



8/005 Community Engagement Policy

1.0 Objective

This policy outlines the Town's commitment to and approach to community and stakeholder engagement.

The policy guides the delivery of community and stakeholder engagement across the organisation to inform decision-making, build relationships and strengthen community outcomes.

The objectives of the policy are to:

- Build a shared understanding of Council's commitment to community and stakeholder engagement;
- Support quality governance and decision making through the use of quality and timely engagement with stakeholders and the community;
- Raise awareness of Council decisions and community aspirations surrounding programs, projects and initiatives.

2.0 Policy statement

Community engagement speaks to the methods and processes used to involve the community in decision making that affect their lives. Good governance is based on a belief that those impacted by or interested in a decision may have important contributions to make in a decision-making process.

The Town's decision-making processes are influenced by several factors such as financial, technical, legal, environmental and social. As such, different methods and levels of influence will be assigned to different engagement processes. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation will be used to outline to the public what that level of influence is.

When there is a difference between the outputs of an engagement process and endorsed Elected

Member's decisions, the reasons for this difference will be clearly communicated.

The following guides the design, delivery, reporting and evaluation of the Town's engagement initiatives.

3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and Elected Members of the Town of Port Hedland. It establishes a strategic framework to guide decision-making processes, support the delivery of community facilities, programs and services, and fulfill the commitments outlined in the Strategic Community Plan. The policy reflects the Town's core values of unity, quality and integrity.



4.0 Policy Background

Under the Local Government Act 1995, local governments must engage with the community on various matters. This includes the planning and review of the Strategic Community Plan, the development and review of local laws, the advertisement of differential rates, and other planning-related issues.

Planning Matters

Consultation on planning matters, such as development applications and scheme amendments, is governed by the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 and the Town’s local planning policy for public consultation on planning proposals.

Best Practice

Engagement will be conducted in alignment with the Town’s Community Engagement Policy, ensuring inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. The Town is committed to tailoring its engagement approach to the scope and scale of the project, enabling the community’s voice to be heard and reflected in the decision-making process.

5.0 Engagement Principles

For the Town of Port Hedland, quality engagement is best characterised by process that adhere to the following principles:

Purposeful	We deliver timely, well-structured engagement that support the community and Town to achieve a shared outcome.
Respectful	We deliver engagement that fosters quality relationships and builds shared understanding.
Effective	We consider the time, budget and representation required to deliver robust engagement outcomes.
Transparent	We support participants with timely, easy to understand information at all stages of the process.

6.0 Why we engage

This Framework recognises the Council's commitment to engaging in a manner that;

- Ensures transparency and follows a clear, logical process.
- Adapts to individual cases, considering contextual factors that impact projects or decisions.
- Aligns with community and the Town’s expectations for honest and respectful interaction.



- Informs decision-making to secure financially, socially, and environmentally sound outcomes.
- Embraces diverse perspectives to enrich understanding.
- Cultivates and sustains constructive relationships with the community and stakeholders.

Additionally, this framework aligns to the Local Government Act 1995, Section 1.3 (2) also points to engagement leading to;

- Better decision making by local governments
- Greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments
- Greater accountability of local governments to their communities
- More efficient and effective local government.

6.0 When to engage

- The Town of Port Hedland is committed to ensuring that our community has meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Examples on when engagement should occur are:
 - Projects or matters have the potential to significantly impact the community's quality of life, environment, or future development.
 - Developing or revising policies, strategies, or plans that guide decision making or set the direction for the Town's activities.
 - Introducing new services or making substantial changes to existing services that affect how the community interacts with the Town.
 - Decisions on planning, land use, or infrastructure projects that may alter the physical environment, property values, or community spaces.
 - Legislative or Regulatory Changes: Proposals involving changes to local laws, by-laws, or regulations that impact residents or stakeholders.
 - Determining priorities for funding, capital works, or resource allocation that directly affect the community.
 - Responding to concerns raised by the community or addressing emerging issues that require collective input to shape outcomes.
 - Situations where collaboration with the community or stakeholders can improve decision-making or create shared ownership of outcomes.



7.0 Who we engage

The Town is made up of a diverse population that each contribute to the social, economic and environmental fabric of the community. This includes rate payers, residents, students, workforce and business owners, as well as stakeholders such as community groups, businesses, organisations and other government entities.

Our goal is to engage in a way that is inclusive of all members of the community, regardless of age, gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, education, ability and other diverse aspects of identity.

Engagement is not a one-size fits all process, and we will engage with different people in different way, based on their need and the context and impact of the project we are engaging on. We acknowledge that engagement is also not just externally focused. We will also work across different parts of our organisation with the same principles of engagement that we would apply to the wider community.

We recognise that the needs of specific population groups are diverse. When planning engagement activities, we will consider how the engagement process can accommodate the needs of specific population groups including:

- Traditional Owners and First Nation communities
- Older Adults
- Young People
- People with Disabilities
- People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds.

Unpaid participation includes general community input through surveys, forums and open consultations.

Paid contributions may apply when individuals are engaged for their cultural knowledge, lived experience, or advisory roles such as participating in co-design workshops, providing cultural guidance and other specific information sought by the Town.

8.0 Process

The Town acknowledges that a uniform approach to engagement methodologies does not align with best practice. Guided by the principles of substantive equality, the Town is committed to proactively capturing diverse voices and lived experiences by using a range of methodologies.

The Community Engagement Strategy provides a comprehensive framework to outline the process and guide the organisation in the application of engagement activities. This strategy is adaptable, enabling the Town to adopt tailored approaches where necessary, considering the nature of the engagement, the required level and depth of engagement, and the resources available.



A table of definitions as they relate to the Policy.

Community	The term 'community' is used broadly and can be defined as a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, beliefs, experiences, or traditions. This may include residents, ratepayers, business owners/operators, workforce, visitors, government agencies, and users of Towns services, local community groups, associations and special interest groups.
Consultation	A type of engagement activity that seeks input on a specific matter at a point in time, usually where additional information or representation is required to that already achieved through ongoing engagement.
Elected Members	Sometimes referred to as Councillors, members of the community who have been selected by the wider community to oversee the strategic direction of the Local Government Authority.
Engagement	<p>The process of using diverse methods to actively involve community and stakeholder voices in shaping decisions that impact or interest them.</p> <p>This approach ensures meaningful participation, fosters collaboration, and strengthens connections between decision-makers and the community.</p>
Partnership	A type of engagement activity that produces formal agreements between stakeholders to work together.
Town Officers	Refers to the employees of the Town.
Traditional Owners	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have unique relationships to the land, sea and waterways. Their ownership and stewardship of Country needs to be acknowledged. Australian law recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights and interests in the land and sea under their traditional laws and customs. Please note, the Town operates on Kariyarra land however the local government area also extends to Ngarla and Nyamal country.
Stakeholder	These groups may have a vested interest due to the project's potential to bring about changes or affect lifestyle, social, environmental, or economic conditions.



Directorate	Community Services
Relevant legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
Delegated authority	Nil
Business unit	Community Services – Youth & Community Development

<i>Governance to complete this section</i>			
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