

 <b>Central Highlands</b> Regional Council	<b>CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL POLICY</b>	
	Community Engagement Policy	<b>POLICY REF NO</b>  <i>CHRCP: 0081</i>

## 1.0 Policy Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy is consistent with the Local Government Act 2009 s4 (a) to ensure that local government is accountable, effective, efficient and sustainable; and Local Government Principles s4(2) which provide for:
- a) transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and
  - b) sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and
  - c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement, and
  - d) good governance of, and by, local government; and
  - e) ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees.

- 1.2 This policy supports council’s Corporate Plan 2022-2027 theme 3 “Community wellbeing” and associated key strategy 2 “Review methods and practices for community and stakeholder engagement”.

It also actively supports council’s corporate values of:

- Respect and Integrity (Building trust, teamwork, communication, and a shared understanding; Actively listening to our communities) and
- Accountability and Transparency (Equal opportunities, fair and open consultation, and communication).

- 1.3 This Policy outlines council's commitment to community engagement and why council undertakes engagement. The Policy is part of a whole of council Community Engagement System that includes five important documents:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Statement
- Community Engagement Framework
- Community Engagement Toolkit
- Community Engagement Strategic Action Plan

## 2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to guide council in its approach to community engagement practice.

2.2 Council demonstrates its commitment to engagement through membership to the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia and strives to align its engagement approach with best practice.

## 3.0 Scope

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This Policy guides all councillors, council employees, and consultants employed by council when engaging with the community and staff. This Policy applies to both internal and external engagement initiatives across all council functional areas.

Community engagement is generally a planned process undertaken by council and/or the community with the specific purpose of working with communities, organisations, and other stakeholders to support informed decision making or actions relating to an opportunity, problem or outcome.

Community engagement in a local government context is diverse due to the wide range of functions undertaken and can be both council-led and community-led. While policy cannot be imposed on community-led engagement, council's response to community-led engagement is within the scope of this policy.

#### **4.0 Council's engagement objectives**

- 4.1 Council's community engagement goal is to deliver high-quality engagement processes that contribute to council's decision making, advocacy and enhance council's relationships with community.
- 4.2 Council is committed to seeking input from stakeholders on matters that impact and interest them as well as the broader community. Community engagement does not replace, but rather informs, the decision-making function of council.
- 4.3 The purpose of conducting community engagement is to support council decision making that reflects the concerns and interests of residents, within approved budgets and resources.

#### **5.0 Community Engagement Principles**

5.1 Engagement commitment - Council is committed to community engagement processes. Council believes in the value of community engagement and has a genuine desire to hear community views.

5.2 Consistency in practice - Council will use the Community Engagement Framework to create consistency in practice of community engagement processes across the organisation to build trust and confidence in the community.

5.3 Purposeful engagement - All engagement processes must have a clear scope and purpose. Council will communicate the purpose of the engagement and how contributions will be used for the decision making or project implementation.

5.4 Integrity and transparency - Council will conduct open and accountable engagement processes that genuinely inform decision making and improves relationships with the community.

5.5 Inclusive – Council engagement processes will be inclusive and aim to connect with stakeholders relevant to the engagement, and wherever possible overcome barriers to participation. Council will provide a diversity of engagement approaches that provide genuine opportunities for members of the Central Highlands community to participate in matters that interest and affect them. Council will encourage involvement from a wide cross-section of the community, ensuring balanced input and using engagement processes that are accessible and inclusive.

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5.6 Respect - Council values and respects the diversity of views in the community. Council will listen and understand the views, concerns and experiences of all stakeholders.

5.7 Timely - Council commits to engaging the community at the earliest stages possible and keep them informed throughout the process.

5.8 Feedback - Council will provide feedback to the community on how the engagement process has influenced council decision making.

5.9 Continuous improvement - Council will evaluate engagement activities to improve Council's ongoing engagement practices.

## 6.0 Definitions

6.1 CEO is the Chief Executive Officer.

6.2 Community refers to residents of Central Highlands, ratepayer, people who work or use services in Central Highlands, business people and organisations and agencies who provide services to the community of Central Highlands.

6.3 Community engagement is generally a planned process undertaken by council and/or the community with the specific purpose of working with communities, organisations, and other stakeholders to support informed decision making or actions relating to an opportunity, problem or outcome.

6.4 Community-led engagement is characterised by evidence that the individual or groups have engaged fellow residents or group members and relevant stakeholders in relation to a proposal. They can take many forms including:

- Written proposals or submissions outside of an existing engagement process led by council
- Formal petitions
- Requests to meet with key staff where proposals are discussed and where these proposals are more than a specific service request for existing services identified in council.

6.5 Council-led engagement refers to community engagement processes that are undertaken by council employees and/or contractors who are working for council. Community engagement in a local government context is diverse due to the wide range of functions undertaken. Council-led community engagement can be:

- Legislatively required where projects or processes require council to engage
- Long term and ongoing community engagement processes with the community
- Simple or single project-based engagements
- Complex and involve long term strategy development
- Partnership based engagement processes.

6.6 Council refers to Central Highlands Regional Council.

6.7 Council Officer is a local government employee as defined under the Local Government Act 2009, also referred to as staff.

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6.8 Councillor is as defined under the Local Government Act 2009 and includes the mayor and deputy mayor of council.

6.9 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation dedicated to advancing the practice of public participation

6.10 Stakeholder is individuals, groups of individuals, organisations or political entities who are interested in or impacted by a council outcome or decision.

6.11 The Act refers to the Local Government Act 2009 (Qld) (as amended)

6.12 The Regulation refers to the Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld) (as amended)

<b>Strategic Link</b>	Corporate Plan 2022-27 Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan Refresh Local Government Act 2009 (Qld) Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld) Planning Act 2019 (Qld) International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Framework
<b>Category</b>	Community Development
<b>Lead Business Unit</b>	Connected Communities
<b>Public Consultation</b>	Yes
<b>Adoption Date</b>	25/10/2023
<b>New Review Date</b>	Biennially
<b>Document Number</b>	899232
<b>Record Keeping</b>	ECM, Vine and council website.
<b>Related Documents</b>	Community Engagement System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement Framework</li> <li>• Community Engagement Statement</li> <li>• Community Engagement Toolkit</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement Strategic Action Plan 2024-28</li> </ul> <p>Central Highlands 2022 Community Plan Refresh  Code of Conduct for Councillors Policy  Employee Code of Conduct Policy  Media Relations Policy  Social Media Policy</p>
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