Attachment 1 to Item 10.2.1.

Draft Communication and Engagement Strategy 2024 - 2028

Date of meeting: 11 June 2024
Location: Council Chambers
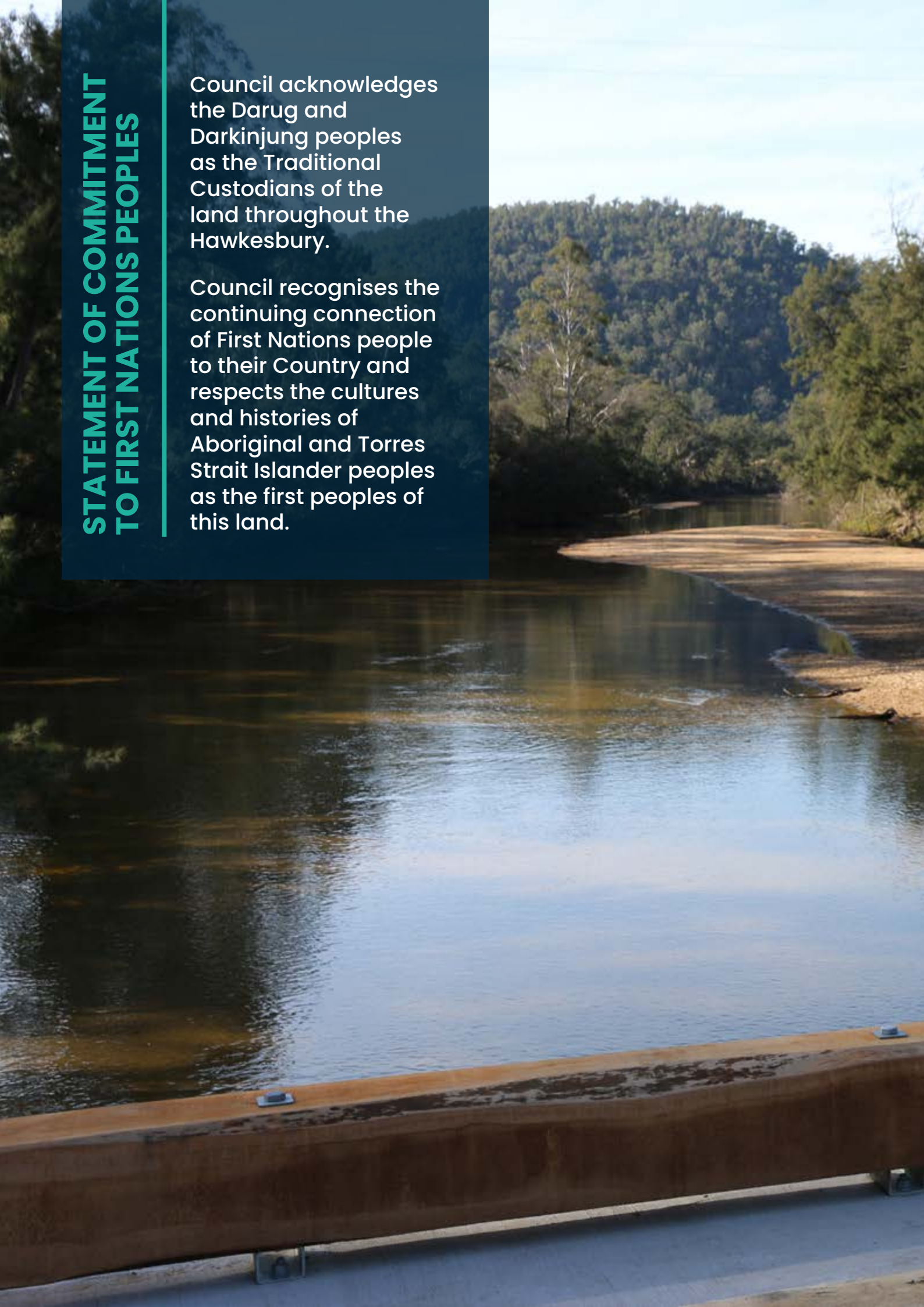Time: 6:30pm

Hawkesbury
City Council

HAWKESBURY CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024–2028

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

Council acknowledges the Darug and Darkinjung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land throughout the Hawkesbury.

Council recognises the continuing connection of First Nations people to their Country and respects the cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of this land.

Contents

Council's commitment to engagement

Council is committed to engaging with our community in a timely, transparent and accountable way to ensure all residents are both aware of and involved in decision making processes - building a Hawkesbury that delivers for their needs and is loved and celebrated by all. A key component of a project's success is a well engaged, informed and involved community.

This Communication and Engagement Strategy clearly states how and when the community will be engaged in Council's decision making processes and provides a comprehensive list of options for creatively connecting with our diverse community depending on their location and demographic.

Strategy Purpose

- Principles that will guide our approach to engagement.
- Define which activities or decisions require community engagement.
- The level of involvement and influence the community will have, and when.
- The methods we will use to inform and to seek community input.
- Timeframes for each type and level of engagement.
- Strategies to engage Hawkesbury's geographically and demographically diverse community to ensure everyone is involved and informed, and that we hear from a range of people that are truly representative of the Hawkesbury.

Strategic Goals

- Engagement that is timely.
- Engagement is meaningful and effective.
- Engagement is accessible and inclusive.
- Participation reflects Hawkesbury's diverse community.

Under-engaged Audience

- Residents from remote and geographically isolated communities.
- People with low digital literacy and without internet access.
- People aged 35 and under.
- People aged 65 and over.
- Aboriginal community.
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

This Communication and Engagement Strategy has been prepared as a framework to support all of Council's plans, programs, and key activities, as part of Council's commitment to encourage open, transparent and active relationships between Council and the community. The strategy builds on Council's ongoing activities and actions implemented as part of the 2021-2025 Communication and Engagement Strategy.

This document is intended to be a living document, continually updated as the Hawkesbury experiences new challenges and demographic shifts, encounters new communication platforms and our community requirements change.

The objectives of developing this strategy were to:

• Analyse Council's current engagement and communications processes to ensure Council is effectively reaching the community.

• Respond positively to the findings regarding preferred engagement methods contained within the Community Satisfaction Survey and engagement activities.

• Implement new initiatives that encourage an open and transparent relationship between our community and Council.

• Build on Council's current communication and engagement initiatives.

This document proposes a communications program for Council designed to achieve the goals of engaging the community; builds awareness of Council brand, culture, and reputation; promotes characteristics of the region and reinforces positive community sentiment. The strategy specifically seeks to support the following goals:

• Communities that can readily identify and engage with their Council

• Increase pride in the region

• Increase awareness and support for the community's vision

• Inform decision making

• Keep the community informed about engagement opportunities

• Educate the community on how Council functions and makes its decisions, and why

• Increase awareness of major projects and how Council is progressing with milestones

• Cultivate a positive and proactive culture

• Communicate with the demographic of the area using a variety of media platforms

• Increase internal awareness and commitment to the Communication and Engagement Strategy.

Working with the community, colleagues and stakeholders across the Hawkesbury, the key objectives that our communication and engagement will be working to achieve are:

- Broad community engagement

- Connecting people with the information they need

- Building trust in the organisation and increase Council's standing in the community

- Embedding a strong and recognisable brand

- Encouraging community interaction and response

- Creating varied opportunities and channels for engagement

- Identifying and supporting the community's role in the decision making process

- Promote the Hawkesbury as a great place to live, work and visit

- Promote Hawkesbury City Council as a great place to work and a great organisation to do business with

- Informed, motivated and empowered staff who are advocates of Hawkesbury City Council and the Hawkesbury region.

To achieve our goals and objectives we have also developed a list of specific actions that we will deliver over the next four years. We will review these actions regularly to ensure they are on track and adapt and respond to changing circumstances as needed.

The Community Participation Plan which outlines how and when Council will engage with the community across our planning functions has been referenced in this document. The Community Participation Plan will be updated in the latter half of 2024 to ensure it is consistent with this Strategy.

Community engagement is about involving people in decision making. Community participation and input is critical in creating a great place where people want to live, work and visit.

Hawkesbury City Council has an organisation-wide commitment to engage our communities in a transparent, timely and meaningful way.

Community engagement provides Council with a better understanding of community views and values, and helps us to make more informed decisions and deliver better services. Good community engagement can improve outcomes by sharing perspectives, helping stakeholders understand decisions and foster trust between Council and the community.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Council must comply with a number of different pieces of legislation which set out how we should engage with the community including:

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)

- Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act 1979 (NSW)

- State Records Act 1998 (NSW)

- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)

All councils in NSW use the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework to guide their planning and reporting activities. Your Hawkesbury Your Say is usually linked to plans, strategies and work outlined in the IP&R framework. The diagram on page 13 demonstrates the importance of community engagement within this framework.

The Engagement Toolkit is an internal document which details the processes that all staff and external consultants need to follow when delivering engagement projects at or on behalf of Council.

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) stipulates a range of mandatory, minimum requirements for engaging in relation to Council's planning functions. The Act also requires that councils develop a Community Participation Plan (CPP) that outlines how and when they will engage the community across their planning functions. The requirements of the CPP have been incorporated into this Strategy specifically addressing community engagement in planning functions.

OUR APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

In line with our objectives our communication and engagement activities will be built around:

- Brand positioning and recognition – to achieve awareness and be recognised as an excellent Local Government Area servicing a place that is desirable to live, work, visit and invest

- A strategic approach – clearly planned activities which are aligned to our corporate objectives of great place to live, a valued and protected environment and history, strong economy, and reliable council

- Direct communications – sharing engaging information and content with the community through their preferred channels

- Supporting combat agencies and the sharing of their messaging during emergencies and provide recovery communication.

Our approach will be guided by the following principles:

Accessible
WE WILL Deliver messages in different ways; tailored to consider geographical isolation, demographics and special needs.

Proactive
WE WILL Provide opportunities for all community members and organisations to be involved, utilising the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum.

Timely
WE WILL Engage early enough for participation to be meaningful. Reasonable time will be given for the community to provide input.

Inclusive
WE WILL Use multiple channels for everyone; utilising both digital and physical/traditional mediums and platforms.

Supportive
WE WILL Be supportive of other organisations, particularly during crises, to deliver optimal outcomes for the community.

Transparent
WE WILL Be open and honest in our decision making

Diverse
WE WILL Reflect the different wants and needs of our communities

Meaningful
WE WILL Offer opportunities and report back on outcomes

Clear
WE WILL Aim to be easy to understand

Hawkesbury City Council is committed to fostering a community that is inclusive for all people who live, work, and visit our region. This means ensuring all people with disabilities and diverse needs have every opportunity to fully connect, participate and enjoy the community, social and business life of the Hawkesbury region.

As part of this commitment, Council has developed the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2026. A number of the principals contained within the Plan helped guide the inclusiveness principles in this Strategy, especially 'Focus Area 4: Improving systems and processes to be more accessible and inclusive'.

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The below tables explain the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation which was designed to assist organisations to select the appropriate level of participation that defines the community's role in any community engagement process. The Spectrum is internationally recognised as a best practice approach to engagement planning. Council adopts this approach when planning engagement activities.

PRINCIPLES	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Goals of Engagement	To provide the community with clear, concise and accurate information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain community feedback on proposals, strategies and plans for consideration	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the community
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, act on them where appropriate; 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	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations	We will implement what you decide
Example Methods and Channels	• Corporate website • Social media • Posters, signs, banners, flyers and letters • Advertising • eNewsletter and email • Customer Service and Messages on Hold • Events activations • Community hubs	• Your Hawkesbury Your Say • Surveys and quick polls • Interviews • Small group discussion • Town Hall • Online meetings	• Workshops • Focus group	• Steering committees • Deliberative style engagement • Co-design • Panel	• Elections • Referendums
Community Role	**Listen**	**Contribute**	**Participate**	**Partner**	**Lead**

PRINT MEDIA

ONLINE

FACE TO FACE

INTERACTIVE ENGAGEMENT
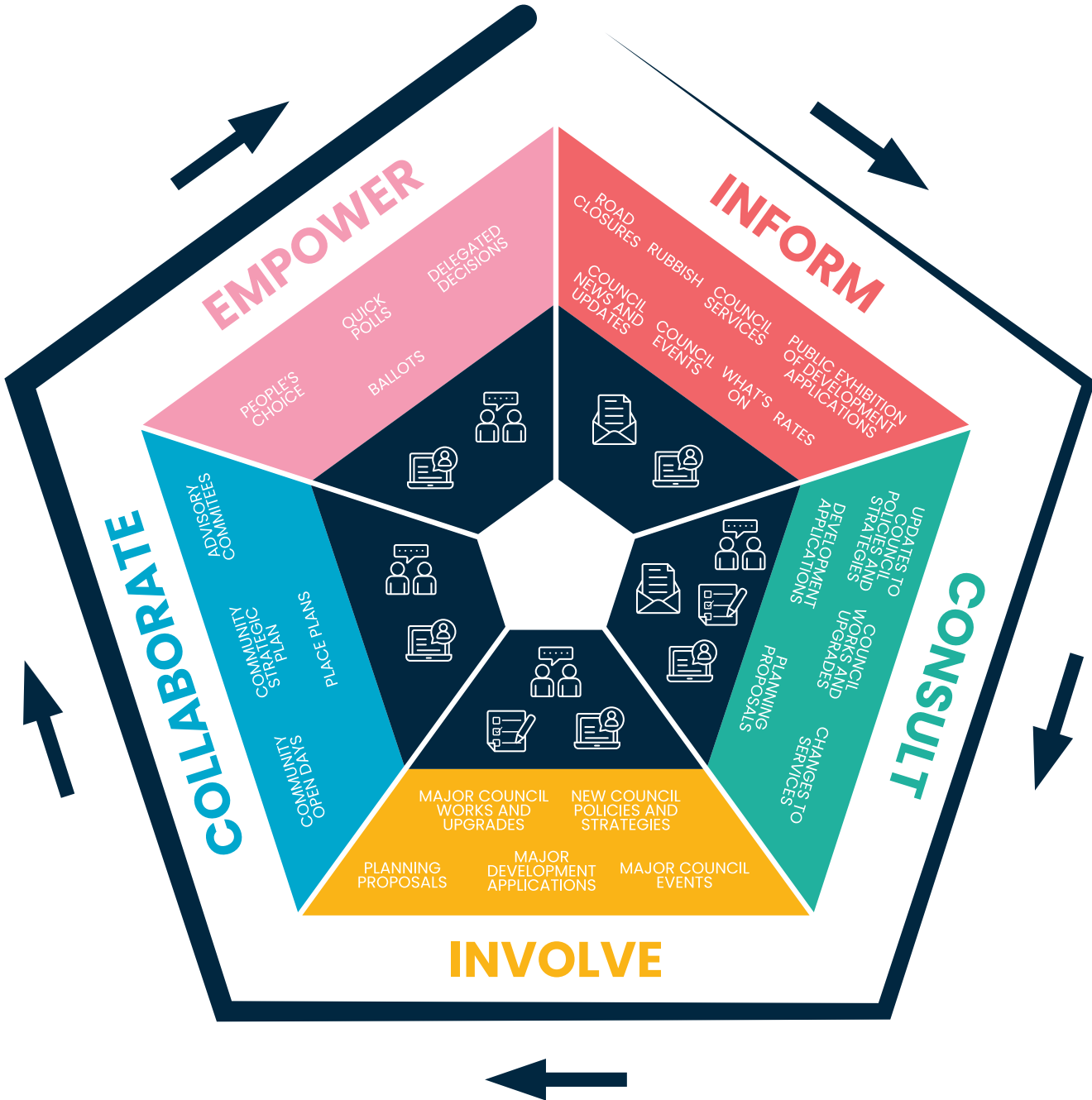
PARTICIPATION LEVELS AND ENGAGEMENT

EMPOWER

DELEGATED DECISIONS

QUICK POLLS

PEOPLE'S CHOICE

BALLOTS

INFORM

ROAD CLOSURES

RUBBISH

COUNCIL SERVICES

COUNCIL NEWS AND UPDATES

COUNCIL EVENTS

WHAT'S ON

RATES

PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

COLLABORATE

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

PLACE PLANS

COMMUNITY OPEN DAYS

CONSULT

UPDATES TO COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

COUNCIL WORKS AND UPGRADES

PLANNING PROPOSALS

CHANGES TO SERVICES

INVOLVE

MAJOR COUNCIL WORKS AND UPGRADES

NEW COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

PLANNING PROPOSALS

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

MAJOR COUNCIL EVENTS

YOUR LEVEL OF IMPACT, INFLUENCE AND INVOLVEMENT

LOW

HIGH

By area, the Hawkesbury is the largest local government area in Sydney, covering more than 2700 square kilometers. While much of our population is concentrated in urban centres in the south and east of the Hawkesbury Local Government Area, we have people living in 64 towns and villages right across the Hawkesbury. Many of these towns and villages are geographically isolated with poor access to mobile and internet connections. When we are communicating, we are mindful that is it not with one group of people, but a complex and diverse range of audiences.

Often, we share a common message amongst our community about the delivery of our Council services.

At other times we are not trying to communicate with everyone. Specific Council issues, initiatives or programs often relate to only one segment of our community, so we need to be constantly thinking about who we need to reach with our activities, and to what extent.

Upper Colo Bridge Opening, 2023

Our Community Snapshot

WHO ARE WE ENGAGING WITH?

POPULATION
67,862

LAND AREA
2,776 KM²

PEOPLE PER KM²
24.44

TOWNS, VILLAGES & RURAL LOCALITIES
64

AGEING POPULATION
39 YEARS OLD IS THE MEDIAN AGE

FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES
4.8% OF POPULATION

COUPLES WITH CHILDREN
35% OF POPULATION

BORN OVERSEAS
13.3% OF POPULATION

DWELLINGS
25,474

LANGUAGES SPOKEN OTHER THAN ENGLISH
TOP 3 MALTESE, PUNJABI AND ITALIAN

DISABILITY
5.6% NEED ASSISTANCE DUE TO DISABILITY

LOCAL JOBS
29,900

LOCAL BUSINESSES
7,478

VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION
27.6% OF POPULATION

MOST POPULAR INDUSTRY
CONSTRUCTION AND HEALTH

Community Profile – Hawkesbury

8.9% | 6,009
PRIMARY SCHOOLERS
(5 TO 11)

6.2% | 4,152
BABIES AND PRE-SCHOOLERS
(0 TO 4)

7.9% | 5,333
SECONDARY SCHOOLERS
(12 TO 17)

8.9% | 5,989
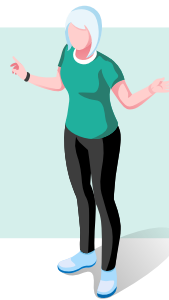TERTIARY EDUCATION AND
INDEPENDENCE (18 TO 24)

18.4% | 12,381
PARENTS AND
HOMEBUILDERS (35 TO 49)

13.1% | 8,834
YOUNG WORKFORCE
(25 TO 34)

13.7% | 9,238
OLDER WORKERS AND
PRE-RETIREES (50 TO 59)

11.1% | 7,475
EMPTY NESTERS AND
RETIREES (60 TO 69)

1.8% | 1,215
ELDERLY AGED
(85 AND OVER)

6.2% | 4,152
SENIORS (70 TO 84)

WHO ARE WE ENGAGING WITH?

OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are any individuals or groups who have an interest in the decisions of Council.

A vital part of the community engagement process includes identifying the key stakeholders who have an interest or will be impacted by the decision.

STAKEHOLDERS MAY INCLUDE:

- Residents
- Ratepayers
- Businesses
- Customers
- Volunteers
- Aboriginal communities
- CALD communities
- People with a learning difficulty
- People who are hearing impaired or deaf
- People who are visually impaired or blind
- Councillors
- Council employees
- Local members of parliament
- Bushfire and flood affected communities
- Industry groups
- Sporting groups
- Arts and culture
- Environmental groups
- Council working groups and committees
- Emergency services
- RAAF Base Richmond
- Local media
- Schools
- TAFE
- University
- Young people groups
- Relevant agencies
- Neighbouring councils
- People who live in areas without access to communication technologies
- Homeless or in temporary accommodation
- Farmers
- Visitors to the Hawkesbury

Councillors

Councillors are the public face of Council and it is important that they are given the right communication advice and support to allow them to communicate effectively with residents, community and business groups and other stakeholders.

They are considered a trusted source of information relevant to their region, and often they are advocates for getting things done and fast responses.

They are on the front line and operate in a challenging environment where demand for Council services is increasing. It is important that they are given the right communication support in a timely manner that helps to engage them in the right conversations.

Strong rural connections and our towns and villages

One of the Hawkesbury's strengths is its sense of community identity across its towns and villages, particularly those outside the main centres. The distinct characteristics of each of the townships should be promoted and celebrated.

Council wants to understand what makes these communities special, but we also need to work with them to understand their concerns.

Community leaders and local organisations from our towns and villages and organisations within these communities are often the most trusted source of information.

Many are local business owners, leaders or presidents of local organisations. These community champions are integral to getting the message to the communities.

Our Army of Ambassadors

We are part of the community. Of our approximately 360 employees, many live locally and are part of the Hawkesbury so we have a vested interest in the success and future of our region.

We encourage staff to act as 'brand ambassadors' in our community, by ensuring they are informed, motivated, empowered and proud to be recognised as Council staff.

Our visitors and new residents

Across our communities we know what the Hawkesbury has to offer. We want to celebrate this not only with locals, but with new residents and visitors.

We have been working hard to improve the way we promote the Hawkesbury to visitors who come out to see and explore a destination that is only an hour from Sydney.

We know that our visitors are jumping online to do the research but then coming into the Visitor Information Centre for that great personal experience, to validate the online research, for local tips and up to date advice.

Crisis communications

The Hawkesbury is a region which is impacted by bushfires, floods and extreme weather. Our emergency communications are focused on keeping our community safe during any crisis. In crisis situations, we act as a bridge between the emergency services and the public.

The responding emergency service is always the lead authority to ensure that the appropriate message is used to direct the community to use the right channel of the service to avoid conflicting and confusing messages.

Council's Disaster and Emergency Dashboard is a one stop shop heavily promoted during emergencies to provide information about local conditions, including emergency news updates and links to other agencies on Council's website. Council also uses detailed Crisis Communication Plans to guide our response during emergencies and in the recovery phase.

We could also have to deal with a crisis situation which could be a threat to Council's business. A Business Continuity Plan has been developed to address these situations. A Communication Plan is an addendum to this Business Continuity Plan.

INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

Council recognises that some communities may experience barriers to participating in engagement. We are committed to providing opportunities for all voices in our community to be heard. This includes:

- Using plain language that is easy to understand

- Providing information in accessible formats

- Ensuring a variety of engagement tools are available to reach those without internet access, people with a disability, people for whom English is not their primary language, and people with low literacy levels

- Translating information, where necessary

- Ensuring venues are accessible

- Meeting commitments outlined in our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

- Meeting commitments outlined in our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) (yet to be adopted)

CHALLENGES TO BE CONSIDERED

Analysis of the participants in Council's engagement projects has identified gaps in the following groups, compared with representation across the entire community:

- People aged under 35, in particular people aged 16-24 and over 65

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse populations

- Aboriginal communities

- People with low digital literacy or without internet access

- Residents from remote and geographically isolated communities.

> " *We see the Hawkesbury as a vibrant and collaborative community living in harmony with our history and environment, whilst valuing our diversity, striving for innovation, a strong economy and retaining our lifestyle and identity* "

This vision aligns with our Community Outcome 4 – Reliable Council (*Community Strategic Plan - Our Hawkesbury 2042*)

Intent

Be a respected civic leader through consistent, transparent and engaged decision making the community can understand.

Relevant long term objectives

- Provide representative, responsive and accountable governance
- Encourage an informed community
- Build strong relationships and shared responsibilities
- Support the operation of the organisation through effective staff engagement
- Encourage informed planning, balanced growth and community engagement

Relevant indicators of success

- Our community will be more aware of our elected leaders and Council operations
- More of our community will be actively engaged in local discussions and decisions about strategic directions, services, plans and programs
- There will be a higher satisfaction level with Council's performance

All councils in NSW are required to operate within an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework. The IP&R framework guides how each council develops, documents, engages and reports on their strategic plans under the Local Government Act 1993.

The Local Government Act identifies community engagement as a key principle for councils. It states that councils should proactively engage with their community, through the IP&R Framework and other measures to gain their insights into planning, projects and key matters which affect the region.

The Act requires councils to create a Strategy which ensures engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs and for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters). This Strategy aligns with these key guidelines and standards.

This Strategy is a key driver informing the plans developed by Council under the IP&R framework. The key goal of IP&R is to create and build plans which achieve the community vision for the region. Consistently and effectively engaging with our community is vital to setting this vision, identifying key priorities and monitoring the progress of achieving these goals.

The key documents under the IP&R Framework include:

The Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) is the highest level plan that a council will prepare. The purpose of the Plan is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals.

The Delivery Program

The Delivery Program outlines a council's direct response to the CSP. It details the specific activities (projects and programs) that will be undertaken during its elected term to address the CSP.

The Operational Plan

The Operational Plan is a sub-plan of the Delivery Program. The Operational Plan outlines the annual activities that will be undertaken as part of the Delivery Program, alongside the annual budget.

Who engages?

There are a variety of groups and teams across Council who are responsible for implementing Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy and Council's Community Engagement Policy.

PROJECT TEAMS

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION OFFICERS

COMMUNICATION TEAM

EXECUTIVE TEAM AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

COUNCILLORS

COMMITTEES

EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS

THIRD PARTY LED PROJECTS

When we engage

The following table explains when and how we will engage with the community on plans, strategies, policies and other matters being considered by Council. This list is not exhaustive – it is a broad guide outlining the minimum levels and methods of engagement the Council will undertake.

Council will often opt to extend engagement beyond these levels where the matter being considered is of a nature that is complex, of high impact and of significant interest to the community to ensure the project is a success and the community is well engaged and informed.

PROJECT TYPE	IAP2 ENGAGEMENT LEVEL	WHAT WE WILL DO (MINIMUM COMMITMENT)	HOW WE WILL DO IT	ENGAGEMENT PERIOD
Development applications (DAs)	Inform and consult	Inform residents of proposed works and provide them with an opportunity to have their say	Notification letter to affected residents/facility users/customers Publish the development application online in the Council Notices and with in the Development Application Register The full process is outlined in Council's Community Participation Plan	Minimum two weeks
Identified asset infrastructure and capital works (e.g. traffic and streetscapes)	Inform and consult	Inform residents of proposed works and provide them with an opportunity to have their say	Notification letter to affected residents/facility users/customers Provide information on Your Hawkesbury Your Say and enable online submissions Provide information on Council's website Promote engagement opportunities via Council's communications channels Offer to hold a meeting/workshop with stakeholders Inform stakeholders of the final decision and results of the engagement	Minimum two weeks for each engagement period Two weeks notification of commencement of works

PROJECT TYPE	IAP2 ENGAGEMENT LEVEL	WHAT WE WILL DO (MINIMUM COMMITMENT)	HOW WE WILL DO IT	ENGAGEMENT PERIOD
New capital works and placemaking projects **Plans of Management**	Consult and/or involve	Provide an opportunity for the community to have a say at each stage of the project Keep the community informed and updated at each stage Update stakeholders on the outcome of the engagement	Create a dedicated Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page and enable online submissions Send notification of project and engagement to all identified stakeholders using appropriate communications channels Host an information session/meeting/workshop with stakeholders Leverage a community event such as Hawkesbury Fest or Hawkesbury Show to engage with audience already in attendance Promote engagement opportunities to the broader community through Council's communication channels Ensure hard copy information is available upon request Hard copies available at Council's Customer Service Centre and Hawkesbury Central Library CALD communities are identified as stakeholders Provide a summary of information in fact sheet form or similar in community friendly language Update stakeholders on the final decision and the results of the consultation and publish this on the Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page	Minimum four weeks for each engagement period unless otherwise prescribed by legislation Two weeks notification of commencement of works
New/updated plans and strategies **Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan Communication and Engagement Strategy**	Involve and collaborate	Provide information and context and provide opportunities for the community to have their say Engagement should be undertaken prior to drafting or redrafting the document and again once the document has been drafted, prior to adoption	Create a dedicated Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page and enable online submissions Ensure hard copy information and submission forms are made available in hard copy at Customer Experience Centre and upon request Host information sessions/meetings/workshops/forums/focus groups/have a say days/pop-ups and other activations as appropriate Promote engagement opportunities to the community through all Council's communication channels Provide a summary of information in fact sheet form or similar in community friendly language Update stakeholders on the final decision and the results of the consultation. Publish this information on the Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page	Minimum four weeks for each engagement period

PROJECT TYPE	IAP2 ENGAGEMENT LEVEL	WHAT WE WILL DO (MINIMUM COMMITMENT)	HOW WE WILL DO IT	ENGAGEMENT PERIOD
Programs and services (e.g. Library, school holiday and events programs) **Council's services such as customer service, waste, public place maintenance and cleansing etc.**	Consult	Provide information and an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to provide input to and feedback on programs and services	Undertake the Community Satisfaction Survey every two years (this measures satisfaction with Council's services) Seek input from relevant stakeholders and community groups when planning and designing new programs, events and services Distribute evaluation surveys to people who participate in programs and events Ensure there is an opportunity for people to provide general feedback via Council's website and Customer Experience Centre	As appropriate depending on the program or service being evaluated – two weeks minimum
Council policies	Consult and involve	Provide context information and give the community the opportunity to have a say before drafting or redrafting the Policy and again once the Policy has been drafted, prior to adoption	Create a dedicated Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page and enable online submissions Send notification of project and engagement to all identified stakeholders using appropriate communications channels Host an information session/ meeting/workshop with stakeholders Promote engagement opportunities to the broader community through Council's communication channels Ensure hard copy information is available at Customer Service Centres and upon request Provide a summary of information in fact sheet form or similar in community friendly language Publish the results of the consultation and the adopted Policy on the Your Hawkesbury Your Say project page. Send this to key stakeholders involved in the engagement	As appropriate

Instances where Council may not engage the community

There will be circumstances where Council may not engage the community in a decision, or only consult with a section of the community.

Examples of this include situations where:

- Immediate action is required to rectify or remediate an issue

- Technical or other expertise is the primary input to guide the decision

- Council is responding in an emergency where public health and safety are at risk

- Legal, commercial or confidential restrictions are involved

- The community has already had input through prior engagement activities

In these instances, Council is committed to informing the community of the decision and rationale behind it.

Our community expects an open and transparent line of communication that informs them of Council services. They also expect to be notified of issues that may impact their way of life, standard of living and impacts on services provided.

How we engage

Channel	What does our engagement look like
Customer Experience Team	Call Centre (phone and social media) Staff at the front desk Customer Experience Charter Collaboration with communications team, particularly during emergencies Provided with advanced information Supported with additional information to assist enquiries Knowledge base Messages on Hold phone service Attendance at major events Customer Experience pop-ups in towns and villages
Regular media releases issued to	Local and metropolitan media, tv, radio Council website on news page Facebook page Email contact list including Councillors and Customer Experience Team
Advertising in newspaper	Online advertising Ads in newspaper – Independent monthly

Channel	What does our engagement look like
Quarterly community newsletter	# posted to all mailboxes in LGA Posted to council website Emailed to contact list Copies pick up at council venues Facebook page Recreated as digital-friendly Hawkesbury Bite-Size for younger adults
Other printed materials	Letters to properties Banners at McGraths Hill, Clarendon and North Richmond Flags in town centres (Richmond and Windsor) Flyers and corflute signs, utilising QR codes Tactile ground decals Branded scrims at major projects
Signage	Wayfinding signage in our town centres Welcome signage at entrances to the Hawkesbury Building Hawkesbury's Future signage at major roads and other infrastructure projects Project signage as required under funding agreements
Corporate website	Up-to-date information on all Council services www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au
Your Hawkesbury Your Say website	Policies, plans and projects on exhibition for public feedback Major projects maintain ongoing presence throughout life of the project www.yourhawkesbury-yoursay.com.au
Visitor Information Centre website	Information on local attractions, activities, events, accommodation www.discoverthehawkesbury.com.au
Library / Museum / Gallery websites	Information on events and activities Borrowing and image database access www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/museum www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/gallery
Events websites	Light Up Windsor event information www.lightupwindsor.com.au Savour the Flavour event information www.savourtheflavour.com.au
Companion Animal Shelter website	Information on adoptions and lost pets www.hawkesburycas.com.au
Facebook	Information on Council services, activities, engagement opportunities, alerts, emergency information Information on upcoming and in progress events
Instagram	Information on upcoming and in progress events
LinkedIn	Corporate/ business/ job vacancy related posts
Public meetings	Holding public meetings chaired by Council Attending meetings chaired by external groups
Major events and community pop-ups	Provide materials, subject matter experts, displays, educational activities at the following events: • Australia Day on the Hawkesbury • Hawkesbury Show (major display) • Hawkesbury Fest • Savour the Flavour Hawkesbury • Light Up Windsor • Park/facility openings • Customer Experience Pop-ups

WHAT DOES OUR ENGAGEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Channel	What does our engagement look like
Staff email electronic signatures	Graphic advertising project / service / activity, linking to online information
Email databases	Regular updates to customers who opt in to receive marketing information from Library Museum and Gallery
	Regular updates to curated email database around particular project or emergency
	Monthly business newsletter
	GM weekly Thursday email to all staff (internal)
	GM weekly Thursday email to Councillors
Direct SMS (emergencies, waste)	Updates to curated SMS database around particular emergency, including road closures or anticipated loss of access due to a disaster
Council meetings	Minimum of 12 per year, additional if needed
	Community is welcome and invited to speak to matters on the agenda
	Meeting is webcast to improve access
Committee Meetings	Committee meetings varied based on Committee eg Heritage, Flood Plain

A Communication Plan is prepared for each key engagement activity to set goals and outcomes.

At the conclusion of every engagement project a report is provided to project managers and they are responsible for reporting back to the community on the outcome of the public consultation and how stakeholder feedback influenced decision making.

The effectiveness of the engagement is then evaluated to determine what, if anything could be approved in the future.

Evaluation will focus on four key areas:

Efficiency
Review how well engagement activities were performed and ensuring they were on time and on budget.

Effectiveness
Participants understood the process, the methods used, and the decision reached. Feedback received assisted Council to make community informed decisions.

Appropriateness
Analyse whether the community engagement methods matched the level of engagement, the correct stakeholders were identified, and the communication was accessible to all stakeholders.

Impact
Determine if a better decision resulted from the engagement and if it helped to build trust and commitment. Methods we use for capturing feedback about engagement approaches and activities may include:

- Asking survey participants how they became aware of the consultation

- Tracking online traffic sources to the Your Hawkesbury Your Say website

- Our Community Satisfaction Survey

- Feedback forms from engagement events such as workshops, meetings, information sessions, forums etc.

As part of the development of this strategy Council developed and implemented an engagement program to inform the Strategy and future initiatives and action plan.

The engagement program was implemented through three major activities involving over 600 local residents:

- Community Satisfaction Survey

- Online Communications Survey

- Communications Focus Groups

- Face to Face conversations and engagement activity at the Hawkesbury Show

- Councillor workshop

- Aboriginal community discussion

The engagement activities were completed throughout October 2023 – May 2024. The approach to each activity and the key results observed are below.

Engagement Objectives

The objectives of the engagement were as follows:

- Understand community satisfaction and sentiment with the current level and approaches to Council communication.

- Determine Hawkesbury residents preferred methods of communication and any demographic or geographical differences across the community.

- Develop ideas in partnership with the community on effective communication approaches.

The engagement activities were designed to include a diverse range of Hawkesbury residents with different engagement and communication styles, gaining feedback and insights into their experiences and preferences.

Results Summary

The data obtained validated many of Council's current approaches and initiatives to communicate and engage with the community. Overall, the community is satisfied with and highly values Council's communication and engagement. Residents are passionate and desire opportunities to engage with and receive information from Council on a wide range of topics; particularly roads/key project updates, emergency information and what's on including events. Council's communication has a significant impact on the overall satisfaction the Hawkesbury community has with Council and its services.

There is a clear understanding and sensitivity of the size of the Hawkesbury Local Government Area, its diversity and the challenges that exist to engage the more remote and rural communities. A multi layered approach which understands the specific needs geographically and demographically is promoted as the most effective method.

These themes emerged as the key opportunities for Council across all engagement activities:

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter is strongly supported as a key source of updates and information across the Hawkesbury. It has stronger traction with older residents. It is a key point of contact for news, events, project updates and information.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Council's social media is a key source of information, particularly with the younger population. Improvements could be made to provide tailored content for local communities and linking key information with Council's website. Posts need to be engaging, clear and use local imagery.

WEBSITE

The website is the key source of truth and central point for information for Hawkesbury residents, particularly disaster related information, bookings and service access. The website could be improved in accessibility, functionality and usability as well as link to Council's social media more effectively.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

Your Hawkesbury Your Say platform is underutilised and not well known in the community as a tool for direct engagement with Council. Promoting the tool and its role as an engagement portal will assist in involving residents.

FACE TO FACE ENGAGEMENT

Where appropriate, ensure face to face engagement is implemented, including town meetings, project special meetings, focus groups, targeted campaigns and at Council events.

Council conducts Community Satisfaction Surveys to assess the movement of several success indicators under the Community Strategic Plan: Hawkesbury 2042. These indicators relate to Council's overall service delivery and the way the community currently perceives the local area from a range of perspectives. The results also feed into future planning by informing service reviews, initiatives, resourcing and focus areas for future Operational Plans and Delivery Programs.

Micromex Research was commissioned to complete the telephone survey on behalf of Council in 2023. The objectives of the survey were to:
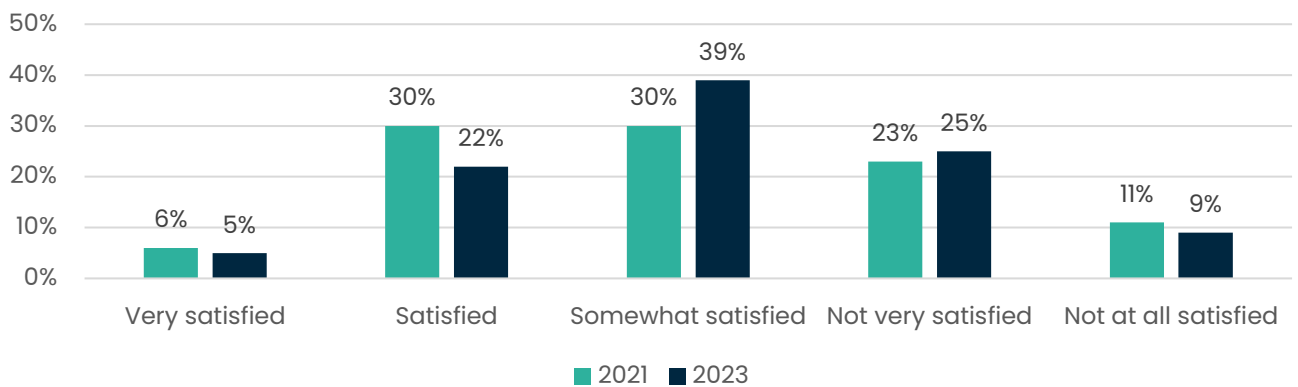
- Engage with a significant portion of the community across the Hawkesbury to conduct an in-depth survey of satisfaction.

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council service performance and a range of attributes of the local area.

- Understand the main drivers of satisfaction and prioritise key areas of focus.

Number harvesting was completed at Council's Savour the Flavour event, Windsor and Richmond train stations, with fieldwork running from the 16 – 20 October 2023. A total of 402 responses were received, of which 26 identified as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander. Several questions were asked concerning Council's communication and engagement with the community.
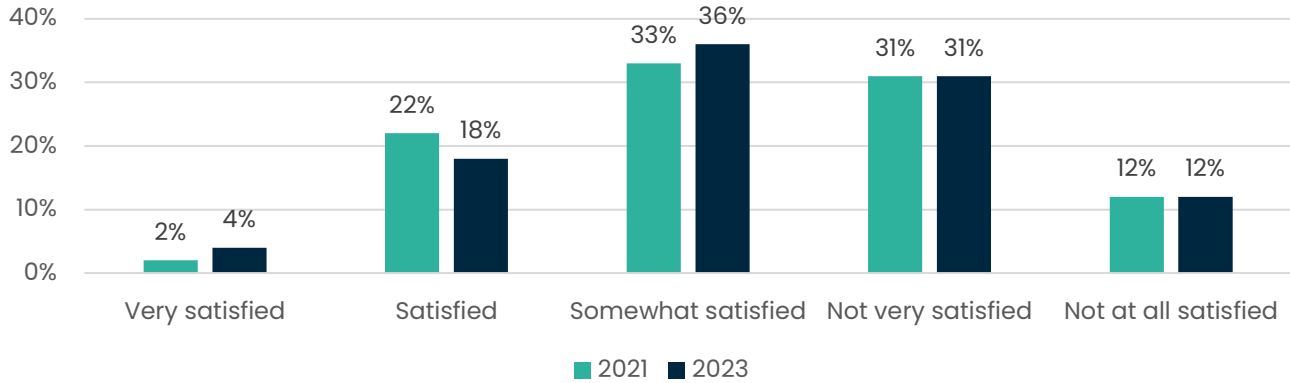
Satisfaction with Level of Communication

67% of Hawkesbury residents are at least somewhat satisfied with the level of communication Council currently has with the community.

- Hawkesbury residents are significantly less satisfied with the level of communication they receive than benchmarked NSW Metropolitan and Regional Councils.

- Satisfaction with the level of communication Council currently has with the community has decreased slightly from 2021, with 66% being at least somewhat satisfied.

- 35-49 year olds are less satisfied than younger or older residents.

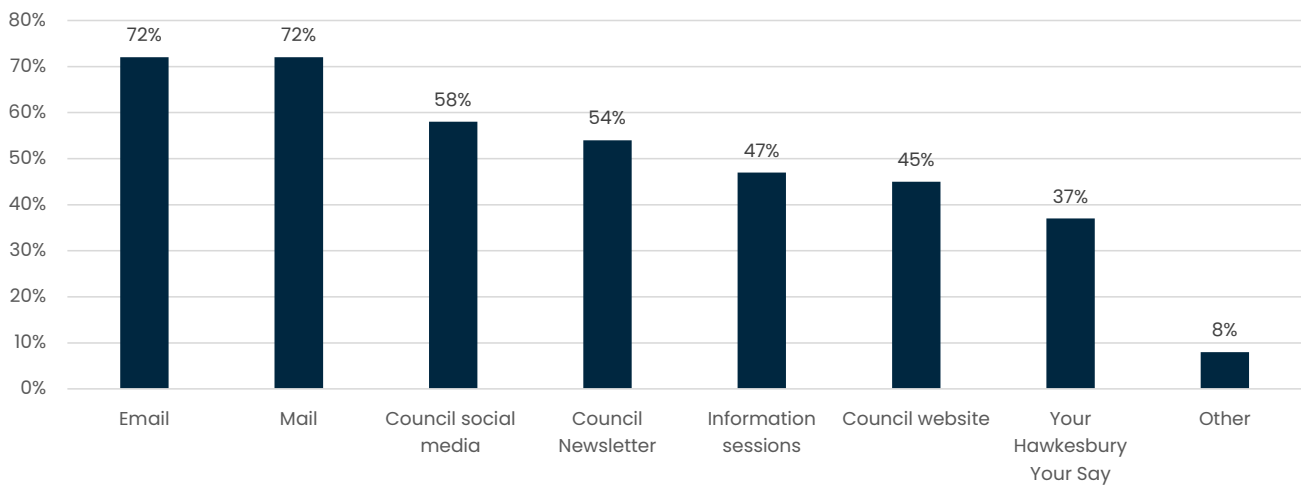|	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not very satisfied	Not at all satisfied
2021	6%	30%	30%	23%	11%
2023	5%	22%	39%	25%	9%

Satisfaction with Community Consultation

- Overall, satisfaction with the way Council consults with the community continues a slight downward trend over the last 10 years, with 57% at least somewhat satisfied.

- Younger residents are more satisfied than older residents, with 35-49 year-olds least satisfied.

Chart: Satisfaction levels comparing 2021 and 2023
- Very satisfied: 2% (2021), 4% (2023)
- Satisfied: 22% (2021), 18% (2023)
- Somewhat satisfied: 33% (2021), 36% (2023)
- Not very satisfied: 31% (2021), 31% (2023)
- Not at all satisfied: 12% (2021), 12% (2023)

Legend: ■ 2021 ■ 2023

Effective Communication Methods

- Overall, residents believe email and direct mail are the most effective methods for Council to communicate with residents.

- Those under 50 are significantly more likely to find Council social media more effective than those over 50.

- Those over 50 engage significantly more with Council's Newsletter and mailed correspondence.

Chart: Effective communication methods
- Email: 72%
- Mail: 72%
- Council social media: 58%
- Council Newsletter: 54%
- Information sessions: 47%
- Council website: 45%
- Your Hawkesbury Your Say: 37%
- Other: 8%

Overall the results from those that identified as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander were consistent with the general consensus and do not lean towards major differences in perception or satisfaction. However, the communication methods show clear differing preferences with a stronger preference for Your Hawkesbury Your Say and slight preference for the website, social media and information sessions over mail and newsletter. The survey also found those that identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander feel slightly less safe in public spaces.

In the 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey, residents were asked to rate the effectiveness of a number of communication/engagement methods.

Q. *When Council is trying to inform or engage you on local issues, which of the following methods would be the most effective in communicating with you?*

	Overall 2023	Gender		Age				Identify with a disability		Identify as Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander	
		Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Yes	No	Yes	No
Email	72%	71%	73%	81%	76%	73%	56%	66%	73%	71%	73%
Mail (Letter boxed)	72%	70%	73%	62%	65%	75%	88%	78%	71%	62%	72%
Council social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn)	58%	54%	62%	74%	70%	48%	36%	38%	61%	61%	58%
Council newsletter	54%	54%	54%	34%	43%	62%	83%	67%	53%	44%	55%
Information sessions	47%	46%	48%	38%	50%	46%	55%	43%	47%	50%	47%
Council website	45%	43%	46%	44%	51%	44%	40%	42%	45%	53%	45%
Your Hawkesbury Your Say website	37%	33%	41%	35%	44%	44%	25%	51%	35%	55%	36%
Other	8%	6%	10%	9%	9%	8%	6%	8%	8%	0%	9%

Overall the majority of people preferred to receive communication via email or mail.

Social media and Council newsletters were preferred as a method to receive information over information sessions and the website.

In terms of overall satisfaction with Council, comparisons show that the level of communication from Council and consultation with the community has a substantial impact on resident satisfaction with the overall performance of Council.

Therefore, continuing to focus on communication, engagement and consultation with the community will likely increase their overall satisfaction and satisfaction with key service areas.

An online survey was conducted to understand specific preferences on communications from residents. The survey asked questions on usage of Council's website, social media, local news and newsletter. The survey was also used to recruit participants for the Communications Focus Group.

Two forms of the survey were rolled out, one to the Hawkesbury wide community and a second to target the St Albans community and gain their specific insights.

Survey 1 – Hawkesbury wide

The survey was hosted on Your Hawkesbury Your Say and promoted through Council's newsletter and social media. A total of 82 responses were received from residents across the Hawkesbury.

Key results included:

- The newsletter was read by over 75% of respondents, showing a high level of uptake and readership.

- Councils' social media, website, newsletter, direct mail, and word of mouth were the main methods people used to find out about local news or information from Council.

- Social media is well utilised with Facebook being the most popular and engaged with. 65% of respondents find Council's social media informative.

- Councils' website is well utilised with 74% of respondents accessing the website. The website is most often accessed for roads updates, reporting something, making a payment, disaster, and emergency updates or for information about Council's services.

- Topics of most interest are community events, upcoming projects and works (particularly roads updates) and Council's spending.

Survey 2 – St Albans Community

The survey was sent directly to community leaders in St Albans for distribution. A total of 10 responses were received from residents in St Albans, Upper and Central Macdonald and Fernances communities.

Key results included:

- The newsletter, social media, email, and website were noted as the most important sources of local news and information.

- The newsletter was highly utilised as a key information source.

- There was a lower uptake of social media, with Facebook preferred and informative by those who did use it.

- The website is a key source of disaster and emergency information and road updates.

- Residents care most about roads and works updates and Council event updates.

Two face-to-face focus groups were held by Council to directly engage residents and further understand the Community Satisfaction and Online Communications Survey results with targeted questions and analysis.

Communications Focus Group 1
Windsor Session

The first focus group was held on the 28 November 2023 at Hawkesbury Central Library in Windsor. Participants were randomly selected from those who expressed interest as part of the Community Satisfaction Survey or Online Communications Survey. Fourteen participants were present and completed a range of group activities, providing insight into their communication preferences and experiences.

There were five activities undertaken

Activity 1 – Social Media Rank and Sort

Activity 2 – Project Scenario

Activity 3 – Good and Bad

Activity 4 – $100 Budget

Activity 5 – Open Discussion

Details of the activities and the outcomes are provided in Appendix 1. The outcome of the workshop found:

- Social media is a key source of information and well utilised by those who are technology minded and want updates on what is occurring in the Hawkesbury.

- It can be hard to go back and find out information on social media, key information needs to be reflected on the website in a similar way. Links to the website for more information are useful.

- The website and social media received the widest support for funding across the two groups. These two platforms need to link and be cohesive with information and support. The website for more serious updates and social media for smaller, quicker updates and stories.

- The website is the source of truth but is hard to navigate and find what is needed, particularly bookings and key service information.

- Email is a simple and effective method for direct correspondence and could be more used.

- Little knowledge or awareness of Your Hawkesbury Your Say.

- The Newsletter is a great source of information, it could be increased and separated from the rates notice to a letterbox drop. It should not be used as a political publication.

Communications Focus Group 2
Colo Heights Session

The second focus group was held on the 30 November 2023 at Colo Heights Community Hall as part of the Community Hubs Program. Participants were attendees of the Hub interested in providing their insights to Council. Six participants were present and completed a range of activities, providing insight into their communication preferences and experiences.

Key results included:

- Colo Heights residents had similar insights to the larger Windsor focus group, with the newsletter and website highly valued.

- Social media was a key point of contact, with a desire to have Colo Heights specific information filtered to residents.

- These residents were much more focused on issues which affect them as a smaller local community. They are very passionate about Colo and the projects and events which affect and involve the area.

- Acknowledgement of Council's efforts to support outlying communities through the Hubs, focus groups and recent projects. These should be followed up with related communications and opportunities.

Aboriginal Engagement

Council recently met with the Merana Aboriginal Community Association from the Hawkesbury to better understand how they and the broader Aboriginal community would like to be engaged on Council projects. They advised that for significant projects they would like to be involved in focus groups and take part in online or phone surveys. A focus group will be held in the coming weeks to discuss the Draft Strategy and all the key Aboriginal groups and local representatives will be invited to attend. The outcomes of the engagement will be integrated into the Draft Strategy.

COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT

Councillors were invited to provide their feedback on the way Council communicates and engages at a Councillor workshop session. The session involved two of the activities which had previously been run at the Communication Focus Group.

Councillors were given a hypothetical budget and asked to allocate to a range of communications methods and discuss their choices. They were also asked to discuss methods to engage the community on key Council projects.

Key insights from Councillors included:

• Ensuring that current and future user groups of facilities are targeted and engaged

• Recognition that engaging everyone is a challenge and a range of methods must be employed depending on the project

• Other Council examples were discussed including the use of QR codes on physical structures to promote engagement from key user groups

• The importance of face to face and direct engagement methods, including town meetings and project special meetings

• Having different conversations with different user groups and across different communities

• The value of surveying communities and asking them about their specific concerns, communicating back to those individual communities through a 'microtargeted newsletter'

• Making better use of more targeted emails using Council's email databases

• Ensuring content is suitable for viewing on mobile devices

• Consider who Council are missing in their engagement (special needs, youth, young families)

• Consider the use of virtual reality and new technologies for big projects

Councillors are the voice of our community and a key input into our ongoing efforts to engage and consult our residents and stakeholders. These insights and the role of our Councillors have been incorporated into the development and implementation of this strategy.

The Hawkesbury Show was held between the 19 - 21 April 2024. Council had a tent at the Show where they engaged with more than 17, 000 on a range of issues. An engagement activity 'Help us help you' gave us the opportunity to discuss how people would like Council to communicate with them. The feedback from more than 300 people was consistent with the 2023 Community Satisfaction Survey and the Communication Focus Groups indicating people's preferred method of communication when receiving information from Council:

Direct mail
40%

Social media
30%

Newsletter
15%

Website
10%

face to face information sessions
5%

The data obtained validated many of Council's current approaches and initiatives to communicate and engage with the community. Overall, the community is satisfied with and highly values Council's communication and engagement. Residents are passionate and desire opportunities to engage with and receive information from Council on a wide range of topics; particularly roads/key project updates, emergency information and what's on including events. Council's communication has a significant impact on the overall satisfaction the Hawkesbury community has with Council and its services.

Actions within this plan will build upon the successful strategies and learnings that are already being practised at Council.

There is a clear understanding and sensitivity of the size of the Hawkesbury Local Government Area, it's diversity and the challenges that exist to engage the more remote and rural communities.

In order to deliver meaningful and inclusive engagement opportunities a multilayered approach which reflects the Hawkesbury's specific geographic and demographic considerations has been developed considering the broad outcomes that emerged from the engagement activities:

Newsletter and eNewsletter

The newsletter is strongly supported as a key source of updates and information across the Hawkesbury. It has stronger traction with older residents. It is a key point of contact for news, events, project updates and information.

Council has created a fornightly email newsletter to promote Council activities, events and service updates, and is building a subscriber database.

Social Media

Council's social media is a key source of information, particularly with the younger population. Improvements could be made to provide tailored content for local communities and linking key information with Council's website. Posts need to be engaging, clear and use local imagery.

Website

The website is the key source of truth and central point for information for Hawkesbury residents, particularly disaster related information, bookings and service access. The website could be improved in accessibility, functionality and usability as well as link to Council's social media more effectively.

Online Engagement Platform

Your Hawkesbury Your Say is underutilised and not well known in the community as a tool for direct engagement with Council. Promoting the tool and its role as an engagement portal will assist in involving residents.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is a strongly supported source of information for the community, specifically for targeted or resident specific information and correspondence. The use of direct mail could be increased/refined to leverage off the community support for this method.

Face to Face

Ensure where appropriate that face to face engagement is utilised, including town meetings, project specific meetings, focus groups, targeted campaigns and events.

Council is always looking to innovate and develop communication channels that meet the specific demographics of our community in an effective manner and has developed an action plan to address the identified concerns, suggestions and opportunities.

Under 18

- Identify further opportunities within the Student Leadership Program to educate students with broad (Council services and function) and detailed (specific projects) information.

- Identify further opportunities to engage young people at our major events with diverse activities.

- Continue to develop the Events Passports activity at major events.

- Identify further opportunities to engage young people with pop-up events at opportunities including new playground openings.

18-34

- Continue development and promotion of the Hawkesbury Bite-Size concept. Bite-Size takes the Community Newsletter and recreates it for a digital / social media audience, with an emphasis on delivering the same information in a significantly reduced format for those with a busy lifestyle. This demographic is also less likely to receive a Rates Notice and therefore don't receive a hard copy of the Community Newsletter.

- Create a Corporate Instagram page to mirror the information on Facebook but in a platform and demographic-specific way.

35-49

- Develop a suite of flyers that would be suitable as inserts in official Council letters, such as the Rates Notice. These can be regarding a Council service, or a specific upcoming engagement opportunity.

- Continue to monitor and follow Facebook trends to optimise our posts for greater engagement.

50-64 and beyond

- Identify further opportunities for direct mail that is targeted and cost effective.

- Customer Experience Pop-up sessions.

All ages

- Update the Corporate website to be easier to navigate and provide more up-to-date information.

- Continue to review website analytics quarterly and update the website in response to analytics.

- Ensure information on social media is reflected on the website.

- Further explore the use of Council's email databases to send information to our community.

- Explore the use of town meetings, project specific meetings and focus groups as a source of direct engagement.

- Develop and grow the email newsletter due to its broad appeal across age groups.

- Explore opportunities to better integrate Your Hawkesbury Your Say and the Corporate website, and to promote more intensively to ratepayers.

- Review and update Council's Community Participation Plan.

- Include periodic competitions in the Community Newsletter to broaden appeal and engagement across all age groups.

- Broaden use of tactile ground decals from only major events to include major projects and other key messaging.

- Investigate the use of signage and physical structures as a place to place engagement material.

- Explore the creation of targeted emails, Facebook and digital media content for specific communities.

- Review the Library/Gallery/Museum digital pages.

- Consider the placement of paper copies of documents on exhibition in the Library.

- Consider the use of virtual reality technology for significant projects.

- Continue to investigate the use of new and emerging technologies.

- Explore the continued use of SMS messaging for targeted engagements, e.g. waste communications and road closures.

Geographically isolated communities

- Maintain Council's ongoing commitment to the Community Hubs; and leverage the Hubs as conduits to deliver broader and community specific information.

- Explore the continued opportunities to use targeted SMS in the event of natural disasters and emergencies for road and waste advise.

- Explore the use of targeted information and Facebook posts.

- Continue to build relationships with geographically isolated communities Facebook Administrators so they can share relevant content onto their social media pages.

- Explore further opportunities for online community meetings and face to face engagement opportunities.

- Explore opportunities to build recovery and resilience in disaster affected communities.

Aboriginal community

- Work with key members of Aboriginal communities and be guided by them to undertake engagement that is place based, targeted and meaningful.

- Consideration of an inclusion of Acknowledgement of Country in Council's correspondence (action in Council's draft Reconciliation Action Plan).

- Engage with key members and the broader Aboriginal community on significant projects using focus groups, online and phone surveys.

- Review the outcomes of the Reconciliation Action Plan and update relevent actions in Council's engagement.

Army of Ambassadors

- Continue to update staff using a range of methods, 10@10 presentations, GM Quarterly Updates, GM Weekly emails.

- Include engagement responsibilities in the corporate onboarding program.

- Continue to deliver weekly Councillor email updates and hold Councillor briefings, workshops each month.

- Explore development of our IAP2 capacity across the organisation.

Ongoing initiatives

- Summer water safety campaign.

- Your Hawkesbury Your Say – create opportunities to increase general awareness, participation and use of the tool.

- Western Sydney Infrastructure Grant program – pre, during and post construction engagement.

Best practice

- Best practice engagement that is meaningful, accessible and appropriate for our community, which includes:
  - Translating information when required, avoiding technical jargon and using simple language in all communication.
  - A variety of engagement methods are used, with both online and face to face options provided where possible.
- Coordinate engagement activities to avoid multiple concurrent large scale consultations/ public exhibitions where possible.
- Share engagement and research insights with all staff via presentations (10@10), documented case studies and internal publications of data to encourage informed, best practice decision making.
- Continue to build capacity across the organisation including advice and training on the use of the Engagement Tool Kit and Communication and Engagement Project Plans.
- Deliver on commitments outlined in Council strategies including the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan (yet to be adopted), Customer Experience Strategy (yet to be adopted).
- Ensure we are receiving good quality information to inform our engagement and preparation of communications plans.

Excluded options

- X (formerly known as Twitter) is declining as platform, and does not rate among ratepayers as a social media platform of choice. It is also not considered a safe media space in terms of mediating and monitoring/moderating content posted by users.
- TikTok is prohibited Australia-wide on all government-connected electronic devices due to concerns over security of data.

Measure, Report, Monitor

- Prepare regular engagement updates for significant projects to Councillors via Weekly Councillor Update email.
- Provide updates to community on project specific engagement outcomes by use of email database, newsletter, social media, Council reports.
- Conduct community satisfaction survey to understand community satisfaction with communication and engagement.
- Monitor and review Council's engagement activities in order to identify areas for improvement including:
  - Review this Strategy every four years
  - Conducting and reporting on the Community Satisfaction Survey
  - Monitor participation levels in engagement activities
  - Review verbal and written feedback on engagement effectiveness
  - Review the growth of Your Hawkesbury Your Say.
- Using digital analytics, measure the effectiveness of engagment activites to refine and inform future activities.

Appendix 1
Online Communications Survey and Communications Focus Groups Activities and Results

Communications Focus Groups

Two face-to-face focus groups were held by Council to directly engage residents and further understand the Community Satisfaction and Online Communications Survey results with targeted questions and analysis.

Communications Focus Group 1 - Windsor Session

The first focus group was held on the 28 November 2023 at Hawkesbury Central Library in Windsor. Participants were randomly selected from those who expressed interest as part of the Community Satisfaction Survey or Online Communications Survey. 14 participants were present and completed a range of group activities, providing insight into their communication preferences and experiences.

Activity 1 | Social Media Rank and Sort

Groups were asked to discuss 5 real social media posts from Council and the engaging elements of each. Key themes included:
- Social media is a key source of information and well utilised by those who are technology minded and want updates on what is occurring in the Hawkesbury.
- Preferences on topics differ depending on demographics, background, and interests. A diverse range of posts is preferred.
- Posts need to be clear, concise and include local imagery/videos.
- Long blocks of text are not engaging.
- Local issues/topics are more engaging including park upgrades, roads upgrades or regional issues.
- It can be hard to go back and find out information – needs to be reflected on the website in a similar way. Links to the website for more information are useful.
- Inviting the community to share their opinion or respond is engaging.

Activity 2 | Project Scenario

Groups were given a scenario to engage the community on an upcoming project – The North Richmond Community Hub.

Key ideas included:
- Events at the community centre showcasing the projects.
- Open days.
- Letter box info drops.
- Social Media campaigns.
- Newsletter articles / information sheets.
- Signage in high traffic areas promoting the project.
- Communicate through local community networks.
- Town Hall information sessions.
- Naming competitions.
- Engage families and students through local schools.
- Surveying of the community on preferences.
- Understanding of diversity and inclusivity.

Activity 3 | Good and Bad

Groups were asked to: Write down and discuss one good and one bad thing about Council's communication.

Like:

- "I really enjoy updates for what's on and roads updates"
- "It excites me when the Council tells me the roads being sealed
- "I like the newsletter as it's informative and broad reaching via post"
- "The newsletter is good"
- "I like the updates in general"
- "Social media is quick and easy"
- "Roads updates, visuals and first aid courses"
- "Letterbox drops on projects and works"
- "The satisfaction survey"
- "I like the way Council puts a newsletter in with the rates"
- "I enjoy when Council do events for the community"
- "I like the physical newsletter when it has information about new facilities and services"
- "I like Council's updates during flooding and fires"
- "I like seeing photos on Council website/Facebook"
- "Community newsletters"
- "I like the community booklet with the rates"

Do not like:

- "I don't enjoy all the emails"
- "I don't like how short notice some information is"
- "Incomplete responses to complaints"
- "I don't like the turnaround time"
- "Following up"
- "Slow to fix things and keep to schedules"
- "I don't like when they take our road off the list"
- "It frustrates me when I can't find information easily on the website"
- "I don't like how there was no interest or concern regarding a particular tree that came down on the road"
- "Very slow to communicate if at all via email"
- "I don't like too much, unclear information"
- "Facilities that I didn't know were available"
- "Recent flood survey was super confusing"
- "Calling Council"

Activity 4 | $100 Budget

Groups were given a hypothetical budget and asked to allocate to a range of communications methods and discuss their choices.

Key results included:

- The website and social media received the widest support for funding across the two groups. These two platforms need to link and be cohesive with information and support. The website for more serious updates and social media for smaller, quicker updates and stories.
- The website is the source of truth but is hard to navigate and find what is needed, particularly bookings and key service information.
- Email is a simple and effective method for direct correspondence and could be more used.
- Little knowledge or awareness of Your Hawkesbury Your Say.
- The Newsletter is a great source of information, it could be increased and separated from the rates notice to a letterbox drop. It should not be used as a political publication.

Activity 5 | Open Discussion

A brainstorm was facilitated with each participant giving their overall thoughts on Council's communication methods and approaches with suggestions for improvements.

Key discussions included:
- The newsletter is a key piece of information and should be further supported.
- More regular updates are needed on Council's spending and key projects.
- Council is good to deal with unless something major occurs or a follow up is required.
- The website is the central source of truth and needs to be improved.
- Support for the survey, focus groups and overall willingness to engage and consult.

Communications Focus Group 2 – Colo Heights Session

The second focus group was held on the 30 November 2023 at Colo Heights Community Hall as part of the Community Hubs Program. Participants were attendees of the Hub interested in providing their insights to Council. 6 participants were present and completed a range of activities, providing insight into their communication preferences and experiences.

Key results included:

- Colo Heights residents had similar insights to the larger Windsor focus group, with the newsletter and website highly valued.
- Social media was a key point of contact, with a desire to have Colo Heights specific information filtered to residents.
- These residents were much more focused on issues which affect them as a smaller local community. They are very passionate about Colo and the projects and events which affect and involve the area.
- Acknowledgement of Council's efforts to support outlying communities through the Hubs, focus groups and recent projects. These should be followed up with related communications and opportunities.