



Edward  
River  
COUNCIL



# COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023 - 2025



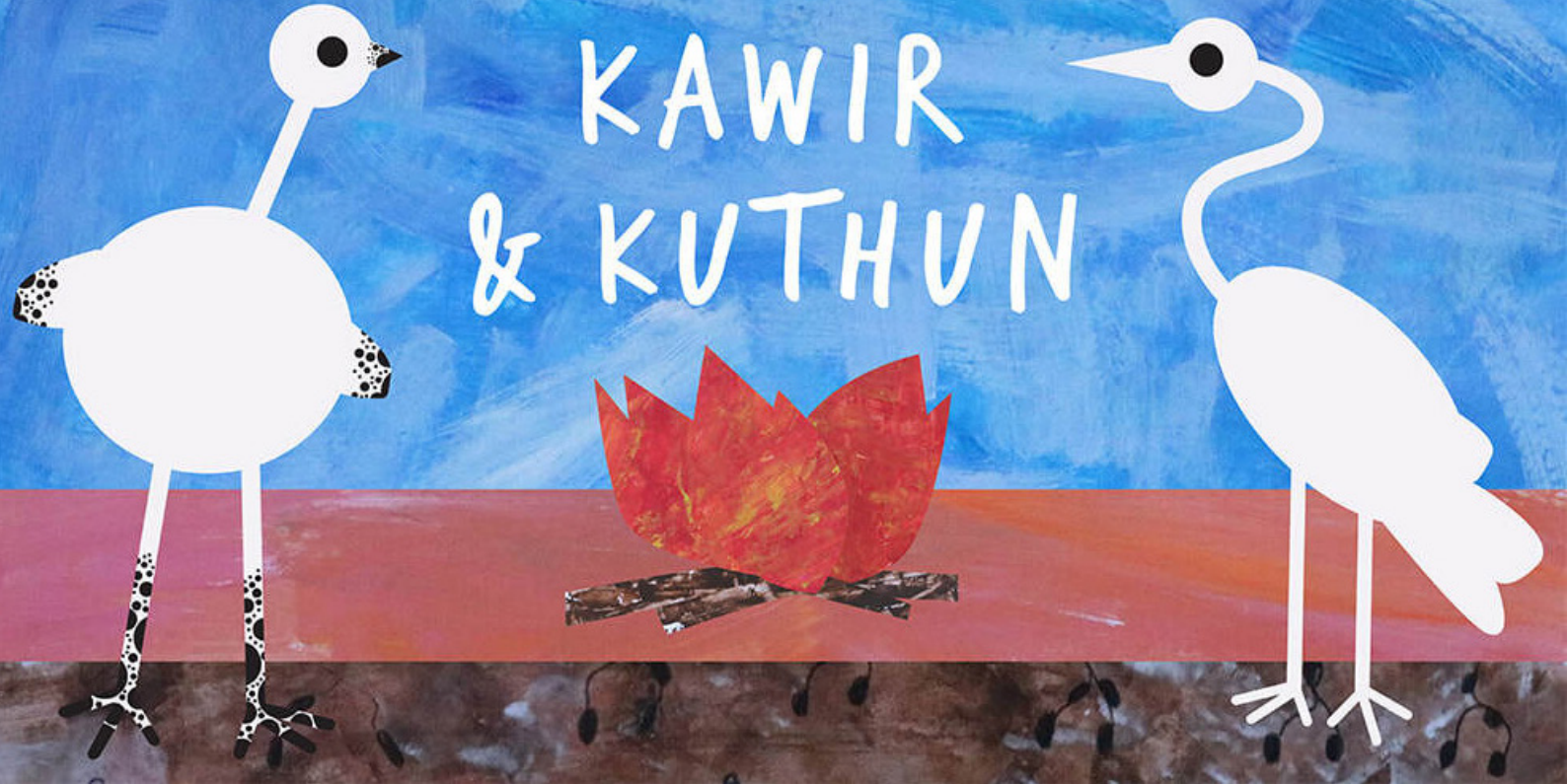


Image credit: Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Edward River Council acknowledges and embraces the Traditional Owners of the Lands within the ERC area – the Wamba Wamba/Perrepa Perrepa Peoples – and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. The Edward River Council also recognises the diversity of different cultures within our community and their contribution.



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# INTRODUCTION

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is essential that communities have a say in decisions that shape their future, and that they help determine the way Council delivers its services to the community. Effective community engagement is a process where communities can access relevant information and provide feedback to Council through methods they are comfortable with.

We understand that when our community is informed and has an opportunity to have a say on decisions that may affect them we achieve better outcomes for the community as a whole. This Communications and Community Engagement Strategy (CCES) forms part of an integrated framework guiding our communication and engagement activities.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The values expressed in this Strategy are consistent with those of our community as reflected in the Edward River [Community Strategic Plan](#) and Council's [Community Participation Plan](#).

For Council staff and elected officials, the Strategy acts as a guide for engagement and the delivery of timely and transparent communications. And for our community, it outlines the standard by which we will be held accountable.

This Strategy is informed by and meets the requirements of the following legislation:

- Local Government Act 1993
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- NSW Information Commissioner's Charter for Public Participation 2018
- Crown Land Management Act 2016
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

## WHY IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Edward River Council recognises the importance of excellent communication and engagement with its most important stakeholder: community. For decisions to best meet community needs, it is essential that all community members know what is happening and understand how they may be affected. It is also vital for community members to have the opportunity to provide feedback for consideration in the decision-making process.

Council is committed to positive and effective communication and engagement with its community stakeholders. As part of this commitment, this strategy sets out the key principles that guide how we share information and seek and respond to feedback.

We're listening. Following a broad consultation with the community, councillors, and staff we've heard that Council's communication and engagement approach is not as effective as it could be.

We hear you and we're acting. The approach outlined in this Strategy reflects this feedback and is a demonstration of Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

We are striving to find better ways to keep everyone well-informed. We are striving to have better conversations with our community. We are striving to build strong relationships.

It is our goal to foster mutual trust and respect with all community members, so that we can achieve better community outcomes.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

Community Participation Plans (CPP) are a requirement under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Endorsed in November 2019, the Edward River Council [Community Participation Plan](#) makes community participation in land-use planning matters easier and clearer.

The CPP identifies how and when Council will inform, engage and consult with the community on a variety of land-use planning functions.

The CPP applies only to the Strategic Land-Use Planning and Development Assessment functions of Council and excludes State Significant Development which is managed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

For ease of reference, the Edward River Council [Community Participation Plan](#) is included as an Appendix to this Strategy.

## DEFINITIONS

**Communications** is how we connect with our stakeholders. It is sharing the right message at the right time to inform our community.


Source: NSW Government, All-Of-Government Communications Framework

**Community engagement** is a planned process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape the decisions or actions of the members of the community, stakeholders or organisation in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome.

Source: NSW Government, All-Of-Government Communications Framework







*"The most important thing council can do is talk to the locals – front-on and straight-up. The community also needs to help council out. We all have a role to play."  
- Simon, Wanganella*



# OUR COMMUNITY

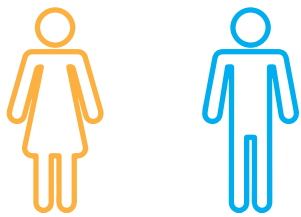
To ensure we plan our communications and engagement activities appropriately, it's important to understand what our local Edward River community looks like.

bring this vision to life, we know the composition of our community is going to change over time.

Below is a snapshot of our community in 2021, according to the Census of Population and Housing (Australian Bureau of Statistics). It reminds us to consider and use a variety of methods to ensure we engage effectively with all of our community.

## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

We share a vision with our community for our region to grow and thrive. As we work together to



**51%** Female  
**49%** Male

Traditional custodians  
**Wamba Wamba  
and Perrepa Perrepa  
people**

**5%**  
of our population is  
Aboriginal and/or Torres  
Straight Islander

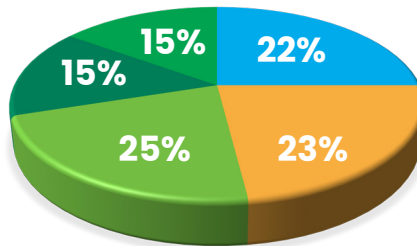


**13%**  
provided unpaid assistance  
to a person with a disability,  
health condition, old age.

Median age  
**46**

ABS estimated resident  
population 2021

**8,500**



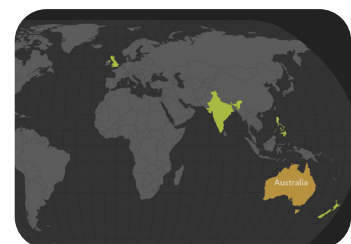
- 65 years or older
- 19 years or younger
- 35-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 20-34 years

## Top 5 countries of birth

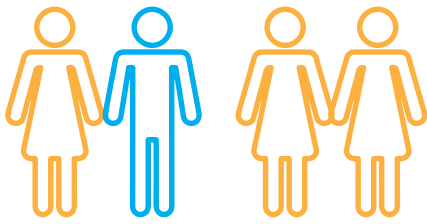


**26%**  
Born Overseas

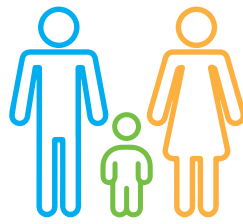
1. Australia
2. England
3. New Zealand
4. India
5. Philippines



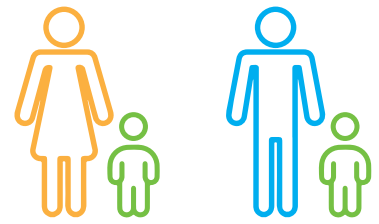
## FAMILIES



**49%**  
Couples

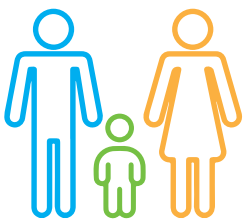


**36%**  
Couples with children



**14%**  
Single Parent

## HOUSEHOLDS



**64%**  
Family

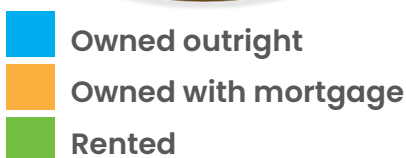
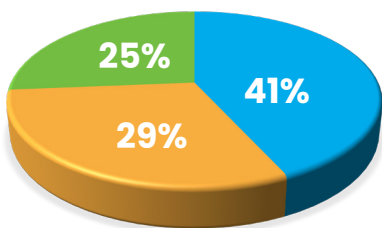


**2%**  
Group Home



**33%**  
One person

## DWELLING TYPES



**90%**  
separate house



**8%**  
semi-detached,  
town house etc



**2%**  
apartment or  
other







**90%+**

More than 90% of the Australian population have a smart phone



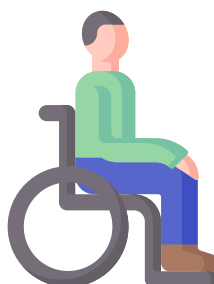
**72%**

of residents have internet access from a dwelling



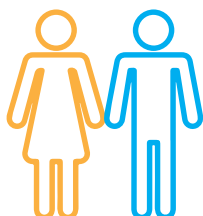
**35.1%**

completed Year 12



**7.2%**

people with a disability



**34.1%**

not in workforce



**58.8%**

working full time



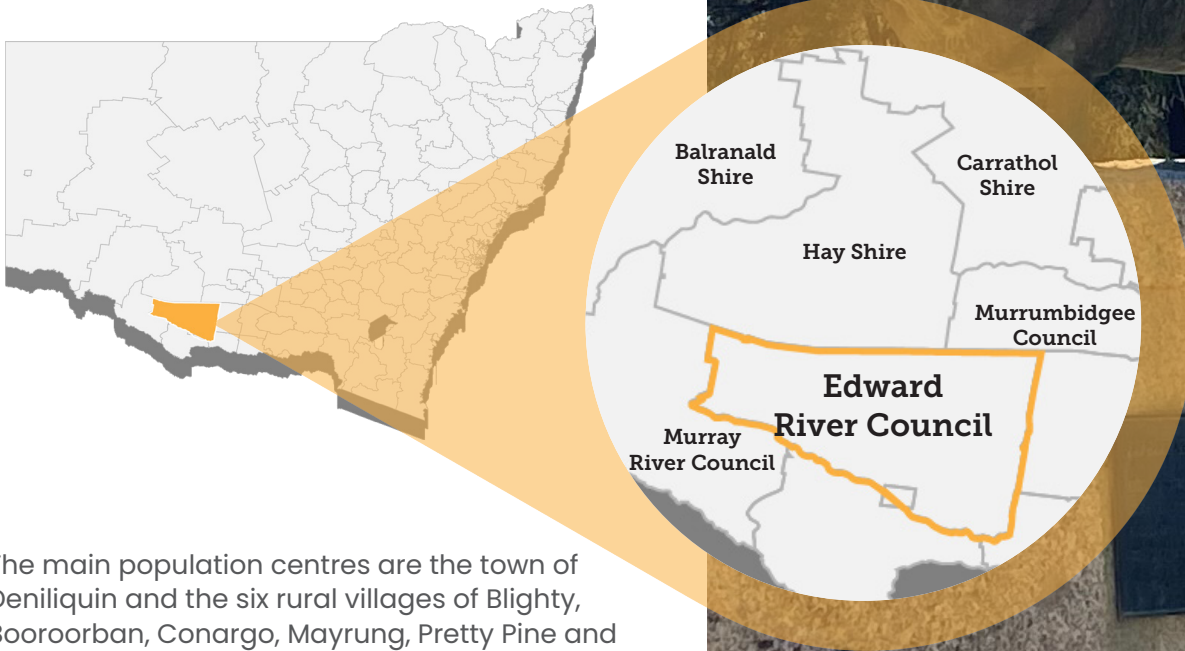
**31.5%**

working part time

## TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The Edward River Local Government Area (LGA) is located in the Riverina Murray Region of south-western New South Wales near the border with Victoria.

Edward River LGA covers an area of nearly 9,000 square kilometres and is home to approximately 9,000 permanent residents. A challenge for Council's communications and engagement is to ensure we provide opportunities for all of our residents, no matter where they are across the LGA, to be engaged and receive information in a fair and equitable way.



The main population centres are the town of Deniliquin and the six rural villages of Blighty, Booororban, Conargo, Mayrung, Pretty Pine and Wanganella.

Towns and villages	Population (Source: ABS Census data, 2021)
Deniliquin	7,432
Blighty	192
Booororban	36
Conargo	117
Mayrung	171
Pretty Pine	59
Wanganella	61



# OUR STAKEHOLDERS

It is vital that we identify, understand and engage with stakeholders that are affected by, or have an interest in decisions made by Council. Council communicates and engages with many individuals, groups and organisations to ensure we hear a range of views and consider these in the decision-making process.

Our stakeholders include:









# PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In all that it does, Council’s work is governed by the four social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights. In this Strategy, the social justice principles are supported by other principles that have been developed through community input. When we asked you what was important about communication and engagement you told us it should:



## Be accessible

Make channels and information easy to use and understand.



## Be timely

Provide information and seek feedback with ample time to act.



## Be targeted

Ensure all relevant community stakeholders are consulted.



## Be acted upon

Community feedback should genuinely inform outcomes.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

Our approach reflects the principles that establish supportive environments for everyone – addressing barriers to communication and engagement that may exist.



# OUR STRATEGY

## HOW WE ENGAGED WITH YOU TO DEVELOP THIS STRATEGY

Our approach was to hear from our community about how we deliver communication and engagement – what currently works well, where there are opportunities for improvement, and how you prefer to be engaged by and receive communications from Council.

To ensure we heard from a broad cross-section of our community, we conducted pop-up activities at the Peppin Heritage Centre and Deni Wanderers soccer match day. We attended Blighty netball and AFL training evening sessions and distributed a fact sheet inviting feedback. We invited stakeholders who regularly interact with Council to a stakeholder workshop and spoke to others on the phone. We also listened to our councillors and staff.

In addition, we conducted an online survey which was promoted on Facebook, distributed paper surveys at engagement activities, conducted telephone interviews and targeted interviews with First Nations representatives and other key community groups, and posted on Facebook to let people know about our engagement activities and how to get involved. We created an information sheet, created an engagement page on the Edward River Council website, and set up display boards in public areas.

We heard from many community stakeholders, and their ideas, priorities, concerns and feedback has been considered in the development of this Strategy.

## WHAT WE HEARD

### Communication Methods

- Approximately half of those we spoke to preferred direct communication (via customer service or a call to Council) and approximately half expressed a preference for digital communication, (via Council's website and social media).
- The community acknowledged that comments on social media posts can be unhelpful on occasions.

### Customer Service

- Positive feedback was received about the face-to-face customer service provided by Council
- People appreciate being able to talk to someone directly about their issues.

### Responsiveness

- In some instance people felt that if they provide feedback it may not be listened to by Council.

### Timing

- The community stressed the importance of receiving information with enough time to consider it, participate and give feedback before a decision is made.

### Willingness to Participate

- Community members expressed a willingness to be involved in communication and engagement activities if the method/activity aligns with their availability and lifestyle.





## OUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT VISION

*We actively communicate and engage in a way that shares our stories, listens to our community, informs our future, and improves the wellbeing of the people who live in the Edward River Council region.*

### THIS STRATEGY

As the closest level of government connected to the community, we have a unique opportunity to communicate and engage with our local residents and other community members. Council delivers over 40 Council services, with approximately 120 staff across the organisation. We're also the link between our community and other levels of government, advocating for your priorities.

Edward River Council has prepared this Strategy to guide all of its communication and engagement activities with the ultimate aim of enhancing community outcomes.

This Strategy outlines Council's commitment to inform and involve all community members. It details the main elements of our approach to share information, seek feedback, and work together.

The successful implementation of this Strategy will help Council to effectively communicate and proactively act on feedback it receives. In doing so, it underpins our ability to deliver quality services and infrastructure to the community we serve. The Strategy will support a consistent approach to all our communications and engagement activities.



## DECISION MAKING

The role of Council is to make decisions that have benefits for the community as a whole.

Our community provides meaningful input to Council's decision-making in many forms, including surveys, formal submissions, advisory group recommendations, complaints and compliments, customer enquiries, and through interactions with staff and elected officials. This feedback is considered when Council makes decisions.

We understand that there are often a range of views on any particular issue. Council will always listen to all views, but cannot act on every desire expressed by the community. We must act to benefit the whole community within available resources. We acknowledge that not every decision made by Council will please everyone.

There will also be occasions where Council must make a decision with limited community input. For example, this may be because the decision is largely determined by legislation, or because an urgent decision must be made to address an immediate risk.

## OUR COMMITMENT

Edward River Council commits to regularly communicating with, seeking input from, and involving all relevant community stakeholders in decisions that directly impact them.

### **We are committed to:**

Enabling all community members to have a voice to Council

- Truly understanding community needs and priorities
- Making information easy to access and understand
- Giving meaningful consideration to all feedback
- Continually improving.

We will do this by:

- Being proactive and responsive
- Promoting equitable participation
- Conducting stakeholder research
- Targeting relevant stakeholders
- Using community-preferred communications channels and engagement tools
- Explaining our decisions
- Honestly appraising our own performance.





# ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

## WHEN WE WILL ENGAGE

Community engagement takes place in many ways - from a quick online survey to a series of community workshops.

Council commits to identifying circumstances where engagement should be undertaken, and also acknowledges that sometimes engagement will be initiated by the community. Examples of when we will engage include when there is a change proposed to our services, a need to update or develop Council plans and policies, or in planning for new community infrastructure.

Council may seek input and feedback from the community at various stages in a project. The specific timing will depend upon the context, relevant legislation, and best practice. In many cases legislation sets out minimum requirements for receiving public feedback.

## HOW WE WILL ENGAGE

Council understands that the size of our Local Government Area (LGA) can be a barrier to engagement.

When we plan engagement, we will tailor activities to ensure everyone can access information and provide feedback in a variety of ways. Council commits to creating opportunities for face-to-face and online engagement where possible and appropriate.

We know digital engagement isn't always suitable for everyone, especially in areas that can't access high-speed internet and for some people in our community. This will be front of mind when we plan engagement, and we understand that in some cases more traditional methods of communication, such as a letter or a notice in the newspaper, work best.

Council will provide our community with sufficient time to consider the information provided and have their say. We will also allow sufficient time to consider all feedback we receive in the final decision-making process.

We are keen to use creativity and innovation wherever possible to more effectively communicate and engage with communities. We also commit to developing communications and engagement tools that provide for standardised and consistent processes.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

The community can expect Council to follow these steps when it delivers engagement activities:



### **Describe what is being proposed in clear, easy-to-understand terms**

We will make what is being proposed clear, and describe potential benefits or impacts of the plan, policy, project or initiative. We will also clearly articulate key dates and how the community can receive information and provide feedback.



### **Identify relevant stakeholders**

Once the project is defined, the next step for Council staff is to identify who in the community may be interested in or affected by the project. In some cases this may be a specific group of stakeholders, while in other instances the whole Edward River community may have a stake in the project.



### **Choose the most appropriate communication methods**

Once the project is defined and stakeholders identified, Council will carefully consider the best and most appropriate ways to reach the community and identified stakeholders. Sharing information may be as simple as an addressed letter, a social media post or website update. Methods for receiving feedback are detailed in the following section and may include community workshops, focus groups, surveys, online feedback or a range of other engagement activities. For complex projects, or where it is unclear what the best method of communication may be, we will ask identified stakeholders how they would like to be engaged.



### **Provide accurate, easy-to-understand and consistent information**

As part of the engagement process, Council will provide the community with accurate information that is easy to understand. Messaging from staff and elected officials will be clear and consistent. This may include fact sheets, answers to frequently asked questions, discussion papers or short videos.



### **Seek and listen to feedback**

Council commits to actively listening to feedback, understanding perspectives across the community and recording the feedback received.



### **Consider our response**

Council will collate, analyse and identify how engagement outcomes will be used to make decisions.



### **Closing the loop**

We commit to, wherever practical, letting the community know what we have heard and how that feedback has informed decisions.



## METHODS OF COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Council tailors the way it shares information and invites participation to best match the initiative and the needs of community.

Engagement on land-use planning functions is specifically outlined in the Edward River Council Community Participation Plan and is included in an Appendix to this Strategy.

For other services, functions and infrastructure delivered by Council we will regularly use the following communication methods detailed in the table below. The table also identifies where these methods align with the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

It should be noted that the IAP2 Spectrum includes “Empower” as a level of community engagement. However, under the Local Government Act 1993, the only decision-making power that is placed in the hands of the public is the ability to elect Council Members every four years.

At Council, our approach aligned to the IAP2 Spectrum is as follows:

LEVEL	GOAL	APPROACH	METHODS
Inform	One way communication providing balanced and objective information to help you understand what is going to happen or has happened	We will share information about a decision or direction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website information</li> <li>Advertisements in local media</li> <li>Letters to residents, ratepayers and other stakeholders</li> <li>Brochures/fact sheets</li> <li>Information displays</li> <li>Flyer in rates notices</li> <li>Banners in key locations</li> <li>Social media posts</li> </ul>
Consult	Two-way communications to obtain public feedback about ideas on rationale, alternatives and proposals to inform decision making.	We will explore options, gain feedback and an understanding of your preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online feedback form and emails</li> <li>Meetings by invitation</li> <li>Reference groups</li> <li>Surveys/market research</li> <li>Public feedback/ Submissions</li> <li>Public &amp; online forums</li> <li>Drop-in sessions</li> <li>Face-to-face interviews with stakeholders</li> <li>Village discussions</li> </ul>
Involve	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to decision making.	Your ideas and issues will shape the final decision or recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council committees</li> <li>Facilitated workshops</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>
Collaborate	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions.	Your recommendations will be included in the final decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advisory or reference groups</li> <li>Committees &amp; panels</li> <li>Focus groups</li> </ul>

## ENGAGING IN PERSON

Engagement or participation is not only about having your say, it is also about listening to others to understand their point of view. In-person engagement activities allow an opportunity for this two-way discussion. Some of the in-person opportunities we may use include:

- Community workshops and stakeholder meetings and information sessions, to enable the community to understand and be understood by others when sharing their views
- Public forums allow community members to address Councillors on items for consideration at a Council meeting
- Committees provide a meeting forum for community group representatives to raise issues relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Direct contact, either in person or over the phone, between Council officials and community members and groups on specific projects and plans

## ENGAGING ONLINE

Online communication and engagement can allow people who may otherwise be excluded from in-person engagement activities to participate.

- Council's website provides information to the public on Council projects and services and includes online surveys and other feedback mechanisms from time to time
- Social media channels are an opportunity to keep the community up to date and provides community access opportunities to learn more about Council matters
- Council's dedicated email at [haveyoursay@edwardriver.nsw.gov.au](mailto:haveyoursay@edwardriver.nsw.gov.au)

## MORE TRADITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Our community is still interested in more traditional methods of engagement, which include engaging in person – outlined above – as well as:

- Direct mail or letterbox drops to residents and groups
- Pop-up stalls at frequently visited locations
- Onsite or physical displays and signage at events or key locations
- Advertisements and Community News in our local newspaper
- Advertisements, community announcements and interviews on radio or television

## ENGAGING DURING EMERGENCIES

Over time our region has been affected by floods, fires, extreme weather and pandemic restrictions. When there is an emergency it is vital we look out for each other and share accurate and timely information to make sure everyone stays safe and know how to access support.

When there is an emergency, Council will work with local emergency services and the community to share information. In all cases, emergency services will be the lead authority to ensure accurate advice and consistent messages are provided to our community.

## HOW WE RESPOND TO FEEDBACK

We will ensure the community feedback we receive is collated and provided for consideration during decision-making processes.

When a draft plan, policy or program proposal is placed on public exhibition or is the subject of a community engagement activity, the report to Council recommending a decision will include a summary of the feedback received, and may include:

- Engagement and communication methods used
- Participation rates and engagement data
- Information about submissions/feedback received, and Council's response to that feedback.

Individual submissions received may be provided as an attachment to a report to Council. Every effort will be made to de-identify personal information included in submissions that are published in a Council business paper.

## EVALUATION AND MEASUREMENT

To measure and evaluate the effectiveness of our engagement, we will assess:

- Measurable participation levels in engagement activities.
- The methods used and if they were appropriate and relevant to the stakeholders.
- If the responses were relevant to the plan or project.



- Verbal and written feedback from the community on the effectiveness of the engagement activities used, and adequacy of the material and information to give informed feedback.
- Achievement of the engagement aims in the Community Engagement Strategy.
- How we reached a representative cross-section of affected stakeholder or the community generally.

These evaluation results will be used to continually improve our engagement methods and inform future engagement and communications activities.

This Strategy will be reviewed as part of the review of the Community Strategic Plan around the time of each local government election, or as required in the event of legislative or other significant changes that require a review of Council's engagement or communications approach.

Evaluation is outlined more fully in the Measuring Success chapter, below.



**We want to hear from and talk with all community members.**

**We must encourage, empower and enable everyone to participate.**





# MEASURING SUCCESS

Successful engagement will mean our community feels listened to, and that we act on the feedback we receive.

Community engagement is not a one-size fits all concept. Many factors influence the approach Council will take. What works well in one situation may not work well in another.

Success also depends on the context. For some initiatives, success may be receiving a large number of submissions that highlight community concerns. While on others, success may be conducting rich, detailed conversations with a few community members.

In all situations, Council's most important measure of success is that all community members related to the specific initiative feel like they know what is happening; that they have been listened to; that they have had opportunities to influence/inform outcomes. Where the community can't influence outcomes Council will clearly explain why.

It is important that the results of community engagement are reported back to the community including any decisions made by Council. Reporting back and closing the feedback loop will demonstrate that community feedback is acted on.

Council will undertake an evaluation for each identified engagement process.

Some ways Council will evaluate the success of community engagement activities are:

- Rates of community participation in engagement activities (e.g. number of unique participants, number of surveys completed, number of attendees at an event)
- Appropriateness of engagement methods and techniques used (e.g. though participant evaluation surveys to confirm they got from the process their expected experience)
- Demographic analysis of participation in engagement activities to ensure we are hearing from a representative cross-section of the community
- Quality and range of feedback received through the consultation process

Council will report back on all its engagement activities and their associated outcomes through their website, social media pages and other publications. The six-monthly Delivery Program progress report and council's Annual Report will also be utilised to highlight engagement activities and their outcomes.

## KEEPING TRACK

As required by the Local Government Act 1993, Council will use the existing Integrated Planning and Reporting framework (IP&R) framework to plan, monitor and report on the implementation and effectiveness of this Strategy.

The next review of the Communication and Community Engagement Strategy will be undertaken in late 2024 and every four years thereafter to align with local government elections and the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle.

Regular reviews will ensure that the Strategy aligns to contemporary practice and information available about the communication needs and engagement preferences of the community.



# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

[\* TIMEFRAMES TO BE CONFIRMED]

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We will plan and deliver community engagement that is accessible, timely, targeted and meaningful, building participation and trust in Council decision-making.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Objective 1: The principles of IAP2 are embedded into our organisational culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake targeted training for staff who have a community engagement role</li> </ul>	2024-25
Objective 2: Systems and processes exist in Council that support good community engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an internal process for registering projects where community engagement is undertaken</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a Community Engagement Policy that makes clear when community engagement must be undertaken</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a checklist of actions to be completed on all projects identified as requiring community engagement</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a Stakeholder Register to enable quick and effective information provision about engagement activities</li> </ul>	2024-25
Objective 3: Engagement tools are available that support staff to undertake good community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Council's website and explore options to improve ease of use and access to engagement information</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop community engagement toolkit for use by staff in engagement activities</li> </ul>	2023-24

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: COMMUNICATION

We will deliver transparent communication that keeps our community informed.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Objective 1: Create systems and processes that support strategic and effective communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an annual calendar of strategic Integrated Planning and Reporting key dates to assist with internal and external messaging and forward planning</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an corporate image library to assist with accessible and attractive communication materials</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an accessible and easy to use tool for staff to input communication material</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide key messages summaries to support elected members on decisions of high interest</li> </ul>	2023-24
Objective 2: Communicate consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email members on Council's stakeholder register to inform of upcoming activities</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver weekly internal updates to all staff from the CEO to ensure consistent messaging from across the organisation to the community about Council activities</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host monthly Toolbox meetings with all staff led by the CEO to communicate decisions and other outcomes following each Council Meeting</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide social media training for stakeholders identified in the Social Media Policy</li> </ul>	2024-25
Objective 3: Communicate effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design communication that's easy to understand and accessible to all</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise our website as the core communication channel and continue to invest in its growth and improvement</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review current practices for communication channels (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn) and determine content strategy and service levels</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a strong social media profile on Facebook and LinkedIn to increase awareness of Council services and opportunities for engagement</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure communication is a standing item on the Leadership Team agenda</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine training needs and plan for delivery within budget</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build Council's identity and brand through consistent visual communication</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop key communication reporting metrics</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure, evaluate and report on all communication activities on a monthly basis to the Leadership Team</li> </ul>	2023-24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and internal communications plan</li> </ul>	2023-24	



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: MEDIA AND ADVERTISING

We will build trust and reputation through proactive, consistent and trustworthy information that reflects the priorities of our community.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Objective 1: Build and maintain strong relationships with media to facilitate informed reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work across the organisation to identify newsworthy stories and work with media outlets on opportunities</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote Edward River Council and our local communities with positive and proactive media</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond consistently to media enquiries to manage expectations around news deadlines</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor, evaluate and report on all media and public relations activity on a monthly basis to the Leadership Team</li> </ul>	2023-24
Objective 2: Deliver appropriate advertising content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review current advertising spend for effectiveness and return on investment</li> </ul>	2023-24
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek opportunities for councillors or Executive to speak at corporate, community and networking events that provide opportunities to promote Council, its initiatives and our local communities</li> </ul>	2024-25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work in partnership with RAMJO and other local and regional organisations to advocate for Council and community priorities</li> </ul>	2024-25



# APPENDIX 1

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

<https://www.edwardriver.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/draft-community-participation-plan.pdf>



# APPENDIX 2

## PUBLIC EXHIBITION AND MINIMUM CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

LEVEL OF IMPACT	TYPES OF PROJECTS	WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM COUNCIL
<p>Level 1 – LGA wide impact or high community interest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Strategy Plan and other Integrated Planning and Reporting documents</li> <li>• Annual Operational Plan and Budget</li> <li>• Policies, Frameworks and Strategies with community impacts</li> <li>• Plans of Management</li> <li>• Open space concept plans</li> <li>• Masterplans</li> <li>• Major infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Major changes to an LGA wide Council service</li> <li>• Major changes to Council infrastructure or facilities</li> <li>• Changes to environmental policy or planning (Review of Environmental Factors, Environmental Impact Statements)</li> <li>• Major changes to a road or transport corridor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 28 days public exhibition of proposed changes (policies, strategies, plans with community impact)</li> <li>• Use of a variety of engagement techniques (as outlined in this Strategy) to provide opportunities for the community to access information and provide feedback</li> <li>• All relevant information to be accessible on Council’s website, and promoted through social media channels</li> <li>• Where resources allow, opportunities for both online and in-person community engagement</li> <li>• We will allow enough time to plan and carry out engagement</li> <li>• We will provide avenues for the community to ask questions and we will provide responses to help inform the community</li> <li>• We will promote opportunities for feedback about LGA and high interest issues through a variety of channels including print media, email, social media and signage (where appropriate)</li> </ul>
<p>Level 2 – LGA wide relevance with low impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updates to Council corporate and governance policies with community impacts</li> <li>• Minor changes to a Council service</li> <li>• Minor upgrades to LGA wide significant infrastructure (e.g playground, sports field)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of a variety of engagement techniques (as outlined in this Strategy) to provide opportunities for the community to access information and provide feedback</li> <li>• All relevant information to be accessible on Council’s website, and promoted through social media channels</li> <li>• We will allow enough time to plan and carry out engagement</li> <li>• Direct communication with existing users of a service or facility who will be impacted by email, letter or other notification</li> </ul>

LEVEL OF IMPACT	TYPES OF PROJECTS	WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM COUNCIL
Level 3 – Local impact with high interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place plans or other plans that specifically focus on towns and villages</li> <li>Significant changes to a Council run local service or program</li> <li>Significant changes to Council infrastructure in local villages (e.g removal, upgrade or relocation of a playground)</li> <li>Changes, upgrades or closure of local roads or transport routes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum of 28 days public exhibition of proposed changes</li> <li>Use of a variety of engagement techniques (as outlined in this Strategy) to provide opportunities for the community to access information and provide feedback</li> <li>Community notification, letter or email to all potentially and significantly impacted residents</li> <li>Where relevant, direct communication with existing users of a service or facility who will be impacted by email, letter or notification</li> <li>All relevant information to be accessible on Council's website, and promoted through social media channels</li> <li>Where resources allow, opportunities for both online and in-person community engagement</li> <li>We will allow enough time to plan and carry out engagement</li> <li>We will provide avenues for the community to ask questions and we will provide responses to help inform the community</li> </ul>
Level 4 – Local impact with low impact or interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open space infrastructure repairs or maintenance</li> <li>Minor road maintenance</li> <li>Installation, upgrades or maintenance of footpaths</li> <li>Minor traffic or parking change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community notification, letter or email to nearby residents and businesses who will be directly impacted</li> <li>We will erect signage and notices where appropriate</li> <li>Information on Council's website where appropriate</li> <li>Social media posts with notices and updates</li> </ul>

<b>Title</b>	Communications And Community Engagement Strategy 2023 - 2025		
<b>ECM Doc Set ID</b>	273120		
<b>Date Originally Adopted</b>	17.10.2023		
<b>Council Minute No.</b>	2023/1017/12.7		
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager Community & Economy		
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Modified By</b>	<b>Modifications Made</b>	<b>Date version adopted</b>
Version 1	Dana McNally	5.10.23	17.10.2023

# GET IN TOUCH

We welcome your thoughts on the way we approach communication and engagement. The more feedback we receive the more we can meet the needs of the community we serve. If you have any comments, on any matter – large or small – we would like to hear it. Please contact us any time using the details below.



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