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|  | COUNCIL POLICY | |
| | Community Engagement Policy | |
| | POLICY NO | 033 |
| | DEPARTMENT | Community & Client Services |
| | PROGRAM | Corporate Communications & Marketing |
| | ENDORSED BY COUNCIL | 27 November 2019, Folio 65418 |

1.0 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.

2.0 Purpose

Mackay Regional Council (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 engaging the Mackay community using appropriate, effective and inclusive practices.

3.1 Reference

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Mackay Regional Council Corporate Plan 2016-2021

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 the Mayor and Councillors of Mackay Regional Council.

IAP2 shall mean International Association for Public Participation.

MRC shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

5.1 Background

Genuine and effective community engagement has benefits for Council, MRC

and citizens. 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 Council 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.

6.0 Policy Statement

6.1 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 citizens 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.

6.2 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 MRC 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.

The Community Engagement Policy addresses the principle outlined in Council's Corporate Plan 2016 - 2021:

“Ensure that council officers and elected members have the tools and skills to effectively communicate with our customers to enable a positive interaction with council.”

MRC will establish a community engagement register on its website to record its 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.

7.1 Review of Policy

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

1. The related documents are amended or replaced.
2. 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.

Version Control:

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