

# POLICY STATEMENT

**NUMBER:**

**TITLE:**

**Community Engagement Policy**

**SECTION AND POSITION:**

Department of Governance and Community Services  
Community Development Manager

**RELEVANT LEGISLATION:**

*Local Government Act 2009*  
*Local Government (Finance, Plans and Reporting) Regulation 2009*

**PURPOSE:**

To provide direction to Central Highlands Regional Council when undertaking community engagement and assist in decision making, policy changes and planning activities.

**SCOPE:**

This policy is a guide for conducting community engagement activities to ensure alignment with Council's required standards and the expectations of the community, where required by legislation or directed by Council.

**PREAMBLE:**

Central Highlands Regional Council endeavours to have meaningful engagement with the community it represents. Council will also listen to and value what residents have to say about issues which affect their lives.

While it is not possible to fully engage with the community on all issues and decisions, Council will ensure the community is as well informed as possible and has the opportunity to enhance Council's decision-making on key issues, plans and projects.

Council regards community engagement as the cornerstone of good governance and critical to effective planning and delivery of infrastructure and services to meet the needs and expectations of the community.

The Community Engagement Policy may only be changed by resolution of Council.

**DEFINITIONS:**

Council shall mean the Central Highlands Regional Council.

Community refers to people who live in, work in or visit the Central Highlands region.

Council defines community engagement as:

*Any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses that public input to make decisions (IAP2 2005)*

**Policy Statement: Community Engagement**

---

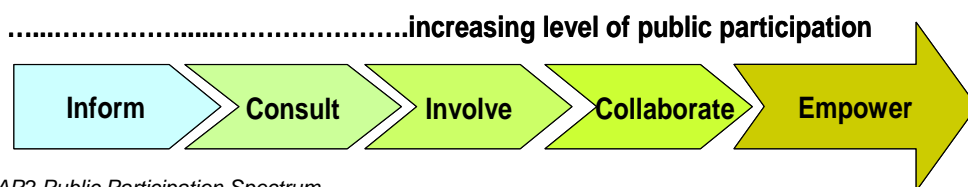
**POLICY:**

1. Community engagement activities undertaken by Council will be consistent, where practical, with the guiding principles from IAP2 (*International Association for Public Participation*), Queensland Government requirements, and within approved budgets and resources.

The IAP2 guiding principles are:

- 1. Inclusiveness** — More inclusive processes and practices will increase citizen access to government information and broaden involvement in government policy development, planning and decision making.
- 2. Reaching out** — New and more effective ways to involve citizens in planning and decision making processes will allow government to move beyond established networks to tap into the significant knowledge and expertise residing within communities.
- 3. Mutual respect** — Listening to and understanding the views, concerns and experiences of citizens will lead to better decisions and strengthened government–community relationships.
- 4. Integrity** — Open and accountable engagement practices and processes that genuinely inform decision making will increase community trust and confidence in government.
- 5. Affirming diversity** — Incorporating diverse opinions and perspectives into policy development, planning and decision making will help achieve effective and sustainable outcomes.
- 6. Adding value** — Government and citizens working productively together will add value in policy development and program and service planning.

2. Central Highlands Regional Council, where practical and appropriate, will adopt the framework and techniques for public participation as proposed by IAP2 for community engagement activities. IAP2 is internationally accredited and promotes best practice in the engagement of communities.



*IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*

The level of engagement will depend on the particular circumstances of the issue or project.

**2.1 Inform**

At inform level ‘one-way’ methods of engagement are used to provide information to the community. This information often explains "why" a decision has been made or the processes used for making a decision. Examples of informing are media releases, fact sheets, newsletters,

## Policy Statement: Community Engagement

---

websites and notification letters.

### 2.2 Consult

Consulting involves the exchange of information between Council and the community. At consult level 'two-way' methods of engagement are used to allow community members the opportunity to express their opinions on a particular issue or proposal.

Examples of consulting include surveys, focus groups, staffed public displays, on-line comments and public meetings.

### 2.3 Involve

At Involve level engagement requires Council to actively seek the involvement of the community as part of the planning and decision-making process.

Examples of involving the community include advisory committees, community workshops, on-line social media and deliberative polling.

### 2.4 Collaborate

Engagement at a collaborative level provides the community with a high level of involvement in Council's decision-making. This type of community engagement encourages community members to be involved in identifying solutions to local issues.

Examples of collaborative methods include community reference groups, joint ventures, community panels and forums.

### 2.5 Empower

Empowering places the final decision-making in the hands of the community.

Examples of empowering are citizen juries, ballots and delegated decision-making.

3. At a minimum, community engagement activities undertaken by Council will comply with the *Local Government Act (2009)* and all other relevant State and Federal government legislation.
4. Councillors and staff undertaking community engagement activities will refer to the following documents for guidance on objectives and proper procedures to adhere to:
  - (a) The Community Plan and Corporate Plan;
  - (b) Community Engagement Policy and Strategy; and
  - (c) Code of Conduct
5. Community engagement does not replace the decision-making functions of Council.
6. Community engagement will be coordinated and integrated in a consistent and diligent manner across all areas of Council.
7. The planning, implementation and reporting of community engagement activities must be conducted by staff in accordance with Council's community engagement policy and strategy.
8. Council is committed to 'closing the loop' by providing timely and relevant feedback to the community and/or key stakeholders, and will evaluate and

## **Policy Statement: Community Engagement**

---

review activities as part of its community engagement process.

9. All Council community engagement activities, including those conducted by external consultants, should be coordinated through Council's Community Development Unit, Department of Governance and Community Services.

**ADOPTED:** 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010

**AMENDED:**

**DUE FOR REVISION:** June 2011