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## BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL POLICY



### **Community Consultation**

STATUS:	DRAFT
COUNCIL MEETING DATE:	16 June 2009
MEETING MINUTE:	
TRIM REF.:	09/076332
ISSUED BY:	Executive Services
ENQUIRIES:	Communications Officer

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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocols and to provide guidelines and tools to assist staff in the undertaking and management of community consultation and participation. The aim of effective consultation and participatory democracy is to facilitate citizen participation in Council's planning and decision-making.

### OBJECTIVES

- Ensure community views are considered in council decisions;
- Ensure that community consultation is relevant and appropriately innovative, including the use on-line community consultation, social and digital media, where appropriate, to ensure broad community participation in matters of significance;
- Ensure that community consultation is coordinated and integrated in a consistent manner across Council;
- Ensure meaningful community engagement in consultation;
- Establish and maintain partnerships between Council and community;
- Build a network of community contacts;
- Minimise burden on community representation;
- Provide requirements for project management of community consultations; and
- Provide a toolkit for Council staff to undertake community consultation.

### BACKGROUND / DEFINITIONS

Council considers consultation as a central principle in sound planning and decision making. Council broadly defines community consultation as a process or processes implemented by Council to facilitate discussion and communication between the Council, the community of the City of Blue Mountains and the directly affected stakeholders in the planning, determination and evaluation of policy, programs and services provided to the Blue Mountains community.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Blue Mountains City Council actively consults with its community in a consistent and professional manner at all times and in accordance with the criteria set out in the Community Consultation Matrix.

### **Principles of Community Consultation**

The purpose of these principles is to assist the Council to make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and stakeholders. Blue Mountains City Council considers that community consultation and participation:

- Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process;
- Includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision;
- Promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers;

- Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision (considering the Disability & Discrimination Act and Council's Access & Equity Policy);
- Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
- Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
- Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

\* Principles adapted from the International Association of Public participation (IAP<sup>2</sup>) Core Values for Public Participation.

## PROCEDURES

Mandatory consultation is required by Legislation and Regulations and is set out in the Local Government Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Council will ensure that all legal requirements are met.

The Communications Officer should be advised of all community consultation and engagement activities proposed by Council staff. The Communications Officer will liaise with staff to advise on the most appropriate method of consultation and the use of the Community Consultation Matrix and Community Consultation Toolkit.

### **Community Consultation Matrix**

The Community Consultation Matrix is a framework that aims to guide staff on when and how they should consult with the community. The Matrix is relevant to all staff who have dealings with the community. A Communications Plan should be part of any project being undertaken by Council staff, including appropriate methods and timeframe for consultation.

The type and level of consultation may vary between activities and projects and the level of consultation may be more intense and detailed depending on the needs of particular groups or a community within the LGA, the nature of the project/proposal and level of impact of that project/proposal. The matrix provides the minimum levels that should be considered when planning activities and projects.

### **Community Consultation Toolkit**

The purpose of the Community Consultation Toolkit is to provide Council staff with practical guidance on how to undertake different types of community consultation. It outlines the tasks that should be undertaken and provides suggested approaches, including more innovative approaches that encourage community involvement. The protocols for different types of consultation are outlined in the Toolkit.

### **Blue Mountains City Council Meeting Kit**

The Meeting Kit has been prepared to assist all staff likely to be involved in, coordinate or chair a range of meetings, in achieving better meeting practices through providing information, guidance and templates for use in meetings.

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION & DOCUMENTS

Local Government Act 2003  
 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979  
 Personal Information and Privacy Act 1998  
 BMCC Strategic Communications Plan 2007  
 BMCC Meeting Kit

## ATTACHED

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION MATRIX  
 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION TOOLKIT  
 BMCC MEETING KIT 2007