community engagement strategy

2024

ballina
shire council

our community our future
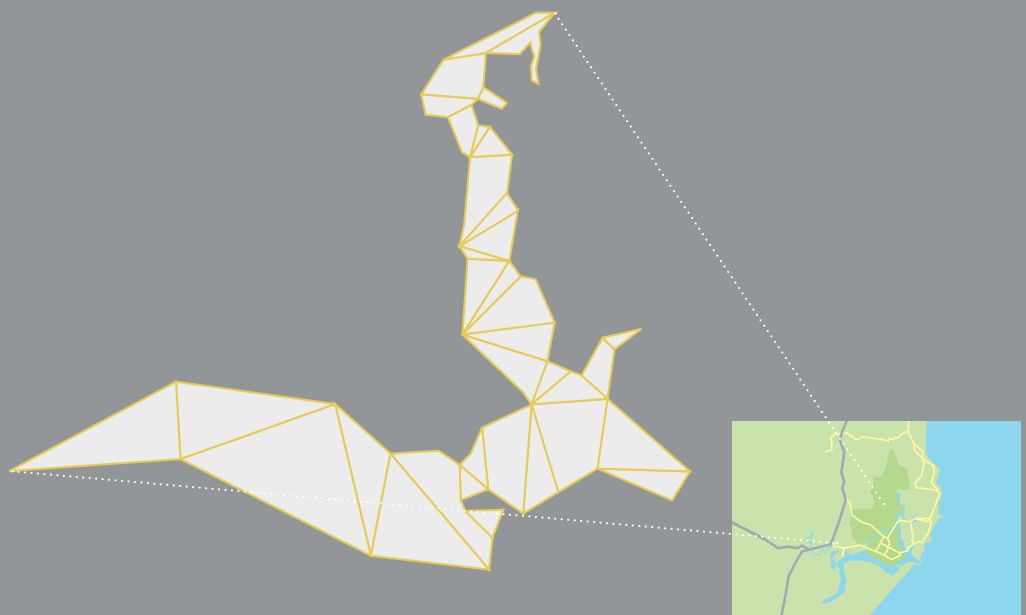
Our design rationale for this document is based on a conceptual interpretation of its contents. To symbolise the strategic community approach, we have used segmented shapes to represent the elements of the community that fit into the geographic focus – Ballina. Together, the shapes form the Ballina River map. Every element impacts on the challenges, direction and ultimately the future of its entire form – our community. We hope you enjoy the journey and the view.

Ballina Shire Council acknowledges that we are here on the land of the Bundjalung people. The Bundjalung are the traditional owners of this land and are part of the oldest surviving continuous culture in the world.

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➔ RELATIONSHIP OF THIS CES:
The Ballina Community Engagement Strategy (CES) is a key component in meeting Council's legislative requirements for community participation under the Local Government Act 1993.

NEWRYBAR

To Brisbane

To Byron Bay

KNOCKROW

HINTERLAND WAY

PACIFIC HIGHWAY

SEVEN MILE
BEACH

TINTENBAR

LENNOX
HEAD

TEVEN

LENNOX
HEAD

SHAG
ROCK

BOULDER
BEACH

IRON
PEG
SKENNARS
HEAD

CUMBALUM

SKENNARS
HEAD

WHITES
HEAD

To Lismore

SHARPES
BEACH

WOLLONGBAR

FLAT
ROCK

ANGELS
BEACH

ALSTONVILLE

EAST
BALLINA

BLACK
HEAD

SHELLY
BEACH

BALLINA
HEAD

BALLINA

BRUXNER HIGHWAY

LIGHTHOUSE
BEACH

WEST BALLINA

SOUTH BALLINA

SOUTH BALLINA
BEACH

BESWICK
BEACH

PACIFIC HIGHWAY

EMPIRE VALE

ROBINS
BEACH

PATCHS
BEACH

WARDELL

To Grafton
& Sydney

0   5

kilometres

*message from our **mayor***

> In local government, our community's needs, priorities, and values are at the core of everything we do.

Effective community engagement is key to achieving alignment, ensuring the policies, programs, and services we provide genuinely reflect what matters to our residents.

Engagement goes beyond informing and gathering feedback. It means connecting with a wide range of voices, listening deeply, understanding diverse perspectives, and thoughtfully incorporating that feedback to achieve the best possible outcomes for the broader community.

By inviting input on major projects, plans and policies, we gain valuable insights that help us make better decisions, create sustainable solutions, and build a community where people feel valued and involved.

The Ballina Shire Council's Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for ongoing, transparent engagement.

While opinions and values may differ, our proactive approach aims to empower residents to share their voices, knowing they play a meaningful role in shaping our community's future.

Together, we can create a vibrant shire where people want to live, work, and visit - guided by the needs and aspirations of our community.

Cr Sharon Cadwallader

Mayor of Ballina Shire

introduction

Ballina Shire Council values input from the wider community as it helps to ensure that the services we provide are relevant, timely and of value.

A Community Engagement Strategy (CES) is a key component in meeting Council's legislative requirements for community participation under the *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The legislation asks councils to actively engage with their local communities as a principle of good governance and recognises that community participation results in better outcomes.

This CES is a roadmap for creating and maintaining positive relationships and effective engagement with our community. It strives to embed best practice consultation across Council now and into the future.

The level that we engage with the community will vary substantially depending on the scale and scope of the project or plan.

Community, as referred to in the CES, includes anyone that is affected by the project or plan, and can include individuals, community groups, non-government organisations, NSW and Australian government bodies.

02

what is community engagement?

Community engagement, also known as 'public participation', is about involving people in decision making and it is at the very core of the democratic processes in local government.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Ballina Shire Council recognises that people have a right to be informed and to have a say on projects that are important to them, or which have an impact on their daily lives. 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.

WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines our approach to engage with the community and stakeholders. It provides transparency and clarity for all stakeholders so they can understand their role in the decision-making process. The strategy outlines who, when and how we will engage on plans, policies, projects and service delivery.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Council must comply with a legislation that sets out when we must initiate consultation. Section 402A of the *Local Government Act 1993* requires council to: *establish and implement a strategy (called its community engagement strategy) for 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 DOCUMENT SITS ALONGSIDE THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) requires planning authorities to outline how and when the community will be engaged across planning functions like policy making and assessment. These requirements are outlined in our Community Participation Plan (CPP) which is available on Council's website **ballina.nsw.gov.au**

Our Community Engagement Strategy (this document) has been developed in response to these requirements as well as those set out in the *Local Government Act 1993*. This strategy also covers non-planning matters.

State policy to encourage people to retain older dwellings rather than sell to developers

State policy 4 to encourage population shift away from coast

Approve more housing diversity

Sticking to 8.5/9m height limit

accepting that others want to live here.

revisit urban planning

Inclusion of all demographics in planning

Land not designated for adequate path ways

Development centers – not sufficiently enforced

Conflict between state & council approvals

State gov doesn't listen at local level re short plan

Gov't incentives to relocate / move to regional locations

Regional development supported by decentralization of gov't jobs & departments

Greater gov't investment in supported housing for essential service workers ie Police etc

Incentives to subdivide – reduced costs, cost simplification

Higher developer contributions

Disassembling tax incentives (negative gearing)

Policy no restrictions on short term letting

Policy height restrictions buildings.

increasing disparity of incomes. low wages for many coastal services

negative gearing / grants of empty houses.

allow more granny flats

Variation in block sizes

Compulsory Variation in housing types in new devps

Minimum house & lot sizes.

Co-ordination between Gov Depts re development infrastructure planning – schools

Councils role in ensuring State controlled infrastructure eg schools in developments

$20,000 cap limits infrastructure good.

Toward... ↑ ways low income earners, Policy to support housing for essential workers

development done privately & for profit

Diverse / innovative housing ideas eg? Multiple Occupancy housing farms, boarding ...

Greater economic support for innovative ideas / solutions.

Policy shift to discarding people getting more than they need for themselves

mass cut + fill – endless rock walls

Luxury dwellings! Unaffordable to low income renters

restrictive covenants that limit possibilities for affordable housing.

lack of diversity of housing types, lot sizes.

lack of satellite villages (need to allow local ...)

Additional amenities – toilets, seating

Reduced traffic in CBD – one way traffic flow

Beach access for impaired users

Good mobility pathways – eg for carts, places to park securely (carts)

asking for large sizes.

desire for large house, social contact

isolated development (without connection or infrastructure)

accessible housing for later in life.

higher density near village centres.

Cheaper housing for our children

Intergenerational housing design.

housing near public transport routes. – encourage community – walk / ride & public transport.

Hunterland development

adequate supply – affordable

space for trees + gardens aesthetically pleasing?

local services adequate eg schools, preschools supports

appropriate scale + intimacy. light, good ventilation. sun.

desi... to ... happ... ... to b...

Social housing options

Duplex options non traditional 3 bedders

More 1-2 bedroom options (units/g...)

Young people share housing

Community access/... structure to service housing

Connectiveness between housing styles

Open space & recreational facilities

Environmentally sensitive construction of housing

Infrastructure planning prior to enable development

To be able to live in my dog approved ...

02

engagement
aims

Our community engagement aims:

Build relationships and trust
Act in an honest, open and respectful way to build strong relationships, partnerships and trust with our stakeholders.

Right to be involved
Believe stakeholders have a right to be involved in decisions that affect them.

Clarity of purpose
Well planned with a defined purpose and stages for community input.

Accessible and inclusive
Seek views representative of the community and provide a range of activities to ensure that the broadest possible range of stakeholders can participate.

Timely and coordinated
Engage early and provide enough time for our stakeholders to provide input so that view can be considered.

Tailored
Use a range of communication and engagement methods that suit the purpose and type of project we are consulting on. Consider the impact, complexity, risk, and timing and range of stakeholders involved.

Transparent
Make decisions in an open and transparent way and provide feedback to stakeholders to explain decisions, reducing level of misinformation.

Learning from practice
Evaluate our engagement activities and continuously improve.

social justice principles

Our approach reflects the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.

▸ Better **understand** the needs of the community.

▸ **Educate** the community and stakeholders about the potential issues that may impact Ballina Shire over the next 10 years.

▸ Obtain **input** into a 10 year vision for the shire including future priorities, needs and aspirations.

▸ **Inform** the community and stakeholders (target audiences) of the opportunities to participate in the development of plans, policies and programs.

▸ **Engage** with a broad cross section of the community that is representative and inclusive of our demographics.

▸ **Create** collaborative partnerships with government agencies to ensure goals and strategies are inclusive of existing state and regional plans.

▸ **Meet** requirements of legislation, policies and procedures.

who we are

If we are to effectively engage, we need a clear picture of who we are.

TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND

We seek to address the legacy of our past and ensure a great quality of life for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The traditional owners of the Ballina area are the Bundjalung people. 3.9% of our community identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

POPULATION

Our largest population cohort lives in the Lennox Head – Skennars Head area, followed by Ballina Island, while our rural hinterland has the smallest population.

In 2022 the total population of Ballina Shire Council was estimated to be 46,000 people. Between 2024 and 2036 the Ballina Shire population is forecast to increase by approximately 8,103 people, or 16.5% growth, at an average annual change of 1.3%.

We are an ageing population, with a higher proportion (27%) of people over the age of 65.

Our median age is 48 years, 5 years older than the median age in Regional NSW.

Based on Ballina Shire's population in 2016, there are nearly 7% living with disability or needing assistance in their daily life in our shire. the median age in Regional NSW.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Overall, our unemployment rate of 3.4% is lower than that of Regional NSW, at 4.6%.

In 2021, households in Ballina Shire had a weekly median income of $1,465, in line with that of Regional NSW. Overall, 16.3% of households earned a high income and over half of households are considered middle income households. A quarter of all household are considered low income, earning less than $800 per week.

HOUSING

Housing affordability and homelessness will continue to be issues to address. It is important for us to provide access to all sectors of the community to participate in engagement.

In Ballina Shire, 49% of houses are occupied by one or two person households with household size declining. House prices and median rents have increased significantly over the 2018 to 2022 period, with rental vacancies remaining low.

Ballina Shire's houseless population has also increased. In 2023 it was estimated the houseless population in Ballina Shire was 30 people, up from 20 people in 2021.

who we engage with

A vital component of the community engagement process includes identifying and understanding key stakeholders who will be impacted by or who have an interest in a decision. Our engagement aims to reach the community to ensure a range of views are heard.

GROUPS	MEMBERS*
COMMUNITY	• Residents • Workforce • Rate payers • Regular visitors • Students • Families • Singles • Retirees • Renters • Landlords • Farmers • Faith groups • Clubs, Associations • Community Organisations • Arts and Cultural organisations • Sporting organisations **UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS:** • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders • People with disabilities • Migrants and new Australian Citizens • Youth groups • Seniors
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	• Local businesses • Chambers of Commerce • Visitors (tourism, events, business) • Industry Associations and representatives (i.e. health, tourism, agriculture, hospitality, real estate)

GROUPS	MEMBERS*
ESSENTIAL SERVICES	• Emergency services • Utility providers • Public transport providers • Schools and education providers • Disability support services
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	• State and Federal Government members, agencies, departments and funded partners • Jali Local Aboriginal Land Council • Neighbouring Councils (incl. Rous, Lismore, Byron) • Northern Rivers Joint Organisation
BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL	• Mayor and Councillors • Executive/Leadership Team • Staff • Organisation with a council delegate • Ward Committees • Standing Committees • Reference Groups • Other Committees

NOTE: Above are not listed in any order of priority.

*This list is not exhaustive and can be used as a guide when conducting stakeholder analysis for each specific project.

what we engage on

PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	TIMEFRAME
INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING DOCUMENTS	Involve	28 days
COUNCIL POLICIES	Consult	28 days or 42 days as specified by legislative requirements or Council resolution
MASTER PLANS TO INFORM FUTURE WORKS	Involve	At least 28 days
PLACE MAKING E.G. STREETSCAPE MASTER PLAN	Collaborate	At least 28 days
COUNCIL STRATEGIES	Involve	At least 28 days
RECLASSIFICATION OF LAND	Consult	28 days
DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS	Consult	14 days Council may extend the public exhibition period without further notification to those already advised
PROJECT AND SERVICE DELIVERY	Inform	7 days
EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS	Inform	As soon as practicable e.g. weather events impacting roads and services, water outages

* timeframes listed in the Community Participation Plan

PROJECT	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	TIMEFRAME
ROAD NAMING PROPOSALS	Consult	21 days with a further 21 days after Council and Geographical Names Board approval
DONATION REQUESTS	Inform	28 days
AUSTRALIA DAY NOMINATIONS	Inform	at least 3 months
LEASES, TENDERS, EOI	Inform	14 days
COMMITTEE AND WARD REPRESENTATION	Inform	28 days
LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT	Involve	At least 28 days *
PLANNING PROPOSAL TO MODIFY THE BALLINA LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (BLEP)	Consult	28 days * or as specified by the gateway determination, which may find that no exhibition is required for a minor proposal
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN	Consult	28 days *
DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTION PLANS	Consult	28 days *
VOLUNTARY PLANNING AGREEMENTS	Consult	28 days *

* timeframes listed in the Community Participation Plan

03

how we engage

engaging **in person**

Engagement or participation is not only about having your say, it is also about listening to others to understand their point of view. In person engagement activities allow an opportunity for discussion.

- Exhibition documentation displayed in Ballina's Customer Service Centre
- Community workshops and stakeholder meetings and information sessions enable the community to understand and be understood by others when sharing their views
- Council deputations allow community members to address Councillors on items for consideration at a council meeting
- Committees provide a meeting forum for community group representatives to raise issues relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference
- Direct contact, either in person or over the phone, with individual community members and groups on specific projects and plans.

engaging
online

Online communication and engagement is growing and can allow people who may otherwise be excluded from in-person engagement activities to have their say.

- Council's online engagement platform *yoursayballina.com.au* provides the community with a central place online to have their say on a range of projects open for feedback
- Council's website provides information to the public on all Council projects and services
- Social media keeps the community up to date on Council news and and provides the community access opportunities to learn more and have their say on Council matters
- eNews provides a fortnightly update on council news including council meetings, Community Connect Magazine, exhibition material, and development proposals.

engaging
traditionally

There is still a need and appetite for traditional methods of engagement. Some traditional methods are outlined under engaging in person.

- Print publications distributed to our stakeholder groups include Ballina Shire Council's Community Connect, Ballina and Lennox Wave, Koori Mail, Ballina Times, and specific industry and special interest publications

- Direct mail to residents and groups, including letters, Community Connect and rates notices. Drop spots at frequently visited locations

- Onsite or physical displays and signage at events or key locations.
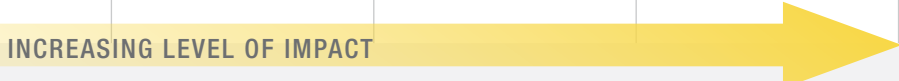
levels *of community participation*

In developing the Community Engagement Strategy, the International Association for Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2) is used, with the following levels of community participation.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
GOAL	To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner	To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions	To work with the public to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision-making	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public
PROMISE	*"We will keep you informed"*	*"We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns"*	*"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decisions made"*	*"We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible"*	*"We will implement what you decide"*
METHODS (E.G)	Customer service Website Media release Social media Community Connect Magazine Print and digital advertising eNews Site signage Rates notice Direct contact (email, phone, letter drop) Live Traffic	YourSay Ballina Information sessions Face to face Street stalls Written submissions Meetings by invitation	Community Survey YourSay Ballina Community workshops Standing and Other Committees Reference Groups	Design Charrette Citizens Panel Standing and Other Committees Reference Groups	Referendums Election of Councillors

INCREASING LEVEL OF IMPACT

The above list of methods is not exhaustive. It is anticipated that by using different techniques Council will be able to connect with the broader community and stakeholder agencies and in particular reach silent and under-represented groups. A determined effort will be made to reach people who would otherwise not attend public meetings or be reached via other forms of traditional consultation.
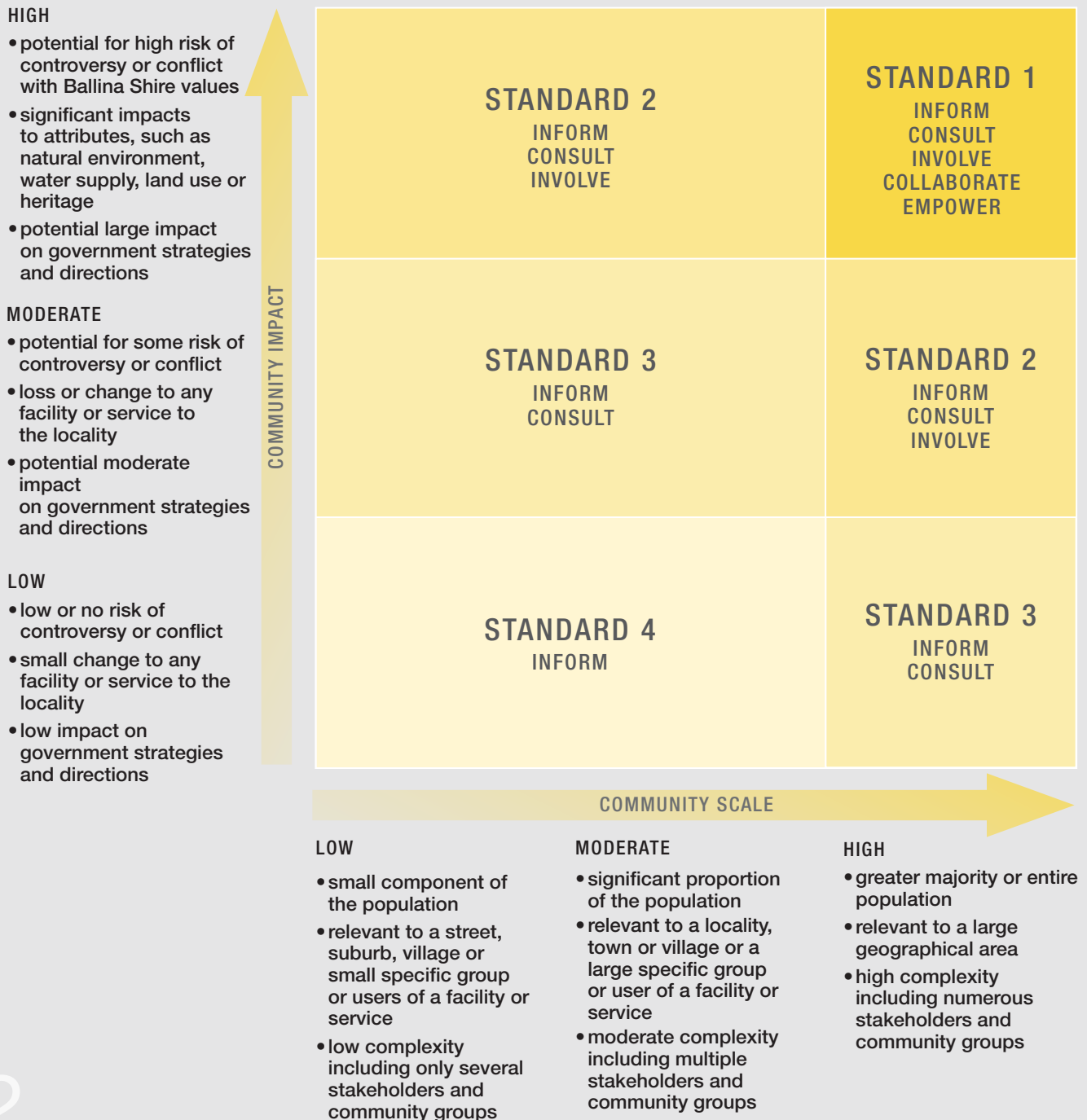
➜ ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The engagement activity to be used at the various stages of engagement is provided in the following engagement tools

04

engagement *standards matrix*

The level of community participation (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) can be determined by assessing the impact and scale a particular engagement project will have on our community.

HIGH
- potential for high risk of controversy or conflict with Ballina Shire values
- significant impacts to attributes, such as natural environment, water supply, land use or heritage
- potential large impact on government strategies and directions

MODERATE
- potential for some risk of controversy or conflict
- loss or change to any facility or service to the locality
- potential moderate impact on government strategies and directions

LOW
- low or no risk of controversy or conflict
- small change to any facility or service to the locality
- low impact on government strategies and directions

COMMUNITY IMPACT

STANDARD 2 INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE	**STANDARD 1** INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE EMPOWER
STANDARD 3 INFORM CONSULT	**STANDARD 2** INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE
STANDARD 4 INFORM	**STANDARD 3** INFORM CONSULT

COMMUNITY SCALE

LOW
- small component of the population
- relevant to a street, suburb, village or small specific group or users of a facility or service
- low complexity including only several stakeholders and community groups

MODERATE
- significant proportion of the population
- relevant to a locality, town or village or a large specific group or user of a facility or service
- moderate complexity including multiple stakeholders and community groups

HIGH
- greater majority or entire population
- relevant to a large geographical area
- high complexity including numerous stakeholders and community groups

engagement
methods and resourcing

Our engagement methods are outlined according to the level of community participation, which can be determined by using the matrix on the previous page. The following tables suggest engagement channels according to the standard level (1, 2, 3, 4).

INFORM

ENGAGEMENT CHANNEL	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	SUGGESTED ACTION STANDARD (SEE PAGE 22)			
					1	2	3	4
CUSTOMER SERVICE	Information provided to customer service officers to respond to customer enquiries.	👤	+	-	■	■	■	■
BALLINA SHIRE COUNCIL WEBSITE	Information is published on Council's website e.g. project updates, latest news, water outages.	🌐	+	$	■	■	■	▨
MEDIA RELEASE	Issued to news outlets and service providers. Includes Community Service Announcements.	🌐	+	-	■	■	▨	⊖
SOCIAL MEDIA	Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Linkedin).	🌐	+	$	■	■	▨	☐
COMMUNITY CONNECT MAGAZINE	Council's quarterly magazine and official location for community notifications.	📄 🌐	++	$$	■	▨	☐	⊖

TYPE	👤 in person	🌐 online	📄 traditional	
TIME	+ 0-5 hours	++ 5-25 hours	+++ over 25 hours	*minimum per task including preparation and staff time*
COST	- no cost	$ <$1,000	$$ $1,001-$10,000	$$$ >$10,000 *minimum costs not including staff time*
ACTION	■ required	▨ recommended	☐ optional	⊖ not required

04 *engagement methods and resourcing* cont.

INFORM

ENGAGEMENT CHANNEL	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	SUGGESTED ACTION			
					STANDARD (SEE PAGE 22)			
					1	2	3	4
TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL ADVERTISING	Digital marketing, newspapers, industry and print publications, radio, bus shelters, cinema.	📄 🌐	++	$$	⊠	⊠	☐	⊖
ENEWS	Council's project based or general eNews. Subscribe at *ballina.nsw. gov.au/eNews*	🌐	+	$	■	⊠	☐	⊖
PRESENTATIONS	Present to stakeholder groups. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	👤	++	-	⊠	☐	⊖	⊖
DIRECT MAIL	Addressed correspondence to a specific location, person or organisation.	📄	++	$$$	■	⊠	☐	☐
LETTERBOX DROP	Unaddressed bulk drop (letter, flyer, notification) to people with a letterbox in a determined area.	📄	++	$$	⊠	⊠	☐	☐
LOCAL DROP SPOTS	Circulate information or posters to frequently visited locations such as libraries and the Visitor Information Centre.	📄	++	$	⊠	⊠	☐	☐
INFORMATION IN RATES NOTICE MAILOUT	Provide information in annual or quarterly rates notices.	📄	++	$$$	⊠	⊠	☐	☐

INFORM

ENGAGEMENT CHANNEL	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	SUGGESTED ACTION STANDARD (SEE PAGE 22)			
					1	2	3	4
RATES NOTICE ADVERTISING	Use advertising space on the back of the payment slip on rates notices. Annual notice will reach all ratepayers, but reach will reduce each quarter depending on outstanding rates due.	📄 traditional	+	$	▨	▨	☐	☐
SITE SIGNAGE	If there is a specific site, erect signage to inform the public about project information and timeframes.	📄 traditional	+	$$	■	▨	▨	☐
SITE TOUR	Provide an informative/guided tour.	👤 in person	+	$	▨	☐	☐	☐
COUNCIL EMAIL FOOTERS	Provide a 'call to action' link and image in Council emails.	🌐 online	+	-	☐	☐	⊖	⊖
ON HOLD TELEPHONE MESSAGES	Short message to customer 'on hold' information.	🌐 online	+	$	■	☐	⊖	⊖
LIVE TRAFFIC	Publish road status due to weather events, projects and incidents *livetraffic.com.au*	🌐 online	+	$	▨	▨	▨	☐

TYPE 👤 in person 🌐 online 📄 traditional

TIME + 0-5 hours ++ 5-25 hours +++ over 25 hours *minimum per task including preparation and staff time*

COST - no cost $ <$1,000 $$ $1,001-$10,000 $$$ >$10,000 *minimum costs not including staff time*

ACTION ■ required ▨ recommended ☐ optional ⊖ not required

25

04 engagement methods and resourcing *cont.*

CONSULT

ENGAGEMENT METHOD	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	ACTION TO BE TAKEN STANDARD (SEE PAGE 18)			
					1	2	3	4
'YOUR SAY BALLINA' ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM	Key source of truth, housing all project information and timelines. Seek feedback using consultation tools such as interactive mapping, voting tools, polls, surveys, discussion forums and written submissions on *yoursayballina.com.au*	online	+++	$$	■	■	◨	⊖
INFORMATION SESSIONS	Stakeholders invited to interactive information session about an upcoming project. Includes onsite/location based meetings. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	in person	++	$$	◨	■	☐	⊖
STREET STALLS	Physical presence at key locations with high pedestrian traffic such as central business areas, markets and events.	in person	++	$	◨	◨	☐	⊖
FACE TO FACE	Includes door knocking, visiting key stakeholders and individuals at their home, business, or location, to keep them informed and provide two-way discussion.	in person	++	-	◨	◨	☐	⊖
MEETINGS BY INVITATION	Invite stakeholders to meet with staff and/or Councillors to discuss and exchange views. Include onsite/location based meetings. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	in person	+	-	■	■	◨	⊖

TYPE	👤 in person	🌐 online	📄 traditional
TIME	+ 0-5 hours	++ 5-25 hours	+++ over 25 hours *minimum per task including preparation and staff time*
COST	- no cost	$ <$1,000	$$ $1,001-$10,000 $$$ >$10,000 *minimum costs not including staff time*
ACTION	■ required	◨ recommended	☐ optional ⊖ not required

INVOLVE

ENGAGEMENT METHOD	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	ACTION TO BE TAKEN STANDARD (SEE PAGE 18)			
					1	2	3	4
COMMUNITY SURVEY	Council undertakes a community survey every two years to understand the communities priorities and overall level of satisfaction with Council's performance. These in-depth community surveys randomly survey 500 residents via telephone (mobile and landline). Survey results can inform engagement projects.	📄	+++	$$$	▨	☐	⊖	⊖
STANDING AND OTHER COMMITTEES	Add an item to engage relevant standing or other committee agenda. See page 14 for list of committees.	👤	+++	$	◼	▨	⊖	⊖
COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS	A facilitated and interactive meeting where general public are invited to collaborate, share ideas, and provide input on local projects, plans, or policies to help inform decisions. May be held with small focus groups or larger groups up to 50 people.	👤	++	$$	▨	▨	⊖	⊖
REFERENCE GROUPS	Invite people with an active interest in a decision or problem to be part of a meeting where detailed and robust conversation occurs to inform decision making, generally held in small groups of no more than 20 people. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	👤	+++	$$$	◼	▨	☐	⊖
COMMUNITY SURVEY ON A SPECIFIC TOPIC	Engage vendor to survey a random sample on a specific topic e.g. Special Rate Variation.	👤	+++	$$$	▨	⊖	⊖	⊖

04 *engagement methods and resourcing cont.*

COLLABORATE

ENGAGEMENT METHOD	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	ACTION TO BE TAKEN STANDARD (SEE PAGE 18)			
					1	2	3	4
CITIZEN PANEL	The public are invited to apply to join the group. The intention is a cross-section of people that provides a well-informed, representative and balanced community view. The group operates under an agreed Terms of Reference to consider a particular matter. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	in person	+++	$	recommended	optional	optional	optional
DESIGN CHARRETTE	Intensive, hands-on workshop bringing people from different disciplines and backgrounds together with members of the community to explore design options for a particular area. Include exit survey of engagement process at completion of event.	in person	+++	$$$	optional	optional	not required	not required

TYPE — in person | online | traditional

TIME — + 0-5 hours | ++ 5-25 hours | +++ over 25 hours *minimum per task including preparation and staff time*

COST — - no cost | $ <$1,000 | $$ $1,001-$10,000 | $$$ >$10,000 *minimum costs not including staff time*

ACTION — required | recommended | optional | not required

EMPOWER

ENGAGEMENT METHOD	IN PRACTICE	TYPE	TIME	COST	ACTION TO BE TAKEN STANDARD (SEE PAGE 18)			
					1	2	3	4
REFERENDUM	Council may hold a 'constitutional referendum' on certain electoral matters, in which voting is compulsory and the result is binding.	👤	+++	$$$	☐	⊖	⊖	⊖
ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS	Local government elections are held in NSW on the second Saturday in September every four years. At local government elections, voters in each local government area elect councillors to their local council. The NSW Electoral Commission conducts the election in the Ballina Shire.	👤	+++	$$$	☐	⊖	⊖	⊖

The above lists are Council's identified and preferred channels and methods of community engagement and participation. Council is not limited to these lists and based on project needs and industry trends, alternative methods may be used as required in order to reach a range of people, interests, ages and communities.

how we respond
to feedback

We want to ensure the community feedback is considered when decisions are made.

Once feedback has been considered, Council staff will recommend next steps or outcomes.

When a report and recommendation is submitted to Council, any final decision will be by elected officals.

As part of the process to close the feedback loop, we will:

Update the *YourSayBallina* engagement page outlining engagement outcomes and next steps.

Email those who provided feedback with the outcomes of the consultation and link to the project page. Prior to Council considering the matter, we will email people who have provided feedback (who have not opted out of receiving updates) that a report will be submitted to Council.

When an item is placed on exhibition the resulting report to Council will provide the findings of the community engagement. The Council report will include a high level summary of engagement and may include:

Engagement and communication methods used

Participation and engagement data

Information about submissions/feedback received

The report will summarise the submissions and provide a staff response. Submissions may be provided as an attachment.

Following a Council meeting, those who provided feedback will be emailed Council's resolution, *YourSayBallina* page will be updated, and link to Agendas and Minutes will be included in Council's eNews.

06

evaluation
and measurement

To measure and evaluate the effectiveness of our engagement, we assess:

Measurable participation levels in engagement activities.

The methods used and if they were appropriate and relevant to the stakeholders.

If the responses were relevant to the plan or project.

Verbal and written feedback from the community on the effectiveness of the engagement activities used, and adequacy of the material and information to give informed feedback.

Achievement of the engagement aims (on page 10) in the Community Engagement Strategy.

If we engaged with diverse groups, and what feedback we receive from under-represented groups.

These evaluation results will be used to continually improve our engagement methods and inform future engagement strategies.

This strategy will be reviewed within three months of the local government election, as part of the broader review of the Community Strategic Plan, or as required in the event of legislative changes or requirements.

06

challenges
and opportunities

We will look at the following challenges as opportunities to improve our community engagement:

CHALLENGE	OPPORTUNITY
LACK OF STAFF INVOLVEMENT	Project Advisory Team (PAT) and/or internal communications processes will capture potential projects and plans to start the conversation early with staff around opportunities and needs for community engagement. Educate staff on the purpose and benefits of community engagement.
LACK OF RESOURCING AND LIMITED TIME FRAMES	Identify resourcing and skills gaps and empower staff by providing community engagement coaching, training and appropriate toolkits for reference. Refer to the engagement standards and actions in the CES to use most appropriate methods of engagement within budget and resourcing. Respond to timeframes outlined in legislation and this strategy.
ACCESSIBILITY LIMITED AVENUES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK	Engagement to be undertaken at accessible locations across the shire. Use in-person, online and traditional methods. Use reporting tools to identify under-represented groups and consider alternative techniques to reach them.
SCOPE CREEP AND EXPECTATIONS	Define engagement aims and provide a clear scope to help manage community expectations. Understand and communicate the community's level of influence.
LIMITED PARTICIPATION MINIMAL FEEDBACK RECEIVED	Target engagement to ensure it is reaching the relevant stakeholder groups. Use engagement methods appropriate to these groups to ensure they can actively participate.
CONSULTATION FATIGUE	Stagger engagement to reduce the risk of community and key stakeholders feeling saturated. Ensure the level of community participation is proportionate to the scale and impact of the project on the community. Continue to close the loop on engagement so our community knows their feedback is considered and valued.
UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS NOT HEARD	Target and tailor engagement to reach under-represented groups such as youth, aboriginal, disability, families, senior and minority groups.
ADOPTED PLANS DON'T REFLECT COMMUNITY FEEDBACK	Report back to ensure feedback that is within the scope of the engagement and project to better inform the final plan and project.

06

action plan
engagement improvements

ACTION	$$$$	OBJECTIVES	WHEN
Develop Communication Strategy for Ballina Shire Council (internal)	-	Including channel review, to support streamlining of information and ensure high impact channels to inform community.	Q1 2025
Professional training for key staff	$$	Identify all engagement personnel and skill gaps across the organisation. Select key staff to undertake IAP2 certification and training in face-to-face facilitation.	Q2 2025
Staff Information Sessions	-	Ensure staff are familiar with the CES, council's objectives for community engagement, the level of engagement required, and the methods of engagement available to them and how to access and use these methods.	Q3 2025
Review community engagement effectiveness	-	Improve reporting cycle and analysis of the effectiveness of methods and techniques used. Identify gaps in community participation and adapt approach as required.	ongoing
Develop an Engagement Toolkit	$$	Including CES and clear engagement guidelines for internal staff and external consultants, to support the consistent delivery of engagement activities across council. Evolve toolkit with best practice methods of engagement.	Q3 2025 ongoing
E-Learning and onboarding Pulse modules	$	Online learning resources to support ongoing staff development and support a consistent engagement approach across the organisation.	Q4 2025 ongoing
Review CES in 2028	-	Councils are required to review their CES within three months of local government elections.	Q4 2028

07

appendix: *public exhibition notification and timeframes*

The process of public exhibition and notification is an important part of how Council engages with our community on planning decisions. This provides a regular and valuable way for the community to participate in the decision making process by making comments on a development proposal or draft plan during the public exhibition period.

Council's public exhibition processes are determined by the type and locality of the draft strategic plan or proposed development. This influences who Council notifies, where the information is available and the timeframe that the documents will be publicly available.

The following section outlines the exhibition and notification processes for strategic planning and statutory planning documents. It includes information about:

• Where to find documents on exhibition,

• How the community will be notified about the public exhibition, and

• Exhibition timeframes for these documents.

Council may however go beyond these timeframes and, at its discretion may provide additional notification or longer timeframes to those property owners and occupiers, community groups, organisations and agencies that, in the opinion of Council, may have an interest in the strategy, plan or development proposal.

WHAT IS PUBLIC EXHIBITION?

Public exhibition means making documents including draft plans, strategies, policies or development applications available for the community to view and comment on, through a formal submission. The public exhibition process typically involves notifying the community that documents are available to view publicly. Depending on the type of development application or plan, notification can be provided through Council's website, ***yoursayballina.com.au***, eNews and/or by mail (letter or email) to members of the community, adjoining landowners and residents or to relevant agencies and community groups

HOW ARE EXHIBITION TIMEFRAMES DETERMINED?

The LG Act also specifies minimum mandatory exhibition timeframes for some planning related matters such as plans of management (POMs). For proposals and plans not covered by these Acts, Council has its own standard minimum exhibition timeframes outlined within this strategy (see pages 16 and 17) .

The EP&A Act details the types of proposals and plans that must be considered. Schedule 1 of the EP&A Act sets the minimum statutory exhibition timeframes for these plans and proposals.

WHAT IS A SUBMISSION?

When comments on an engagement project, draft document or development application are provided to Council they are known as a formal submission. A submission outlines the support or concerns that an individual or group has relating to the engagement project. Submissions are usually made via the online engagement platform *yoursayballina.com.au* or in writing via a letter or email.

## ARE SUBMISSIONS PUBLIC DOCUMENTS?

In accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, submissions to documents on public exhibition are public documents and may be viewed by the public and published on Council's website, listed on Council's DAs Online portal *da.ballina.nsw.gov.au* and/or included in Council meeting reports and agendas.

If you do not want your submission to be publicly available, a written request for confidentiality will be required.

Council may also determine a submission is not suitable for public viewing and publication. This could be because it contains personal, private or defamatory material. Further information about how Council manages submissions can be found in the 'Your Privacy' section of Council's website *ballina.nsw.gov.au*

DISCLOSING POLITICAL DONATIONS

The Local Government and Planning Legislation Amendment (Political Donations) Act 2008 imposes disclosure obligations on submitters in relation to political gifts and donations. Detailed information about your obligations under the Act can be found in the 'Disclosure of Political Donations' section of Council's website *ballina.nsw.gov.au*
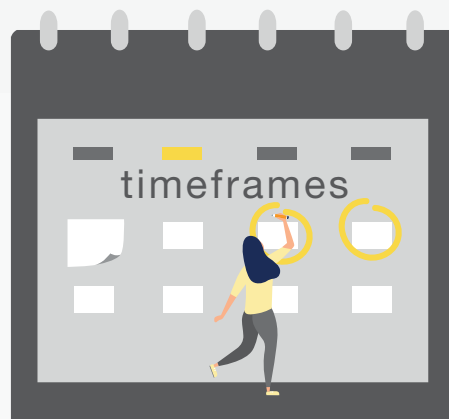
Key points to note about public exhibitions:

▶ Timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends and public holidays.

▶ If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday Council may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day.

▶ The period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.

▶ Council is not required to make available for public inspection any part of an environmental impact statement whose publication, in the opinion of Council, would be contrary to the public interest because of its confidential nature or for any other reason.

07 *public exhibition, notification and timeframes* cont

HOW DO I WRITE A GOOD SUBMISSION?

A good submission should:

- Include the name of the engagement project, draft strategic plan or the DA Reference Number and the property address the DA relates to (this information is usually included in the notification material).

- Clearly state the reasons for objecting or supporting the engagement project, draft strategic plan or development proposal and why. Give details about how you arrived at your assertions.

- Be brief and to the point or include a single page summary sheet where the submission is lengthy because a number of issues are covered.

- Be specific to the project, DA, strategic plan or strategy and avoid generalising.

- Be well researched and based on facts, not on hearsay. Talk to the Council officer who is dealing with the application prior to writing your submission and make sure that you understand what is proposed.

- Avoid statements which are defamatory or offensive.

- Suggest changes that might resolve the problems identified.

- Include your name and contact details as well as a daytime telephone number, as a Council officer may need to clarify matters you raised in your submission.

SHOULD I SIGN A PETITION?

You may find that someone has started a petition to object to a development proposal. Someone may also ask you to sign a pro forma letter. Council will consider petitions and letters received. However, an individual letter about how the proposal will affect you gives Council a much clearer picture of the likely impacts.

WHERE SHOULD I SEND MY SUBMISSION?

Unless otherwise stated on the exhibition material, a submission should be sent:

Online	*yoursayballina.com.au*
By email	council@ballina.nsw.gov.au
By post	Ballina Shire Council, Customer Service Centre PO Box 450 BALLINA NSW 2478
In person	40 Cherry Street BALLINA NSW 2478

Your submission must be received at Council offices by the date and time specified in the exhibition notification. If you are sending your submission through the mail, make sure you allow sufficient time for delivery by 4.00pm on the closing date of the submissions.

Objections relating to a DA or strategic planning document received after the exhibition period has concluded may not be taken into consideration by Council in the assessment of the DA or finalisation of the draft strategic plan.

If for some reason you cannot meet the submission deadline, talk to the Council officer handling the application before the closing date for submissions.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY SUBMISSION?

You will receive notification that your submission has been received. Your submission, along with others received, will then be considered as part of an assessment of the project, DA, preparation of a strategic plan or finalisation of a draft document.

You can continue to track the process of a DA via the DA's Online portal *da.ballina.nsw.gov. au*. You can also contact Council to find out the progress of a project or draft strategic plan after the exhibition period has closed or visit *yoursayballina.com.au*

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