



Community Engagement Framework Policy



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1.Introduction

Inner West Council, formed on 12 May 2016 through the amalgamation of Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville Councils, is committed to delivering effective, efficient services that meet the expectations and needs of the community. Council recognises that local knowledge, ideas and feedback from the community are essential to ensure Council's decision-making improves community wellbeing and long-term sustainability.

Community engagement is the process by which the community participates in and influences Council's decision-making.

What is the purpose of the Community Engagement Framework?

The Community Engagement Framework guides how Council will engage so that a broad range of perspectives are sought and the community has a strong voice in Council's decision-making. The Framework is based on a set of principles and recognises that engagement is a planned practice which should be tailored to particular circumstances, taking into account factors such as complexity, risk, significance, sensitivity, timing or opportunity.

The Framework is applicable to the array of engagement processes that shape programs, services and infrastructure provided by Council, and plans that guide Council's work. The Framework enables Council to engage with the community in a strategic, ongoing, flexible and locally appropriate way.

Engaging with the community is one of the guiding principles for councils under the Local Government Act 1993 (section 8A) and is an important part of local democracy. Some engagement processes are already prescribed by legislation and Council's practice will always meet these minimum requirements.

Council will regularly review and update the Framework as required so that it remains current and complies with any amendments to legislation and innovations in practice.

What are the benefits of effective engagement?

Good community engagement is the basis for understanding decisions, sharing perspectives, improving outcomes and building trust between Council, the community, and other partners. Effective engagement will:

- ensure community needs and expectations are understood and reflected in the decisions and actions of Council
- result in better, more sustainable decisions
- build trust and improve accountability through transparency of decision-making
- value local knowledge and foster local problem-solving
- improve understanding of Council's planning, prioritising and resourcing
- identify critical issues and opportunities early
- optimise use of limited resources and maximise efficient resource allocation.

How was the Community Engagement Framework developed?

Community engagement was a high priority at each of the three former Councils that amalgamated to form Inner West Council. Excellent practice was demonstrated through a variety of methods that ensured a strong community voice in decision-making by the Councils. This legacy will be continued and strengthened at Inner West Council.

The development of Inner West Council's Community Engagement Framework was informed by engagement with staff and the Local Representation Advisory Committee (former Councillors); and the engagement frameworks of the three former Councils.

- The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Framework considered best practice internationally and within Australia, underpinned the three former Councils' Frameworks and forms the foundation of the Inner West Council Draft Community Engagement Framework.

The Draft Framework was on public exhibition for four weeks from Friday 28 April 2017 to Sunday 28 May 2017.

Input from the community, Council's Interim Strategic Reference Groups and staff informed the final version.

The Community Engagement Framework was adopted by Council on 27 June 2017.

2.Local Democracy

What is local democracy?

The system of local government in New South Wales as set out in the Local Government Act provides for governed bodies of councils that are democratically elected.

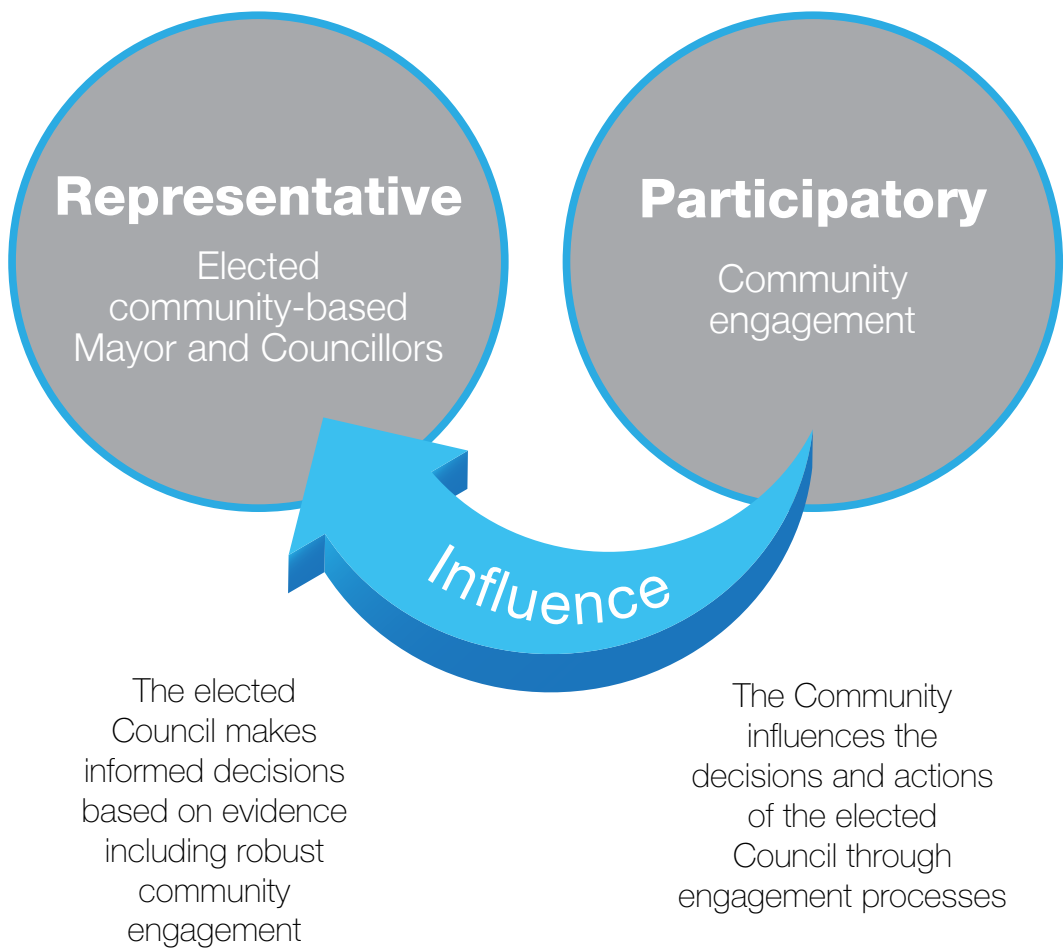
Councils make decisions through local democracy processes which are both representative and participatory.

Representative:

Representative democracy is the process by which the community elects Councillors to be the governing body of the Council. The elected Council develops and implements policies, programs and long-term strategic plans, ensures financial sustainability, monitors performance, and makes decisions to direct and control the affairs of the Council. The elected Council is the final decision maker and is accountable to the community.

Participatory:

Participatory democracy is the process by which community members are actively involved in decisions that affect them. The community can participate through a variety of community engagement processes that influence and shape the elected Council's decisions.



Local democracy at Inner West Council – Representative

Inner West Council was proclaimed on 12 May 2016. The Inner West local government area has five wards.

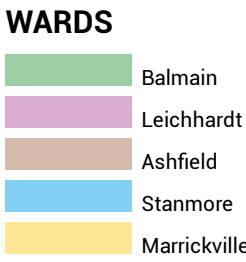
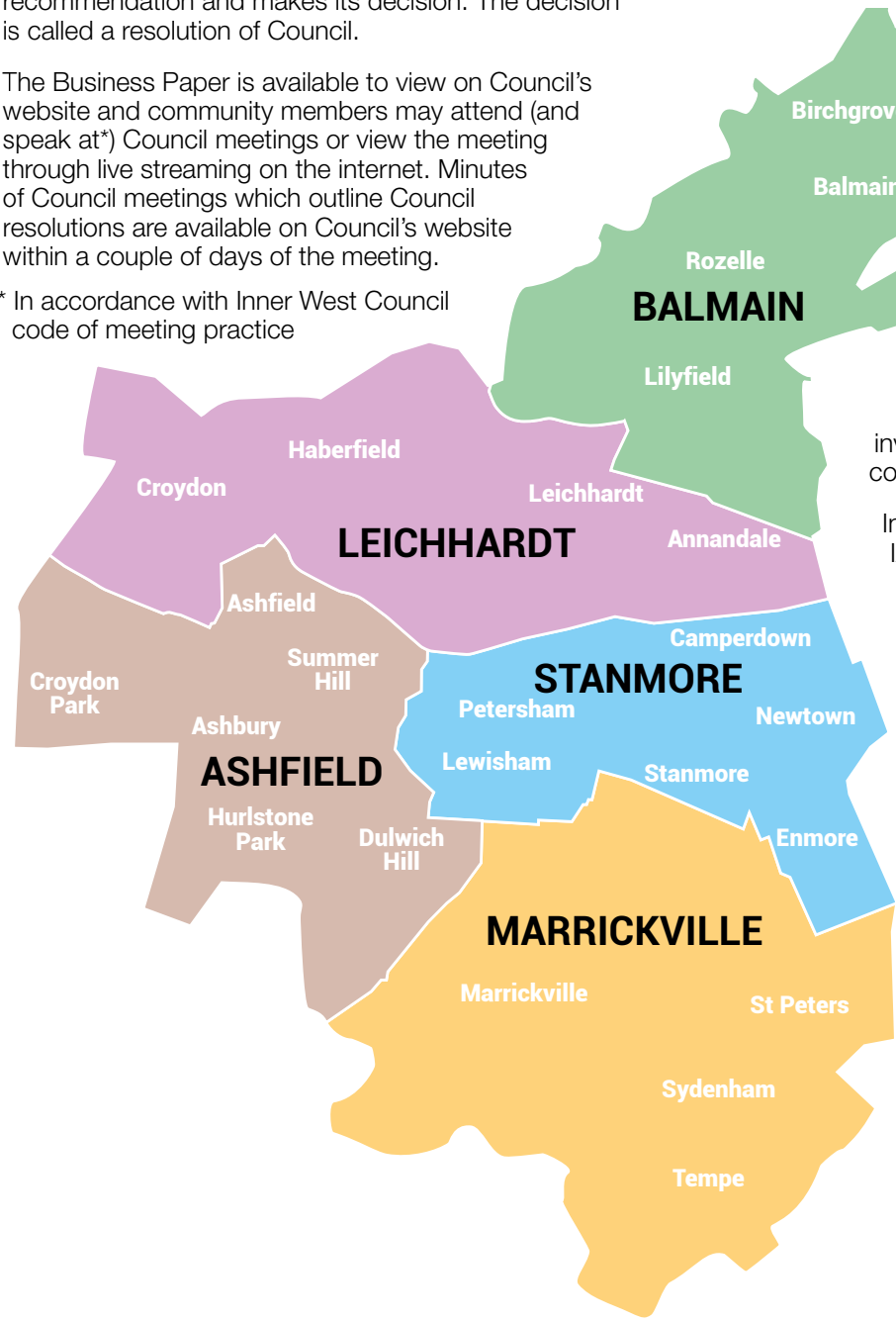
Following elections in September 2017 each ward will have three councillors to represent the community, with fifteen councillors in total. The role of a Councillor as set out in the Act includes to 'make considered and well informed decisions as a member of the governing body' and to 'represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community'.

Prior to elections, Council decisions are made by an Administrator appointed by the NSW Government.

Council decisions are made at formal monthly meetings. At each meeting Council considers items in an agenda called the Business Paper. Each item has a corresponding report, which is written by staff. The results of community engagement are included in the reports. The report also includes recommendations written by staff. The elected Council considers the recommendation and makes its decision. The decision is called a resolution of Council.

The Business Paper is available to view on Council's website and community members may attend (and speak at*) Council meetings or view the meeting through live streaming on the internet. Minutes of Council meetings which outline Council resolutions are available on Council's website within a couple of days of the meeting.

* In accordance with Inner West Council code of meeting practice



Local democracy at Inner West Council – Participatory

The Inner West community has a strong desire to have a voice in Council's decision-making. Eighty-seven percent of people surveyed rated the "Community's ability to influence Council's decision-making as important or very important (Community Satisfaction Survey independently conducted by Micromex 2016, available on Council's website).

The community participates in Council's decision-making through planned community engagement processes. Council engages the community across a wide variety of areas, including to:

- determine strategic plans, budgets, asset maintenance and service levels
- identify community issues, needs and priorities
- plan, change or evaluate infrastructure, programs, facilities or services
- meet legislative obligations
- obtain input into any other matter where there is a significant real or perceived impact on community members.

The level of community participation is assessed according to the IAP2 spectrum which identifies five levels with increasing influence along the spectrum: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower. Crucially, each level of the spectrum involves a goal and a promise to the community.

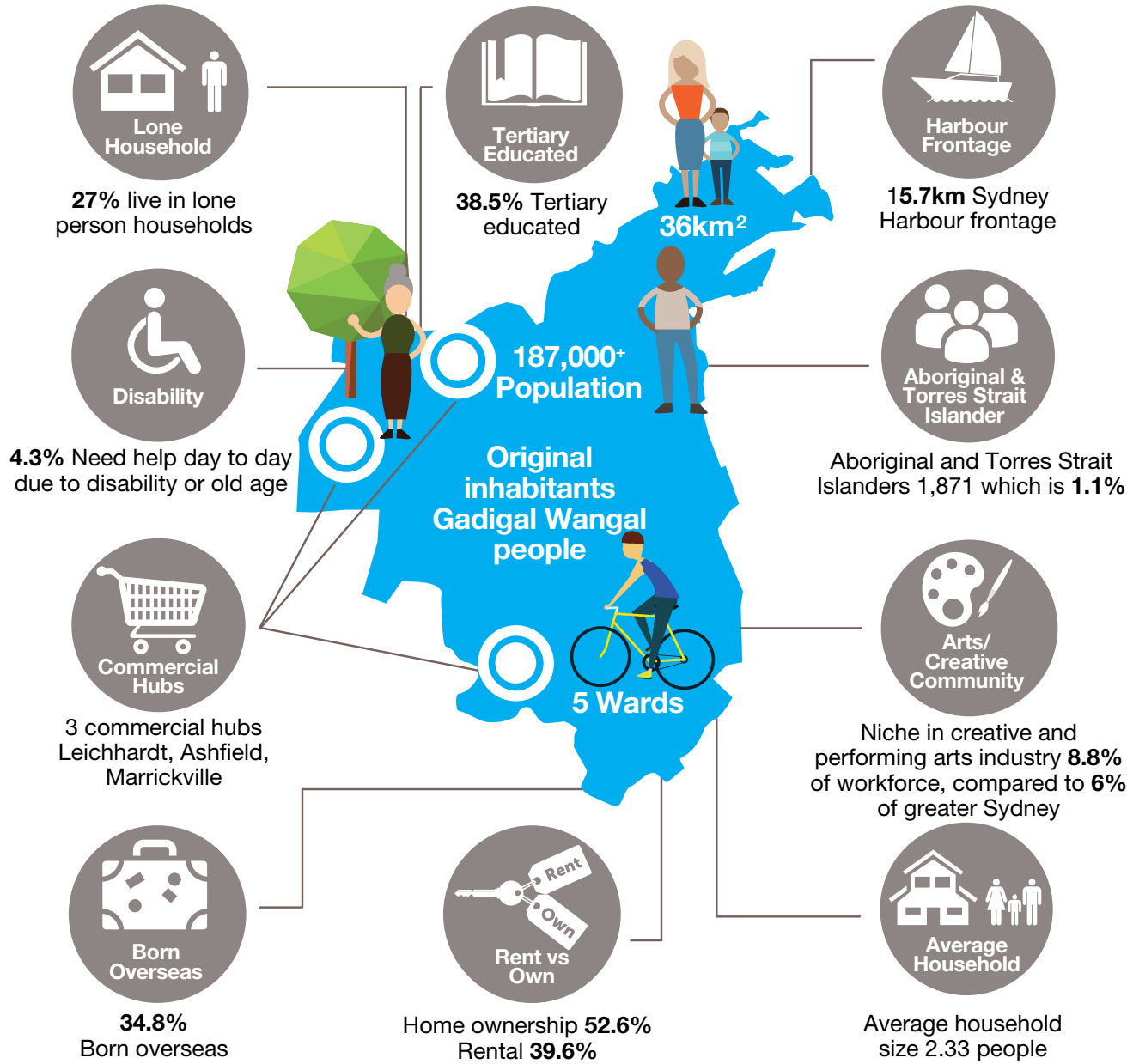
Inner West Council will use the IAP2 public participation spectrum in planning and implementing engagement processes. Participation levels may vary according to the project stage, engagement objectives, level of public impact/ interest, and stakeholder needs.



3.Community Engagement Framework

Who is the Inner West Community?

- > The Inner West is 35 km² and includes 24 suburbs from Birchgrove in the north, Newtown to the east, Tempe to the south and Croydon to the west. The Gadigal and Wangal peoples of the Eora Nation are the traditional custodians of the Inner West. The area is in close proximity to the Sydney CBD, and its thriving economic and cultural scene. The community enjoys excellent access to key services, employment opportunities, transport and cultural and recreational infrastructure.
- > The community is everyone who lives, works, plays, studies, conducts business, visits or uses the services, facilities and public spaces of the Inner West.
- > The community is not a singular entity, but is made up of individuals and groups connected by geography, interest, identity, or affiliation.
- > Communities can be formal or informal.
- > People will be members of many communities within the Inner West.



How will Council engage?

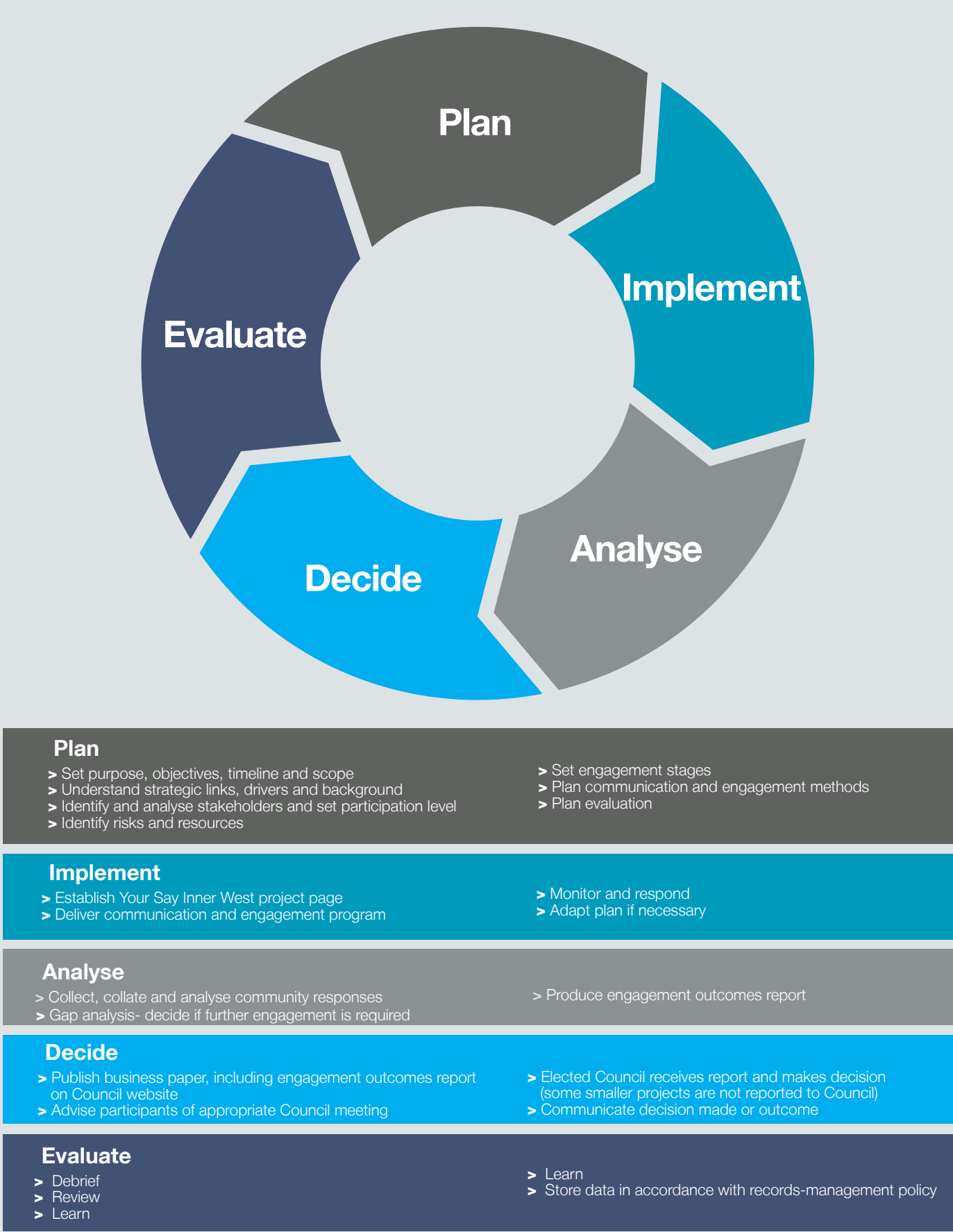
Principles

Five core principles drive Council’s approach to engaging the community. A principles-based approach recognises that one size does not fit all and each engagement has a distinct purpose, with a unique set of stakeholders and specific circumstances. The principles are:

Authentic	<div><div></div><div>The purpose of the engagement and the scope of what’s being decided including which aspects the community can influence or have input into is honestly and clearly communicated</div></div> <div><div></div><div>The decision-making process is clear including how input will be used</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Community input will not be sought if a decision has already been made</div></div> <div><div></div><div>The community’s input is considered in the final decision or outcome</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Authentic engagement allows for adequate notice and time for community response, and usually excludes public and school holiday periods</div></div>
Planned	<div><div></div><div>Engagement is a well-planned process with a clearly defined purpose and stages for community input</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Planning improves outcomes by engaging the community as early as possible in the process</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Planning improves outcomes by identifying critical issues and opportunities early in the process</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Planning delivers a coordinated approach to community engagement</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Coordination guards against ‘engagement fatigue’ where people within the community feel over-consulted and unheard</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Planning ensures Council has considered how individual projects fit into the ‘big picture’</div></div>
Tailored	<div><div></div><div>Engagement will be tailored to particular circumstance as identified in the planning, particularly when there is complexity, risk, significance, sensitivity, timing or opportunity</div></div> <div><div></div><div>A range of tools and techniques will be used to maximise efficiency and participation, balancing technology with traditional methods</div></div>
Inclusive	<div><div></div><div>As many relevant people as possible, who have an interest in or will be affected by a decision, are identified and invited to participate. This is to avoid interest group capture or single issue hijack</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Community diversity is valued and consideration will be made of diverse needs</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Barriers to participation are identified and removed or mitigated</div></div>
Transparent	<div><div></div><div>Information is clear, relevant and timely without jargon</div></div> <div><div></div><div>A summary of community feedback and how it will be used is provided</div></div> <div><div></div><div>Engagement outcomes reports are provided to the elected Council</div></div> <div><div></div><div>The decision or outcome is communicated to people involved in the process and to the broader community with an explanation of how community input influenced the decision</div></div> <div><div></div><div>A permanent record of engagements is available on the Your Say Inner West online engagement hub</div></div>

The Engagement Process

Council’s engagement is undertaken according to the process shown in diagram



Stakeholders

Council's community engagement will comprehensively identify stakeholders - individuals, groups or organisations who will be affected by or who have an interest in a decision - and promote opportunities for participation to ensure a range of perspectives is heard, and the community's needs, values and expectations are represented. Stakeholders can be internal or external.

Stakeholder groups who may be identified in a community engagement process include:



External stakeholders

Stakeholders may include residents, businesses, ratepayers, schools, service users, service providers, government agencies, sporting clubs, and local groups etc.

Every engagement plan will identify relevant stakeholders and their needs or interests. The stakeholder list may need to be refined as information emerges during implementation.

Stakeholders should be carefully nurtured and provided with resources or support where necessary. Council is aiming to build long-term partnerships with the community; not just a single contact for the purpose of a particular engagement.

Council's reputation and the community's trust in Council will be impacted by each engagement.

Inclusive Participation

Some communities are 'hard to reach' as they may have special needs or barriers to participation that impact on inclusion. These barriers may include language, accessibility, cultural, safety issues or even time constraints.

Community engagement activities should be sensitively planned for the intended audience and may need to provide opportunities that mitigate these barriers including

- material in languages other than English and accessible by people with a vision impairment or other disability (including WCAG compliant online material)
- provision for assistance where needed to participate
- accessible venues
- appropriate time and day for the target group
- appropriate method for the target group
- online as well as face-to-face or non-digital activities

Interim Strategic Reference Groups, Statutory Committees and Interagencies

Council has appointed representatives from the community to be members of Interim Strategic Reference Groups (SRGs) during the transition to Inner West Council. The SRGs provide feedback, guidance and recommendations to Council on specific issues, including strategic planning and policy and contribute local knowledge regarding community impacts, emerging trends, opportunities and service gaps. The SRGs, whose role is advisory include:

- Young Leaders Reference Group
- Social Inclusion Strategic Reference Group
- Economic Development Strategic Reference Group
- Housing and Affordability Reference Group
- Transport Strategic Reference Group
- Environment Strategic Reference Group
- Planning and Heritage Strategic Reference Group
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group

Council's Interim Strategic Reference Groups and statutory committees are recognised in the Framework as stakeholders that will be identified in the engagement plans of relevant projects. The Reference Groups will be asked to provide feedback or input into specific engagements and may be

asked to review an engagement plan and/or provide advice on reaching members of the demographic group/s which the Reference Group represents. Recommendations or advice will be included in engagement outcomes reports as the opinion of the SRG as a whole. SRG members may also participate in engagement processes as individuals.

Council also has a number of statutory committees and interagencies which may be stakeholders in a process. Current statutory committees include:

- The Local Traffic Committee advises Inner West Council on traffic and parking control matters for which Council has been delegated authority from NSW Roads and Maritime Services.
- The Inner West Flood Management Advisory Committee helps develop and implement of Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMP) for the Inner West local government area.
- The Local Emergency Management Committee carries out emergency management as the responsible authority for the Inner West local government area.
- The Inner West Council Aged Care Interagency is a forum established to bring together the various agencies working with older people in the Inner West Council area.

Internal stakeholders

It is essential that internal stakeholders (staff across Council service units) are included early in the engagement process, before external stakeholders. Effective collaboration and communication within the organisation will improve processes and outcomes.



Participation levels

The amount of resources, time and depth of an engagement will depend on the level of impact, significance, risk or opportunities of the circumstances.

Legislation sometimes prescribes minimum standards for a particular engagement. Council's engagement will always meet and often exceed minimum standards.

Participation levels are set during the planning process and will take into account:

- What participants expect
- What participants can and can't influence (the scope)
- What assumptions or constraints are impacting the process

Selection of the spectrum level follows stakeholder analysis. Sometimes particular stakeholders may benefit from higher levels of participation and participation levels may also vary according to the project stage and engagement objectives.

The level of participation in the engagement process will vary; some people will be extremely engaged, others will comment occasionally and some may follow the process but choose not to actively participate.

Additionally, levels of interest amongst participants may also vary across the life of the project as their interest, availability, awareness and priorities change. This highlights the need to provide good communication throughout the project to ensure all potential stakeholders remain informed and are aware of opportunities to participate.

Program of communication and engagement activities

The program of activities will be determined by the communication channels, tools and techniques that will best meet the engagement objectives and the needs of stakeholders and decision makers at each stage.

For projects about physical spaces a collaborative map may be useful. For financial decisions, a simulation or budget allocator tool could be appropriate. For legal or major policy decisions, a statistically significant, demographically representative sample may be required using the services of an independent market research company.

Selection of communication and engagement activities will take into account:

- How will it meet the engagement objectives of this stage?
- Will it deliver the appropriate information to enable progression to the next stage?
- How effective will it be in reaching the right audience?
- Will it meet the community's needs?
- Will it capture information that can influence the decision-making process in a meaningful way?
- Is there enough:
 - Time?
 - Budget?
 - Personnel?
 - Expertise?



Online engagement allows stakeholders to participate at a time and place convenient to them. All engagement has a project page at www.yoursayinnerwest.com.au providing

- engagement purpose
- background information
- timeline
- online feedback tools and techniques
- news throughout the project
- reports to Council
- engagement outcome
- permanent and transparent record of engagement

Online feedback techniques can be as simple as a submission form or encourage community discussion, debate and dialogue in a safe, responsive and managed environment. Council may use a combination of interactive mapping, surveys, polls or online forums to obtain community input. Community members can register to receive a monthly e-newsletter from Your Say Inner West to keep up to date with Council's engagement.

Council recognises that not everyone has online capabilities and commits to provide other methods where required.

Your Say Inner West is fully compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to a AA standard.

Increasing level of public impact					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Some communication and engagement activities that Council may use are:

Communication channels	Engagement activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Letters➤ Emails➤ E-news➤ Council column and advertisements in the local newspaper➤ Media releases➤ Social media➤ Inner West Council quarterly news➤ Signs➤ Flyers➤ Newsletters➤ Posters➤ Your Say Inner West website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Online tools at Your Say Inner West➤ Survey➤ Submission➤ Drop-in session➤ Workshop➤ Events / pop-up displays➤ Briefing➤ Focus group➤ Visioning session➤ Co-design➤ Site visits➤ Appreciative enquiry➤ Interviews➤ Citizen Juries

Examples of community participation opportunities include:

- Participating in long-term vision and strategic plan development
- Providing input to develop options for an infrastructure project
- Sharing stories, photos and local knowledge during Framework development
- Taking part in a survey
- Providing feedback about a plan on exhibition
- Attending a workshop or community meeting
- Speaking at a Council meeting
- Providing feedback during a service review
- Signing up and participating at www.yoursayinnerwest.com.au
- Becoming a member of a Strategic Reference Group or statutory committee
- Joining a project-specific working group

Evaluation

Council will evaluate engagement practice to identify how well the objectives were met. Evaluation will assist in:

- Reporting on outcomes
- Identifying gaps in data collections
- Learning what worked and what didn't
- Strengthening Council's and the community's capacity for participation
- Building knowledge and skills
- Continuously improving processes

Evaluation criteria relevant to the engagement will be set. For example criteria may be around numbers of people participating, the demographics of those who participated or the quality of the input.

4.Framework Elements

Four elements ensure successful implementation of the Framework.



5. Framework Review

The Community Engagement Framework will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with legislative change, innovation in practice and community expectations.

The Framework makes reference to the current period in which Council is under administration and the forthcoming election in September 2017 at which Councillors will be elected. The Framework will therefore require review within one year of adoption. The new Councillors and community will have opportunities to participate in the review and the outcome will be made publicly available.



ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This publication can be provided in large print or an alternative media format. If you need this service, please contact 02 9392 5000.

MORE INFORMATION

Contact Council's Engagement Team on 02 9392 5000 or email council@innerwest.nsw.gov.au
Visit www.yoursayinnerwest.com.au



