

Community Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2026





Acknowledgement of Country



We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather upon today. We acknowledge their continuing connections to the land, culture and community. We pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

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Message from the Mayor

Our community has an important role to play in shaping where we live. Community participation and engagement forms the partnership between Council and community.

It is the foundation of our planning and decision-making processes and is critical to ensure that the community can participate in the decisions, processes and projects that affect their everyday lives. By informing, engaging and working with the community we can strengthen and enhance our relationship with those that live work and stay in the Shoalhaven.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a planned approach to community engagement practices to ensure a high level of dialogue with communities is in place for projects and initiatives. We aim to continue supporting and provide a rich culture and inclusive community spirit through consultative planning.

Your Councillors also understand the importance of working together with our community on the matters that affect everyday lives, including the impacts from climate change, sustainable use of our resources, resilience and wellbeing.

Together, we will continue to progress our plans and projects to best meet community needs as well as to address issues that affect our community's wellbeing.

I look forward to working with the community, my fellow Councillors and Council staff to achieve our goals and bring our aspirations to life.

Amanda Findley
Mayor

Who we are

We are a diverse city of unique townships, each filled with a life and character of their own. Our spectacular, varied natural landscapes nourish and define us as the resilient, connected community we are today.

We have a strong sense of community and a generous spirit that is invested in the history and the future of our scenically beautiful and biodiverse environments of coast, foothills, escarpment and plateau.



Our people



Population
108,531

13.5% born overseas
8.1% need disability assistance

Average Age

48

19.2% aged 0-17 years
46.4% aged 60+ years

Population
Increase

+10,308
by 2031



20%
increase for
aged 65+ years



6.5% of the Shoalhaven's population identify as
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



39.5%
completed year 12

25.8% vocational
qualification 12.1% university
education

35,751

jobs

47% in workforce
7.3% unemployed



21%

of households are made
up of couples with
children

17% couples without
children

26.5% single person
10.3% single-parent



45,901 total
households

25.8% mortgage
23.1% renting
3.4% social housing

279 individuals
homeless

Additional
Households

+5,408
households
by 2031

Single person households
increasing to

30.7%
by 2031



Our places



Our **community vision**

“We will work together in the Shoalhaven to foster a safe and attractive community for people to live, work, stay and play. Where sustainable growth, development and environmental protection are managed to provide a unique and relaxed lifestyle.” – Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032.

Our **goals**

We want to provide an opportunity for everyone to be involved in the decision-making process and welcome robust and considered conversations about the process and ultimate outcomes.

Our goals are to:

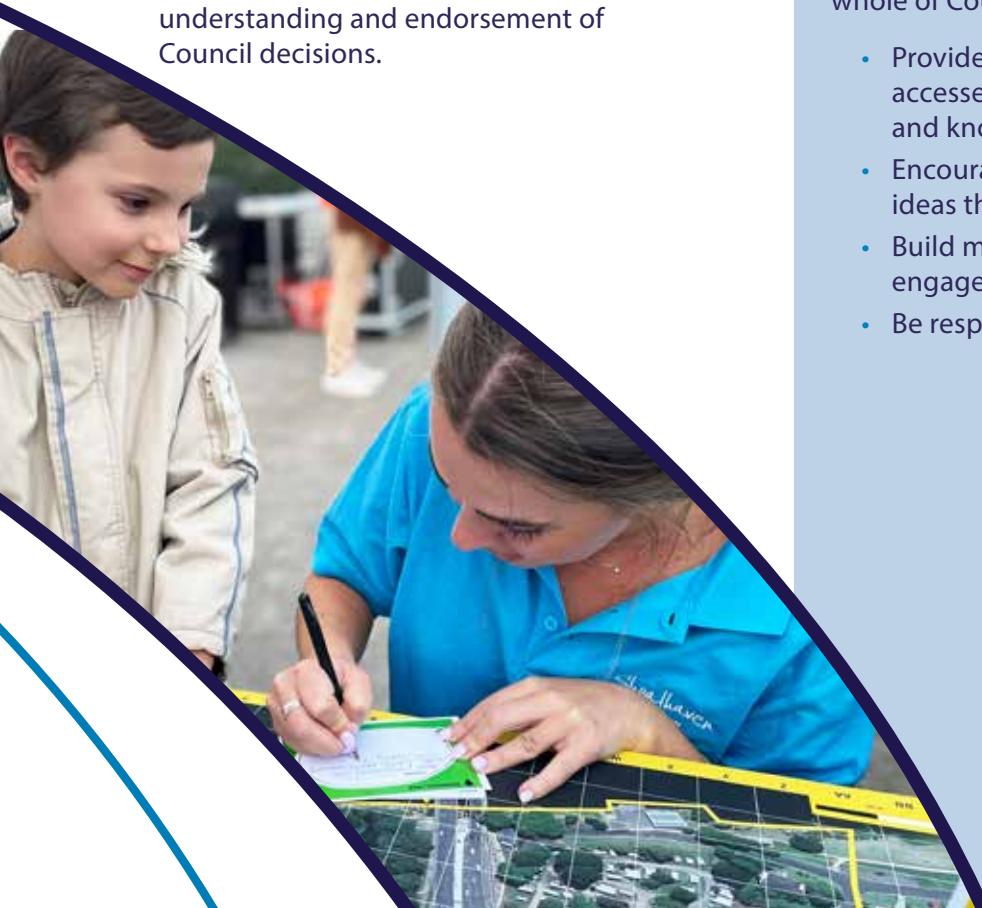
- Listen to a diverse range of views, opinions and ideas on the community’s needs and wants for incorporation wherever possible into our planning and actions.
- Identify shared values, benefits and outcomes and how we can best work together
- Be open, transparent and accountable.
- Create greater community ownership, understanding and endorsement of Council decisions.

Our **objectives**

We recognise the value the unique perspective of each person in our city and encourage participation in decision making through planned and purposeful consultation activities. The diverse needs of individuals are carefully considered and accessibility is prioritised to ensure that everyone is involved and heard.

Our community engagement strategy sets out a whole of Council commitment to:

- Provide information in a way that’s easily accessed and understood to build awareness and knowledge of our policies and plans.
- Encourage collaboration and the exchange of ideas through inclusive processes.
- Build mutual respect through ongoing engagement activities.
- Be responsive and respectful of diverse views.





Community engagement values

Everyone has a right to be informed and heard about matters that affect them and given opportunities to participate. We are committed to encouraging effective and ongoing partnerships with the community to provide meaningful opportunities for community participation.

Consultation activities and projects will be universally accessible and inclusive to all. We recognise that community engagement is part of an ongoing conversation and will seek and provide feedback on initiatives and activities.

Strategic alignment

This community engagement strategy provides the direction for all of our community engagement activities between 2022 and 2026. These activities relate to the development of our plans, policies, programs and key activities. This overarching strategy seeks to drive a coordinated, purposeful and effective community engagement approach that delivers positive outcomes for Shoalhaven.

This strategy directly addresses community focus areas and strategies outlined in the Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032, as summarised below.

| Key Priority | Focus Areas | Delivery |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform and engage with the community about the decisions that affect their lives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for the community to have genuine engagement on Council planning and decision making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide engagement opportunities for the community both online and face to face Explain to our local community the impacts of strategic planning as required by legislation and ensure appropriate consultation is undertaken and information is available |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, consistent, relevant and accessible information to the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous improvement of Council's website, social media and media content |

This community engagement strategy aligns with the below policies, strategies and plans.

- Community Strategic Plan – Shoalhaven 2032
- Shoalhaven City Community Participation Plan 2019
- International Association of Public Participation principles

Our guiding principles

Key priorities identified within this plan have been developed under the social justice principles of:



Equity

We will apply fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need.



Participation

Everyone will be given genuine opportunities to participate in decisions which affect their lives.



Access

We will strive to provide fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve the quality of life for all people.



Rights

We will promote equal rights and provide opportunities for all people from all backgrounds.

The Community Strategic Plan also considers the principles of the quadruple bottom line, addressing social, environmental, economic and civic leadership considerations:



Social

We will strive towards everyone having access and equity to facilities and services.



Economic

We will contribute to maintaining a strong and stable economy and ensure the delivery of infrastructure is financially sustainable.



Environmental

We will protect the natural, cultural and built heritage and work to decrease consumption of resources.



Civic Leadership

We will consider decision-making principles, levels of service and community consultation and participation.

Council's core values underpin our fundamental beliefs and guide our behaviour as individuals and as an organisation.



Collaboration

We enjoy working together to deliver for our community.

Integrity

We are committed to maintain high ethics and standards.

Adaptability

We are ready for change and willing to embrace a new situation.

Respect

We are mindful of and care about the feelings, wishes and rights of others.



Our commitment

We are committed to engaging our communities on the issues that matter in a transparent, open, and accountable way.

We actively involve communities in the decision-making process by providing meaningful, accessible information and feedback opportunities. Committed to authentic and effective engagement with our community in the development of our plans and strategies.

Our engagement framework

Community engagement is about involving the community in decision-making and is at the very core of our democratic processes in local government. Through community engagement, we can understand diverse points of view, clarify community expectations and build trust.

Meaningful engagement allows us to gather information that strengthens local decision making. It relies on the two-way communication process, expression of ideas and talking and listening. This strategy references a continuum of community engagement, based on the International Association of the Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

| | Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| Public participation goal | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision. | 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 aspirations, 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 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. |

Our stakeholders



People who live, work or visit the Shoalhaven



Community Consultative Bodies



First Nations community



Local interest and resident groups



Emergency services



Local businesses



Volunteer groups



Health and support services



Local chambers of commerce



Environmental groups



Investors and industry groups



Sporting clubs and groups



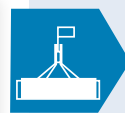
People living with disability



State and federal government agencies



Committees of Council



Local Members of Parliament



Shoalhaven
City Council

Government and Authorities

Local MPs, State and Federal Departments and Authorities.
Emergency Services.
Local Aboriginal Land Councils.

Council Advisory Committees

Youth Advisory, Aboriginal Advisory, Inclusion & Access Advisory, Homelessness Advisory.

Community Consultative Bodies (CCBs) and other Community Groups.

Individual residents, community groups and organisations (e.g. business chambers, faith groups, environmental groups, sporting groups).

Inclusive participation

We strive towards active, transparent, and consistent communication with our community. This two-way conversation needs to be clear accessible and delivered to a standard that meets the requirements of our growing region.

We recognise that some communities are harder to reach as they may have barriers to participation such as experience, language and accessibility. We are committed to providing opportunities for these communities to participate and have a say by:

- translating resources and information where necessary
- communicating warmly, simply, and clearly, so we are accessible to all
- providing information in accessible formats
- ensuring a variety of engagement methods are made available
- ensuring community consultation venues and activities are accessible
- considering age appropriate engagement and participation activities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

We recognise that Aboriginal people and land has always been a place united by strong ties of kinship and compassion. We are committed to working with Traditional Owners on matters of land, water, language, culture, and cultural heritage.

Here in the Shoalhaven, 6.5 per cent of people identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, compared with 3.4 per cent for NSW.

We want to ensure that their voices are included in this process and that our relationships with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are meaningful.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities

We recognise that our diversity of cultures and sense of community are our greatest strengths. Diversity is fundamental to our identity with 5.8 per cent of residents born overseas and 4.9 per cent speaking a language other than English at home.

We work closely with a range of community, sporting, and cultural organisations to build strong and resilient communities. We celebrate culture and diversity, past, present, and future.

Young people

We are committed to building a city that is welcoming and inclusive of young people. We provide opportunities for young people to become active citizens through co-design initiatives, online engagement and face to face activities such as school workshops.

Vulnerable people

We have vulnerable people that live, work, study and visit Shoalhaven, including low-income households, social housing tenants, the elderly, people with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness.

We are committed to creating engagement opportunities that allow vulnerable and harder-to-reach groups to have their views heard.

Community Engagement Methods

Community engagement plans are developed by applying the IAP2 principles to ensure that key stakeholders are identified and we tailor our techniques and methods appropriately.

This guidance informs our approach to seeking input from the diversity of views within our communities to ensure our engagement processes are inclusive.

We actively promote our community engagement activities through a range of platforms and devices to reach broad and target audiences across the city. We also directly consult with community groups to seek insight based on their knowledge, skills and lived experience.

These groups include the Community Consultative Bodies (CCBs) who provide information relevant to their particular community, as well as Committees of Council who are established under section 355 of the Local Government Act, 1993. These committees include:

- Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Youth Advisory Committee
- Inclusion and Access Advisory Group
- Homelessness Taskforce
- Shoalhaven Sports Board
- Shoalhaven Arts Board
- Nowra CBD Revitalisation Committee
- Shoalhaven Economic Growth and Advocacy Group

Ways we engage

| Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website & social media • Advertisements, editorials, signs, letters, notices & emails • Council meetings streaming • Customer contact centres and libraries • Translated communication material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Get Involved engagement portal • Project committees • Public exhibition and submissions • Community meetings (one-off) • Surveys • Drop-in sessions & pop-up stalls • Council meetings • deputations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Webinars • Community meetings (ongoing) • Advisory committees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory committees • Community and stakeholder reference groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community led events and projects |

Evaluation and reporting

We are committed to ongoing evaluation to assess and adapt our approach to community consultation to provide the best possible outcome for the community. We will evaluate against the goals and objectives of this strategy to deliver on our commitment to understand what has worked, what hasn't and the effectiveness in reaching and stimulating interest from different communities so that we can continue to evolve our consultation methods to ensure they are appropriate to our communities. It is essential to identifying any areas of improvement required to meet our goals and aspirations.

When we measure

The amount of interest in community engagement activities is unique to each campaign as it depends on the nature and impact of the subject of consultation. Regardless of the scale of consultation, evaluation is done throughout engagement activities to assess the success of the campaign and make adjustments to the communication approach as necessary.

How we measure

We will evaluate against the goals and objectives of this strategy. We use an extensive set of tools to determine the effectiveness of our engagement activities by applying measures such as the:

- reach achieved through promotion
- level of interest shown by community enquiries
- number of people involved in the consultation activities
- quality of information provided through the community feedback.

Reporting

The findings and outcomes of community consultations are provided to the community in a timely way through a number of ways, including:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of collected feedback via the Get Involved community engagement platform
- Promoting findings and outcomes through media channels
- Reporting back to Council through its meeting process.





Address all correspondence to:

The Chief Executive Officer

PO Box 42, Nowra NSW 2541

shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/contact

1300 293 111

shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au     

