



Shellharbour
CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



The background of the entire page is a monochromatic blue-tinted photograph. It depicts a person from the chest up, facing right. They have long, dark, curly hair and are wearing traditional Indigenous Australian body paint, including a large white spiral design on their left shoulder and chest, and white bands on their arms. They are holding a boomerang in their right hand. The overall mood is respectful and cultural.

Acknowledgement of Country

Shellharbour City Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Dharawal Country and recognises their continued connection to the land.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and the contribution they make to the life of this City.



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Our Community

POPULATION 2023

79,738

DIVERSITY



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population

4.7%



Overseas born

16.1%



Language spoken at home other than English

10%



Residents who are Australian citizens

90%



MEDIAN AGE
39

LARGEST AGE GROUP IN LGA
35 - 49

FAMILY STRUCTURE



Couples with children

32.2%



Couples without children

26.8%



One parent families

13.7%



Lone person household

20.8%



Group household

2.1%

AGE GROUPS



(0 to 11)
Babies, pre-school,
Primary schoolers

15.1%

(12 to 24)
Secondary schoolers,
Tertiary education and
independence

16.4%

(25 to 59)
Young workforce
Parents and homebuilders
Older workers & pre-retirees

44%

(60 to 85+)
Empty nesters & retirees
Seniors
Elderly aged

24.5%

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE
Due to disability



7.1%

QUALIFICATIONS



Vocational

28%



Bachelor or higher degree

13.6%



Advanced diploma or diploma

10%

EMPLOYMENT



Full time

52.1%

Part time

31.7%

Unemployed

4.3%

LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
23.1%



TOP 5 INDUSTRY SECTORS FOR LOCAL JOBS



Health Care & Social Assistance

20%



Retail Trade

14.9%



Construction

13.6%



Education & Training

11.9%



Accommodation & Food Services

9.2%

How we got here

Council has a long-standing commitment to engaging with the community on local and regional issues. This Strategy has been developed based on feedback and is designed to meet the current needs of our community and residents while acknowledging that the way people seek and consume information is constantly evolving.

TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS STRATEGY, WE HAVE:

ENGAGED ONLINE

"Let's Keep
Chatting"

HELD POP-UP INFO SESSIONS

connect with
community and
residents directly

REVIEWED FEEDBACK

from various
engagement
activities*

HELD WORKSHOPS

with Councillors and
Council staff for an
internal perspective

BENCHMARKED

our approach against
National best practice
models in Local
Government

These insights have shaped our approach, so the Strategy is responsive to the evolving needs of our community and promotes more effective engagement.

As Shellharbour continues to grow, so too does the way we communicate. This Strategy is designed to be flexible and adaptive, embracing new digital tools and platforms to engage with the community in creative and meaningful ways. By staying ahead of communication trends and responding to the needs of our residents, we aim to keep everyone informed and actively involved.

* Activities include Community Satisfaction Survey, Community Strategic Plan - Imagine Shellharbour



YOU TOLD US THAT COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT SHOULD:

BE ACCESSIBLE:

Make sure communication channels are easy for everyone to access.

BE INCLUSIVE:

Enable all members of our diverse community to access information and take part.

BE CONSISTENT:

Provide regular, reliable communication and consultation channels that the community knows about and can use.

Our community also told us they prefer a good mix of both online and in-person options for communication and engagement.

BE CLEAR AND EASY TO UNDERSTAND:

Use plain English and make it clear when and how people can share their views on projects and plans that affect them.

Our Framework

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

The table sets out the levels of engagement and influence for different decisions. They are not mutually exclusive and, in most cases, Council will use a combination of techniques to ensure the engagement process is successful. We aim to ensure that residents and stakeholders have access to information to understand what Council is doing and the decisions we make.

The NSW Government's Social Justice Directions Statement identifies four key principles underpinning social justice.

These are **EQUITY, ACCESS, PARTICIPATION and RIGHTS.**

These principles guide the planning and development of Council's engagement activities.

	inform	consult	involve	collaborate	empower
goal	To provide a balanced and objective information in a timely manner.	To obtain feedback on issues, alternatives and decisions.	To work with stakeholders to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making.	To place the final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders.
our role	We will keep you informed.	We will explore options by listening and acknowledging your feedback.	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decision made.	We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in the decisions as much as possible.	We will ensure that the information and tools are available for you to meaningfully participate
your role	Keep in touch.	Contribute ideas and feedback.	Participate in the engagement process by sharing ideas, concerns and aspirations.	Work together to develop solutions.	To collaborate with Council to implement agreed decision.
example tools	- Factsheets - Digital content	- Surveys - Public comment - Drop in sessions	- Workshops - Digital engagement	- Participatory decision making - Advisory Committee	- Toolkits - Fact sheets - Regular updates

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Equity	Access
There should be fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those in need. The planning processes should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances. The equity implications of proposed activities include the impact on community well-being, as well as who pays and who benefits.	All people should have fair access to economic resources, services and rights essential to improving their quality of life. All residents should be able to get to and use public facilities and services, regardless of their social and economic circumstances.
Participation	Rights
All people should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions that affect their lives. This involves a two-way flow of views and information, generally with a focus on decision making.	Equality of rights should be established and promoted. Opportunities should be provided for positive participation to accommodate linguistic, cultural and religious diversity within the local government area.

The **Decision-Making Wheel** places the **decision** at the centre, surrounded by key **impact factors** that influence the decision-making process.

The diagram highlights how these interconnected factors guide well-rounded, informed decision-making.



Legislative requirements

The Local Government Act (402A) requires councils to establish and implement a Community Engagement Strategy when developing its plans, policies, and programs, and when determining its activities - excluding routine administrative matters. This Strategy responds directly to those requirements by setting out how Council will undertake effective engagement with the local community.

This Strategy provides the framework for how Council intends to engage in the development of its Strategies and Plans. It will be reviewed inline with the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle.

A photograph of two women standing outdoors at what appears to be a community event or market. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored wide-brimmed hat, a blue and white striped button-down shirt over a white top, and is smiling while pointing towards the text box. The woman on the right is wearing a brown fedora-style hat, sunglasses, a white t-shirt, and a long denim skirt, also smiling. In the background, there are other people, parked cars, and a building under a large canopy tent.

HOW WE COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE

FACE TO FACE: Events, focus groups, workshops, drop in sessions, council meetings, information booths

DIRECT COMMUNICATION: Phone calls, letters, emails, e-newsletters, rates notices

PRINT & ADVERTISING: Posters, flyers, postcards, brochures, signage, TV and radio ads

ONLINE: Website, online engagement portal, surveys, social media, public exhibition, Council documents

MEDIA: Media releases, alerts and interviews



Our audiences

Council recognises that views gathered through conversations and engagement should be representative of a broad cross section of the community.

Where possible, Council is committed to ensuring open access through:

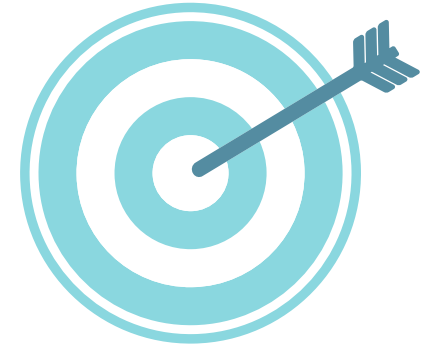
- Use of accessible venues
- Promotion of accessibility options
- Ensuring a range of engagement methods are used
- Provision of easy read materials or direct support to interpret documents

Our hard to reach audiences

In addition, we have identified some specific groups that may require additional considerations when communicating or undertaking engagement.



OUR GOALS



This strategy outlines the different service offerings and approaches we will take to ensure proactive and positive information sharing across all of our audiences.

The strategy is a five-year document, however, it will be reviewed annually to ensure the actions and goals remain relevant and contemporary in a rapidly changing environment.

The key goals that will guide us for the next five years are:

GOAL 1

Enhance Community Awareness

Increase the community's understanding of Council services, programs, and initiatives through effective communication channels. This goal will focus on improving visibility and accessibility of Council activities, so the community is well-informed.

GOAL 2

Foster Community Participation

Encourage active participation from residents in consultations and decision-making processes. By enhancing opportunities for community input, Council seeks to ensure local voices shape the future of the area.

GOAL 3

Build Trust and Transparency

Establish open and honest lines of communication to maintain trust between Council and the community. This goal aims to empower residents, so they feel confident in Council's actions and decisions, and information is communicated accurately and authentically.

GOAL 4

Support Councillors and Staff

Support Councillors and staff so that they are well-informed and equipped to communicate effectively. By providing the necessary resources and training, this goal aims to improve the consistency and clarity of internal and external communications.

GOAL 5

Promote Innovation and Engagement

Implement innovative communication strategies that leverage emerging digital platforms and engage the community in creative ways. The goal is to maintain flexibility in the face of changing communication trends and to model best practices in engagement.

OUR ACTIONS

OUR COMMUNITY
IS AT THE HEART
OF WHAT WE DO
AND WHAT WE
ARE TRYING TO
ACHIEVE.



LET'S CHAT

Community Engagement



Purpose

Create meaningful engagement opportunities that actively involve residents in shaping decisions that affect their local community. By encouraging participation, we aim to ensure local voices are heard and the community plays a key role in Council decision making. Council's engagement will help build a stronger, more connected community, where decisions are informed by the needs and perspectives of residents.

What we'll do:

How We Will Achieve This:

1. Provide regular engagement opportunities: We will organise a range of activities to encourage participation by our community and stakeholders so they can share their feedback on key issues and decisions that impact them.
2. Create accessible feedback channels: Provide a variety of engagement methods for audiences to participate at a time and in a way that suits them. This may include drop-in session, online engagement portal, community survey, community workshops, committees and public participation at Council Meetings.
3. Engage with diverse community groups: outreach to a broad segment of the community, including underrepresented groups, through targeted communication and engagement so that everyone's voice is heard.
4. Closing the loop: Keep residents informed about how their feedback has been considered and how it influences Council decisions and actions. By sharing the outcomes of consultations, residents see the impact of their participation, feel empowered and are encouraged to have continued involvement.

LET'S COMMUNICATE

Communications & Media



Purpose

Maintain clear, open, and transparent lines of communication between the Council and the community. By providing accurate, timely information about services, programs, and decisions, we aim to build trust and confidence. We believe a community that are well-informed are more engaged and have increased understanding of Council's activities and functions.

What we'll do:

How We Will Achieve This:

1. Maintain clear communication guidelines: Use consistent messaging and tone across all communication, that is transparent, clear and accurate.
2. Implement hybrid communication approach: We will adopt a proactive and strategic approach to ensure effective, far-reaching communications by balancing a mix of traditional and digital channels. This may include media releases, print advertising, letters, social media, websites, and e-newsletters, so that we reach diverse audiences through the most appropriate platforms for each.
3. Provide accurate and timely information: Deliver reliable, up-to-date information on services, events, and emerging issues to keep residents well-informed and engaged. By consistently being the trusted source of truth for Council news, we will build credibility and foster greater trust within the community.

LET'S PROMOTE Marketing



Purpose

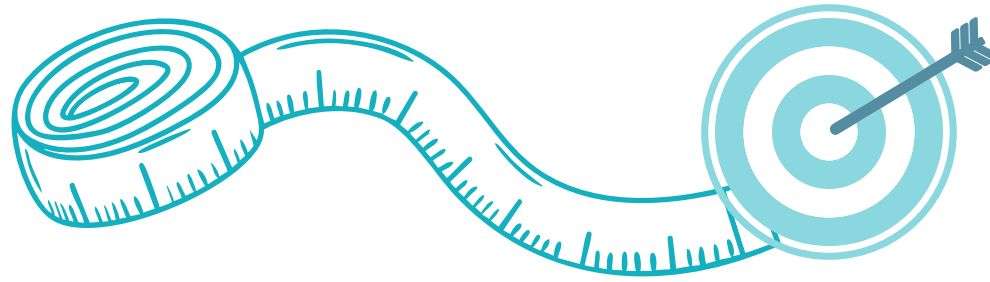
Promote a positive and relatable image of Council, showcasing the stories that highlight our City, our region and the work we do. Through creative, engaging, and informative marketing strategies, we aim to raise awareness of Council's services, events, initiatives, and key functions, strengthening our brand and fostering a deeper connection with the community.

What we'll do:

How We Will Achieve This:

1. Develop targeted campaigns: Create focused marketing campaigns that promote specific Council services, events, or initiatives, using clear messaging that is relatable and relevant to different community groups.
2. Utilise digital media channels: Produce a variety of digital content—such as videos, infographics, and social media posts—to promote Council's initiatives, projects and events. We will stay agile, adapting to emerging trends and evolving community needs to ensure our marketing remains relevant and engaging.
3. Strengthen visual identity: All marketing materials, whether online or print, maintain a consistent design and branding style to strengthen Council's image and brand recognition.
4. Measure and adapt: Regularly track the effectiveness of marketing efforts (e.g., social media engagement, event attendance, website traffic) and adapt strategies to maximise reach, engagement, and positive public perception.

How we will measure success



GOAL 1

Enhance Community Awareness

- Enhance website experience, measured by increase in unique visitors.
- Number of Shellharbour Snapshot (e-newsletter) that provide updates on key programs and services.
- Number of media releases shared.

GOAL 2

Foster Community Participation

- Increase subscribers to Let's Chat (online engagement portal).
- Number of contributions received on project.
- Number of face-to-face sessions.

GOAL 3

Build Trust and Transparency

- Increased number of followers across social media channels.
- Increased subscribers to Shellharbour Snapshot (e-newsletter).
- Improved percentage of positive sentiment received on media.
- Increase website traffic.

GOAL 4

Support Councillors and Staff

- Number of opportunities for Mayor voice (Mayor column, Mayoral messages, video, speeches, media release quotes, social media).
- Number of Councillor Portal updates relating to Communications and Engagement Strategy.
- Number of internal requests delivered (Communications Request Form).
- Number of trained staff in community engagement.

GOAL 5

Promote Innovation and Engagement

- Increased engagement on visual narratives measured through social analytics.
- Number of new videos produced.
- Number of views, shares, and interactions with new digital content measured monthly.



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ON SOCIALS**



Enquiries and feedback should be made to:
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