

**Program:** Corporate Communications & Marketing  
**Date of Adoption:** 22 March 2023  
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## Scope

The engagement of the community is an essential component in responsible governance and an important key to the development of a vibrant local democracy and applies to Council and all Staff of Mackay Regional Council (MRC).

## Objective

MRC is committed to strengthening and engaging the Mackay community in democratic governance. Community engagement is seen by MRC and Council as imperative in building an involved community.

This Community Engagement Policy is a formal expression of Council's commitment to engage the Mackay community using appropriate, effective and inclusive practices.

## Policy Statement

This policy confirms MRC's commitment to ensuring community engagement forms an integral component of informed decision-making and, as such, aims to ensure that as many people as possible who are affected by decisions of MRC and Council are consulted about their needs and concerns prior to decisions being made.

Council considers that to the extent this policy engages and limits, or potentially limits, any human rights, that limitation is reasonable in that it is proportionate and justified.

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This process to remain in force until otherwise determined  
by Mackay Regional Council

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## 1.0 Principles

Genuine and effective community engagement has benefits for Council, MRC and residents. Engagement allows Council and MRC to tap wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions. This, in turn, results in assistance and guidance in terms of decision-making and consequently better outcomes for the community.

Community engagement does not replace the decision-making functions of Council. Rather these processes are designed to ensure that Council has access to a broad range of information about community needs, opinions and options prior to decisions being made. It also increases the likelihood that Council decisions are understood and supported by the community.

MRC understands contemporary community engagement to contain the following basic elements as identified by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2):

- Information: To provide key stakeholders and members of the community with objective and balanced information on policies, plans and strategies.
- Consultation: To obtain feedback from the community and key stakeholders to enable a broader understanding by Councillors and Staff of the local needs, concerns and priorities prior to decision-making.
- Participation: To enhance community ownership of decisions and resultant outcomes and commitment to the decisions made, through involvement in discussion of issues and options.

These elements form the basis of the IAP2 spectrum which underpins Mackay Regional Council's Community Engagement Guidelines. Each level along the spectrum represents an increased degree of community engagement in the decision-making process. The Community Engagement Spectrum provides a model for determining the level of engagement that is most appropriate for the objective.

Further, the community engagement activities will be guided by the core values and Code of Ethics identified by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2):

- Code of Ethics - That we hold ourselves accountable to these principles and strive to hold all participants to the same standard.
- Core Values - that we adhere to these values for community engagement to be effective and of the highest quality.

## 2.0 Policy Statement

### 2.1 Objectives

1. To provide a framework that encourages a relationship with all facets of MRC's operations. It should be read in conjunction with

the Community Engagement Guidelines.

2. To encourage community engagement practices that draw on the skills and wisdom of residents to add value to decision-making processes, with emphasis that the Council will have ultimate responsibility for decision-making depending on the level of influence the community is being given per the IAP2 Spectrum.
3. To ensure that community engagement is clearly linked to the goals and objectives of the Corporate Plan.
4. To ensure that MRC activities within the community are inclusive of all members of that community.
5. To foster collaboration and cooperation between Council, MRC and the community, including businesses and other spheres of government, in the planning and implementation of programs and services for the Mackay area.
6. To increase the community's understanding of Council through improved relationships and communication.

## 2.2 Policy Principles

1. That MRC and Council will provide genuine opportunities for informed community engagement in decision-making in a framework of local democracy.
2. That MRC and Council will strive towards a deeper level of engagement regardless of the level of influence the community has and aim for a shared experience for the stakeholders.
3. That community engagement forms an integral part of the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and services.
4. That MRC and Council will adopt open, accountable processes through which individuals and groups can exchange views and influence policy or decision- making.
5. That there is transparency and accountability in the process which is open, two-way and ongoing.
6. That Councillors and Staff play complementary roles in engaging with the community. Council will decide the high-level strategic issues on which it will engage the community. These issues will be linked to an identified Corporate Plan priority, or a significant emerging issue.
7. That opportunities will be provided to encourage and increase access by Aboriginal people, Torres Strait and South Sea Islanders and people from culturally and linguistically diverse

backgrounds to discussions about MRC initiatives which are likely to impact upon them.

8. That the day to day operations and administration of the MRC shall reflect the objectives of this policy.
9. That **all** Community Engagement activities are presented to Council via monthly reporting.

These policy principles provide consistency, cohesion and facilitate the alignment of our performance reporting requirements under the Queensland *Local Government Act 2009*. Each principle seeks to clarify the purpose of why MRC and Council engages with the community and provide a guide for that engagement to occur.

This policy confirms MRC's commitment to ensuring community engagement forms an integral component of informed decision-making and, as such, aims to ensure that as many people as possible who are affected by decisions of MRC and Council are consulted about their needs and concerns prior to decisions being made.

MRC will utilise the existing Connecting Mackay community engagement register on its website to record its current engagement activities. This will assist in developing a system that mitigates the risk of duplication and over consultation, records activities undertaken and methodologies, and allows the community to see at any time what consultation is being planned or is occurring. Establishment of this register will assist MRC in meeting its reporting obligations to State Government.

### 3.0 Complaints

Any complaints in relation to a decision or a service relating from this policy will be assessed and managed in accordance with MRC's Administrative Action Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be found on MRC's website.

When an individual feels that they are the subject of MRC's failure to act compatibly with human rights, they can make a complaint directly to MRC. These complaints will be assessed against the Human Rights Act 2019.

Complaints may be made as following:

In writing to  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mackay Regional Council  
PO Box 41  
MACKAY QLD 4740

Via Email - [complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au](mailto:complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au)

In person at the following Council Client Services Centres:

- MRC Mackay Office – 73 Gordon Street, Mackay

- MRC Sarina Office – 65 Broad Street, Sarina
- MRC Mirani Council Office – 20 Victoria Street, Mirani

#### 4.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

**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 (IAP2).

**Council** shall mean all elected representatives including the Mayor of Mackay Regional Council.

**Councillors** shall mean an elected representative including the Mayor of Mackay Regional Council.

**IAP2** shall mean International Association for Public Participation.

**MRC** shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

**Staff** shall mean all persons employed by Mackay Regional Council on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis, or otherwise engaged by Mackay Regional Council including those under a contract of service or a volunteer program.

#### 5.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

- The related documents are amended or replaced.
- Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

#### 6.0 Reference

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Human Rights Act 2019

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Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
2	Review of Policy	Amendments to Policy	Council	27.11.19
3	Review of Policy	Amendments to Policy	Council	22.02.23