



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, concentric circle design on their left shoulder and upper arm. In the background, another person is partially visible, holding a boomerang. 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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Endorsed:

Review Date:



# 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide a balanced and objective information in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To obtain feedback on issues, alternatives and decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work with stakeholders to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To place the final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders.</li> </ul>
our role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will keep you informed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will explore options by listening and acknowledging your feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decision made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in the decisions as much as possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure that the information and tools are available for you to meaningfully participate</li> </ul>
your role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep in touch.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute ideas and feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in the engagement process by sharing ideas, concerns and aspirations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work together to develop solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To collaborate with Council to implement agreed decision.</li> </ul>
example tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factsheets</li> <li>Digital content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys</li> <li>Public comment</li> <li>Drop in sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshops</li> <li>Digital engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participatory decision making</li> <li>Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toolkits</li> <li>Fact sheets</li> <li>Regular updates</li> </ul>

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 clear sky.

## 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

A decorative graphic consisting of a thin blue line that starts on the left, loops into two speech bubble shapes, and then continues as a wavy line towards the right.



# 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:

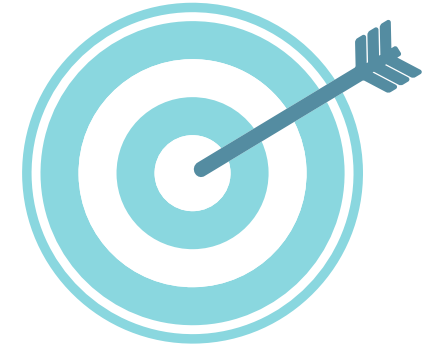
- Use of accessible venues
- Promotion of accessibility options
- Ensuring a range of engagement methods are used
- Provision of easy read materials or direct support to interpret documents

## 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

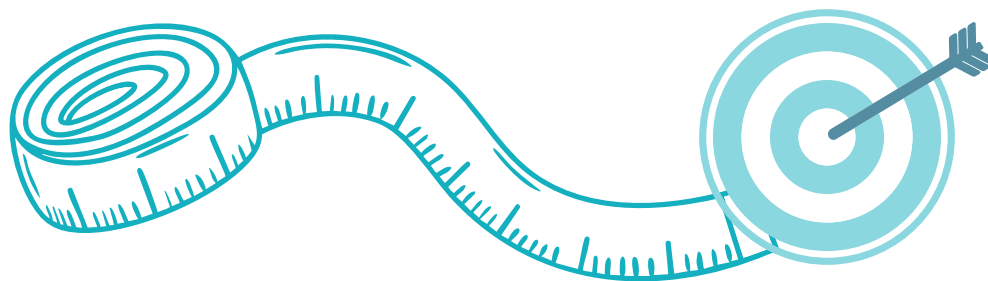
Promote a positive and relatable image of Council, showcasing the stories that highlight our City, our region and the work we do. Through creative, engaging, and informative marketing strategies, we aim to raise awareness of Council's services, events, initiatives, and key functions, strengthening our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



# Community Participation Plan

This section outlines the community's role in planning and development decisions. The Community Participation Plan (CPP) adheres to the engagement principles outlined in this strategy and complies with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), which requires public participation in strategy development, plan-making, and decision-making processes. The level of engagement is determined by the scope and potential impact of the proposal, with the aim of making it easier and more transparent for the community to participate in planning matters.

Council adheres to the minimum requirements of the EP&A Act, including 28-day public exhibition periods for Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), Development Control Plans (DCPs), and Development Contributions Plans. Council may extend these periods or use additional methods if needed.

Development applications lodged for assessment will be notified based on their scale. Applications considered to be relatively minor in nature and not detrimentally affect adjoining or adjacent property owners are not notified, where notification or advertising of planning matters is required, written notice is issued with a minimum of 14 days to respond.

Submissions are considered before decisions are made. Larger developments are reviewed by the Joint Regional Planning Panel or State government, following statutory consultation.

## How to participate in planning matters

### There are several ways to get involved:

- Make a formal submission on a proposal.
- Visit Council's Administration Centre, website, or libraries to access public exhibition documents.

### Submissions

Constructive, well-supported submissions provide valuable input into the planning process. While optional, feedback is encouraged. Submissions must:

- Be in writing
- Include the Application Number and Property Address
- Include the name, address and contact details of the person making the submission
- State reasons for support or objection, focusing on planning issues like:
  - o Ground levels, views, privacy, overshadowing, and solar access
  - o Amenity impacts (e.g., noise, traffic, light)
  - o Visual aspects, heritage, natural hazards, and stormwater

Submissions will be acknowledged in writing. If strategic plans are adopted, submitters will be notified of the meeting date. A summary of submissions will be included in the Council report, with personal details withheld, although they may be accessed under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

Any petitions made to Council in relation to the planning functions we perform will need to be in accordance with Council's Petitions and Submissions Policy and associated Petitions procedure.

Council will not consider any submissions that are received through an external website. Submissions must be made directly to Council as outlined above.

## Strategic Planning and Participation

Strategic planning sets out the desired outcomes for the city and the methods to achieve them. The type of plan being developed will determine the level and method of community participation. Some participation requirements are statutory, as outlined in Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act. The table below outlines the minimum exhibition timeframes for strategic planning functions.

### Minimum Exhibition Timeframes

The table below outlines the minimum exhibition timeframes for planning functions as required by Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act. All timeframes are in calendar days. These may be updated based on legislative changes or community feedback.

Document Type	Exhibition Period
Draft Community Participation Plans	28 days
Draft Local Strategic Planning Statements	28 days
Planning Proposals for Local Environmental Plans (LEPs)	10 to 30 days (or as specified in Gateway Determination)
Draft Development Control Plans	28 days
Draft Contribution Plans or Planning Agreements	28 days

## Statutory Planning and Participation

Depending on the nature of the proposal, Council may choose the following options for community participation:

1. No notification: When a proposal is considered by Council to be minor in nature and to not detrimentally affect adjoining or adjacent property owners.
2. Notification of planning matters: When a proposal is deemed to require notification, Council will write to the property owners and occupiers within 25 metres of each side of the property boundary, subject to the development proposal. The 25 metres is measured from the perimeter of the existing lot boundary. Written notice will be in the form of a letter to the property owners. Usually a minimum of 14 days is given to respond.
3. Advertising (Public Exhibition) of planning matters: Advertising or Public Exhibition is where, Council will write to the property owners and occupiers within 50 metres of each side of the property boundary subject to the development proposal, Council publically advises of the development application by placing a sign at the property of the proposed development. Usually a minimum of 14 days is given to respond.

## Notification Requirements

Development	No notification	Written Notification	Advertising
Development involving a variation to a development standard contained within an Environmental Planning Instrument		◆	
Agriculture		◆	
Air transport facilities			◆
Airstrips	◆		
Amusement Centres		◆	
Ancillary Development	◆		
Animal boarding or training establishments		◆	
Attached dwellings		◆	
Boarding houses		◆	
Boat building and repair facilities		◆	
Boat launching ramps		◆	
Boat sheds	◆		
Camping grounds			◆
Car parks		◆	
Caravan Parks			◆
Cemeteries			◆
Charter and tourism boating facilities		◆	
Child care centres		◆	
Commercial premises		◆	
Community facilities		◆	
Correctional centres			◆
Crematoriums			◆
Dual Occupancies		◆	
Dual Occupancies located within greenfield urban release areas	◆		
Dwelling Houses – with complying setbacks	◆		
Dwelling Houses – with non-complying setbacks including retaining walls and outbuildings non-compliant with maximum floor space area		◆	



Development	No notification	Written Notification	Advertising
Early education and care facilities			◆
Earthworks (minor)	◆		
Earthworks (major)		◆	
Eco-tourist facilities		◆	
Educational establishments			◆
Electricity generating works	◆		
Emergency services facilities		◆	
Environmental Protection works	◆		
Entertainment facilities			◆
Environment facilities	◆		
Exhibition Homes		◆	
Exhibition Villages		◆	
Farm buildings	◆		
Fit-out proposals	◆		
Flood mitigation works		◆	
Freight transport facilities			◆
Function centres			◆
General Industry		◆	
Group homes		◆	
Health services facilities		◆	
Heavy industrial storage establishments	◆		
Heavy Industry			◆
Helipads	◆		
Highway service centres		◆	
Home-based child centres		◆	
Home businesses	◆		
Home industries		◆	
Hostels		◆	
Industrial retail outlets	◆		

Development	No notification	Written Notification	Advertising
Industrial training facilities	◆		
Information and education facility		◆	
Jetties		◆	
Kiosks		◆	
Light industry		◆	
Marinas			◆
Mixed use developments			◆
Moorings	◆		
Mooring pens	◆		
Mortuaries			◆
Multi dwelling housing		◆	
Passenger transport facilities			◆
Places of public worship			◆
Public administration buildings		◆	
Public utility undertakings	◆		
Recreation areas		◆	
Recreation facilities (indoor)		◆	
Recreation facilities (major)			◆
Recreation facilities (outdoor)		◆	
Registered clubs		◆	
Research stations		◆	
Residential flat buildings			◆
Respite day care centres		◆	
Restricted premises			◆
Rural worker's dwellings		◆	
Secondary dwelling		◆	
Semi-detached dwelling		◆	
Seniors housing			◆
Service stations		◆	

Development	No notification	Written Notification	Advertising
Secondary dwelling		◆	
Semi-detached dwelling		◆	
Seniors housing			◆
Service stations		◆	
Sewerage systems		◆	
Sex services premises			◆
Shop-top housing			◆
Signage	◆		
Storage premises	◆		
Strata or Stratum Subdivision	◆		
Subdivision of land – 4 lots or less		◆	
Subdivision of land – 5 or more lots			◆
Telecommunications facilities			◆
Tourist and visitor accommodation			◆
Transport depots		◆	
Truck depots		◆	
Vehicle repair stations		◆	
Veterinary hospitals		◆	
Warehouse or distribution centre	◆		
Waste or resource management facility			◆
Water recreation structures		◆	
Water supply systems		◆	
Wharf or boating facilities		◆	
Wholesale supplies	◆		

Note: The above development types are based on the development types contained within the Shellharbour Local Environmental Plan 2013. Confirmation of the development type and its need to be notified will be confirmed when an application is lodged with Council.



The notification requirements for the submission of revised plans and modifications to development applications made under 4.55 and 4.56 of the EP&A Act will be undertaken, if in the opinion of Council, such notification is required. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis. 14 days will be provided.

If the original application was required to be notified or advertised, Council will notify all those properties notified as part of the original development application or modification application and all those who lodged submissions in relation to the original development application or modification application.

These timeframes ensure adequate community participation, enabling Council to make informed decisions while meeting statutory requirements. For more information on the notification process, refer to Shellharbour City Council policies and the EP&A Act.

Note: The period from 20 December to 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the public exhibition period calculation.



**FOLLOW US  
ON SOCIALS**



Enquiries and feedback should be made to:  
The Chief Executive Officer  
Shellharbour City Council  
*Dharawal Country*  
Locked Bag 155  
Shellharbour City Centre NSW 2529

Telephone: (02) 4221 6111  
Facsimile: (02) 4221 6016  
E-mail: [council@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@shellharbour.nsw.gov.au)

**[www.shellharbour.nsw.gov.au](http://www.shellharbour.nsw.gov.au)**