathurst Regional Council newsletter
- Community participation in engagement activities

We will encourage our stakeholders to participate in providing feedback to Council during consultation activities.



BATHURST REGIONAL COUNCIL 

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