



**COOTAMUNDRA-  
GUNDAGAI** REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

# COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**September 2021**



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# INTRODUCTION

The 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 document is intended to be a living document, continually edited and updated as demographics, communication platforms and our community requirements change. Council to seek community feedback to further develop the plan into the future.

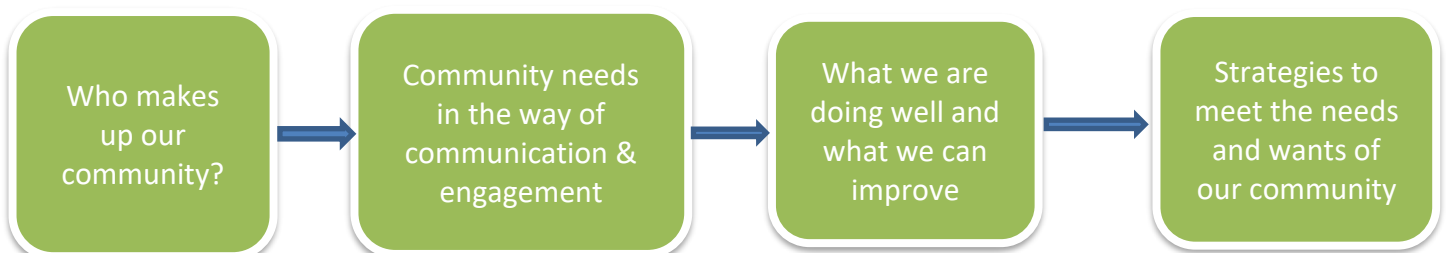
The objectives of developing this strategy were to:

- Understand community satisfaction and expectations of Council in the areas of communication and community engagement.
- Analyse Council's current process in Engagement and Communications to ensure Council is effectively reaching the community.
- Identify new initiatives that will assist with providing a service that supports Council in its commitment to communicate and engage in a way that encourages an open and transparent relationship between community and Council.
- Increase awareness within the community of Council's objectives.
- Increase knowledge and understanding.
- Change attitudes (i.e., gain acceptance).
- Change behaviours (i.e., build commitment).

The document proposes a marketing communications program for Council, designed to achieve the goals of engaging the community, building awareness of Council brand, culture, and reputation, promote characteristics of the region and reinforce positive community sentiment.

The strategy specifically seeks to support the following goals:

- Communities can readily identify with their council.
- A shared vision and direction for the whole community.
- Increase pride in the region.
- Increase awareness and support for community's vision.
- Increase awareness of major projects and how Council is progressing with milestones.
- Cultivate a positive and proactive culture.
- Increase internal awareness and commitment to the Communication and Engagement Strategy.
- Appropriately communicate with the demographic of the area using a variety of media platforms.



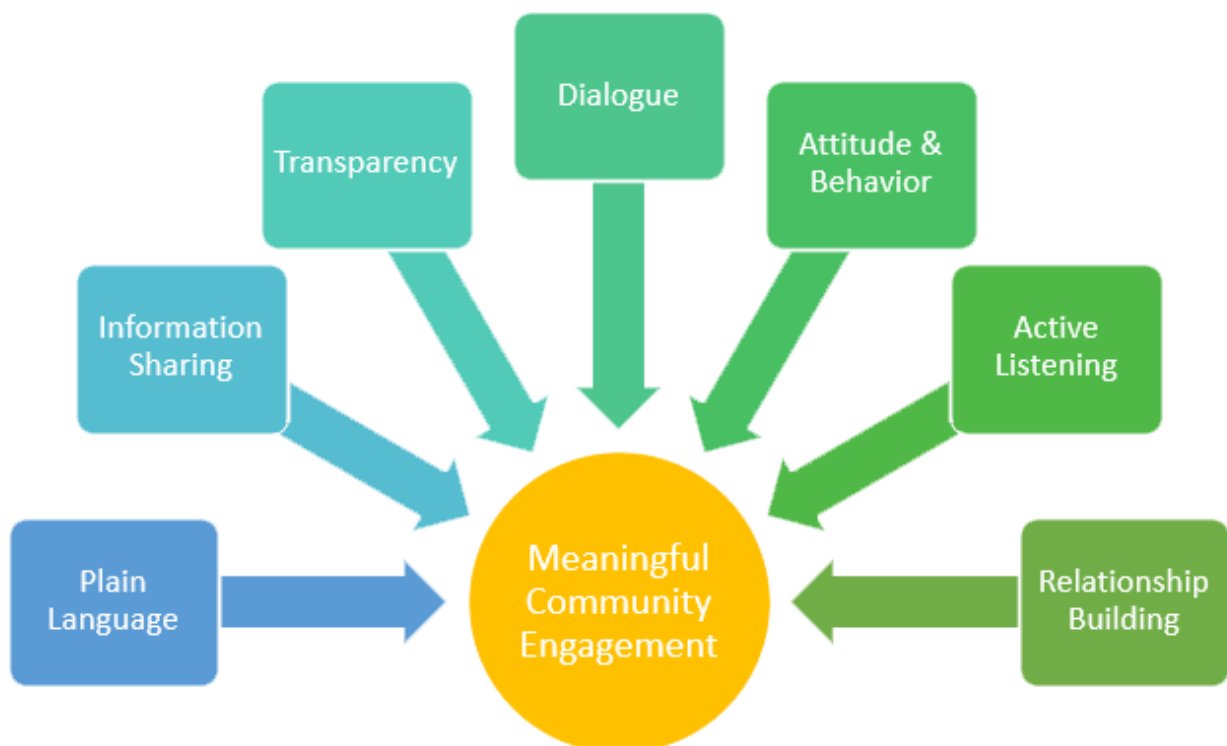
## VISION STATEMENT



## OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the Communication and Engagement Strategy are to:

- Achieve broad community engagement.
- Build trust in the organisation.
- Encourage community interaction and response.
- Improve communication within the organisation for the benefit of the community.



# SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The Communication and Engagement Strategy is based on the social justice principles:

- Equity
- Access
- Participation
- Rights

## STAKEHOLDERS

- Residents
- Students/Youth
- Business and industry groups
- Local Government Area (LGA) Landowners
- Potential residents, developers, and investors
- People who may wish to live, work, or invest in the LGA
- Visitors
- Government Departments and Agencies
- Adjoining local government areas and Regional Organisations
- Reference Groups, Advisory Committees
- Section 355 Committees of Council
- Local community organisations and groups
- Members of Parliament
- Local members and State/Federal Ministers
- Councillors
- Staff

## DEMOGRAPHICS AND AREA PROFILE

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area is in the Southwest Slopes and Riverina Regions of New South Wales, about 390 kilometres south-west of the Sydney CBD, and about 95 kilometres north-west of the Canberra CBD.

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council Estimated Resident Population for 2019 is 11,235, with a population density of 0.03 persons per hectare. The land area of the LGA covers 398,181 hectares / 3,982 km<sup>2</sup>.

### **Who we are**

#### *Dominant population groups*

Analysis of the service age groups of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0 to 17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years). Overall, 21.4% of the population was aged between 0 and 17, and 33.1% were aged 60 years and over, compared with 22.1% and 27.2% respectively for Regional NSW. The major differences between the age structure of Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and Regional NSW were:

- A larger percentage of “Seniors” (14.7% compared to 11.4%)
- A larger percentage of “Empty nesters and retirees” (14.9% compared to 13.1%)
- A smaller percentage of “Young workforce” (8.7% compared to 11.0%)
- A smaller percentage of “Parents and homebuilders” (16.3% compared to 18.0%)

### *Emerging population groups*

From 2011 to 2016, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council's population increased by 148 people (1.3%). This represents an average annual population change of 0.27% per year over the period.

Between 2011 and 2016, there were notable changes in several age brackets within the local population, in particular an increase in the nominal population of Seniors and Retirees, with decreases among middle-aged adults and youth:

- Seniors (70 to 84 year): +206 people
- Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69 years): +123
- Parents and homebuilders (35 to 49 years): -185
- Secondary schoolers (12 to 17 years): -120



### **What we do**

There were 4,277 jobs located in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council in the year ending June 2020.

In the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council catchment, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the largest employer, generating 670 local jobs in 2019/20. The Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry had the largest number of total registered businesses in Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, comprising 31.8% of all total registered businesses, compared to 6.6% in New South Wales as a whole.

### **What we want**

Australians feel strong emotional connections to the local areas in which they live, which is in turn linked with emotional wellbeing and a strong sense of personal identity. Research undertaken by the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government has shown that local government is about being a “place shaper” – in other words, meeting the needs of citizens and their attachment to and satisfaction with the areas in which they live.

Australian communities want to be involved with government in making decisions about how and what services should be delivered in their local area. This view is strongest among people living in rural and remote council areas, and those who have lived longer in their area. Furthermore, respondents living in rural and remote areas are generally more concerned about the consequences of amalgamation on local representation, cost of rates and services and their sense of belonging to the local area.



In the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council area, long standing members of the community have expressed a desire for more input into how Council operates. These residents are a particularly valuable demographic as they have the history and knowledge of their respective communities to give Council the vital feedback needed to ensure community needs are delivered.

Above-average median community age and community feedback have determined the way in which Council can most effectively communicate with the wider population, with printed information (primarily in the form of the Community newsletter, newspaper advertising and media releases) most favoured.



## APPROACH

In line with Council's communication objectives the following communication strategies should be applied.

- Develop Council's positioning and brand equity to achieve awareness and to be recognised as an excellent local Government organisation servicing a place that is desirable to live, work and invest.
- Improve current platforms to facilitate effective engagement with key audiences including staff, customers, the wider community, industry groups, schools, potential visitors, and investors.
- Develop positive perceptions of the organisation and the region by using strategic advertising, printed materials, banners, video collateral, testimonials, social media and imagery that connect with key audiences.

The role of Council personnel and elected officials in community outreach and communication is a critical one. Furthermore, the present CGRC Code of Conduct mandates staff, elected members, and members of Council committees to engage ethically with the community. The proposed Communication and Engagement Strategy will assist the aforementioned to meet these obligations, in particular:

- **Engaging with the community.** The Council strives to meet the environmental, economic and social needs of the community. Representatives must be responsive to community needs and treat people with courtesy and sensitivity. The Council is to have effective communications and protocols, internally and externally, and be open to, and encourage feedback from the Community and interested parties. Services are to be delivered professionally and effectively,

responding quickly with a willingness to be flexible where necessary. Allowances and adjustments must be made to communicate with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

- **Contact with the community.** Elected Members, Committee Members and Employees must make every effort to be positive, helpful, and effective when communicating with the community. Elected Members represent the community on various issues and present their position at Council meetings. It is therefore important for representatives to ensure decisions, processes and policy information which affect the community are communicated accurately and in a timely way; and confidential information remains confidential unless it is determined by law or otherwise that release of the information is appropriate.

## ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES/COUNCILLORS

Councillors are the ears, eyes, and voice of the community. Councillors make decisions on all key matters at Council and Committee meetings.

### *Community consultation:*

Councillors consult with our communities regularly, both formally through public forums and, committee engagements and informally. These engagements seek the opinions and concerns of residents, business owners and other interested parties to ensure Councillors are in touch with community sentiment and attitudes. Councillor communications with the community are bound by the regulations set out in the CGRC Code of Conduct and Media Policy.

### *CGRC staff consultation:*

Councillors are encouraged to attend regular workshops, usually held prior to each monthly Ordinary meeting, to discuss any issues that require clarification, investigation, or research. These workshops are held in an informal setting, with Councillors interacting with staff to discuss an issue or agenda item.

### *Council communication with elected representatives:*

Councillors are issued with all media releases at the time of release, to ensure they have the information to hand and can answer questions from the public or media. This practice keeps them in the loop and gives them subject matter for discussion with residents.

Councillors will be kept updated with key messages via existing and new channels. Suggested enhancements include:

- Regular Community Consultation Sessions, under the heading – “Meet your Councillor Open Day”
- Participate and engage with participants during Local Government Week, Seniors Week, and other dedicated days, where the public is invited to participate.
- Hold small group listening sessions – e.g. “A cuppa and scone” session to foster two-way communication and continuous improvement.
- Encourage community members to attend Ordinary Council Meetings.
- Encourage residents to voice opinions, ideas, and concerns at public forums held at each Ordinary Council meeting.
- Form solid, respectful working relationships with staff to foster trust and confidence.
- Attend and participate in public events.
- Attend and contribute to S355 committees.
- Follow the guidelines set out in the Code of Conduct and Media Policy.





### *Councillor buy-in:*

For a Communication and Engagement Strategy to be effective, the philosophy behind the strategy must have Councillor endorsement. Councillor education will include the following tenets:

- Some information is confidential and sensitive.
- The sharing of information from individual departments to others is important and relevant.
- Responses to requests for information is acknowledged, forwarded promptly, and responded to.
- Courtesy and respect for fellow colleagues and staff is shown especially in regards for requests for information.
- There are procedures in place (CARS), for the registering of complaints and community concerns.
- The role of a Councillor is to represent the community regardless of political philosophy, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, and social custom.
- Embrace a working as team attitude, with each other and the staff they lead. Dispel the “us against them” approach and work together for best outcomes.

## **STAFF COMMUNICATION**

Council staff are a key interface with various audiences and stakeholders. Council staff are kept updated about internal Council business, policies and with key messages via existing and new channels. Suggested enhancements include:

- Regular line managers’ team meetings - with key messages provided for cascading.
- FAQ responses and key messages for staff to promulgate.
- Small group listening sessions - ‘Brown bag lunches’ to foster two-way communication and continuous improvement.
- Whole of staff meetings / events.
- Weekly email updates on dedicated header (“What’s new at Council”, “This week at Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC)” or “Today at Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council”).
- Cost effective video messages could be developed for important communications and issued as required as a bulletin then housed on the intranet site.
- Council customer service team be kept abreast of key changes to services or potential issues and provided with the holding statements and question and answer documents to mitigate potential issues before they arise.
- Adherence must be kept within writing guidelines, Branding and Style Guide.

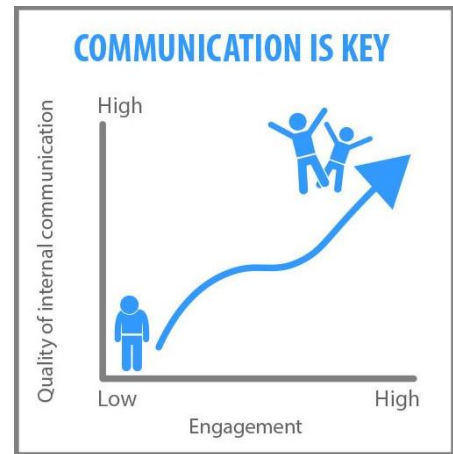
### *Staff buy-in:*

For a Communication and Engagement Strategy to be effective, the philosophy behind the strategy should have staff endorsement. A staff education campaign will include:

- CGRC Media Policy and Writing and Style Guidelines.
- Some information is confidential and sensitive.
- The sharing of information from individual departments to others is important and relevant.
- Responses to requests for information is acknowledged, forwarded promptly, and responded to.
- Courtesy and respect for fellow colleagues is shown especially in regards for requests for information.

It should be recognised that Council staff are residents too and have relationships with members of the community that are not directly involved with Council. The subject of Council and what is happening within Council will always be a topic for discussion. Staff should be given information that is consistent and relevant for matters that will create conversation within the community.

- Staff have information before it becomes public.
- Supplied with a script or explanation that presents Council's view.
- Training supplied on public relations/responding to community requests.



## COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) is a public service. Our communities expect an open 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 on services provided.

Council communicates and engages with the community through:

### Customer Service Teams



- ✓ Customer Service Charter.
- ✓ Highly trained in dealing with customer requests.
- ✓ Provided with advanced information.
- ✓ Collaboration with communications team.
- ✓ Provide input and feedback on customer queries.
- ✓ Supported with additional information to assist with enquiries.
- ✓ Digital notice boards.
- ✓ Flyers, pamphlets, and posters.

### Regular Media Releases, issued to

- ✓ Local and regional newspapers, television, and radio stations.
- ✓ Council websites.
- ✓ Facebook page.
- ✓ Email contact list, including Councillors and all staff.
- ✓ Monthly newsletter.
- ✓ Extract in Snippets advertising.

### Monthly Community Newsletter

- ✓ Posted to all mailboxes within the LGA.
- ✓ Posted to Council website.
- ✓ Emailed to Newsletter contact list.
- ✓ Copies for pick up at Council venues.
- ✓ Facebook page.

### Fortnightly Snippets Advertising

- ✓ ½ page advertisement in Cootamundra Times & Gundagai Independent newspapers each fortnight.
- ✓ Can be weekly if need arises.
- ✓ Sent to all staff and councillors.

## Regular Facebook Posts

- ✓ At least 10 Facebook posts weekly, which include regulatory notices, events, library news, resident reminders and extracts from media releases.
- ✓ Scheduling of Facebook posts to create reminders on date sensitive events.

## Citizen Juries

- ✓ Conducted to gauge a broad community opinion and general feedback on the implementation of an issue.

## Open Forum Sessions

- ✓ Held prior to each Ordinary Council Meeting. Residents can attend in person or have correspondence read out.

## Public Meetings

- ✓ Held for workshopping or to present detailed information relating to a particular issue.

## Committee Meetings

- ✓ Members of various S335 committees.

## Listening Posts

- ✓ Council hosts listening posts in the towns CBD to gauge public comment on a variety of issues.



## CGRC Website

- ✓ Residents can provide feedback via the CGRC Website.
- ✓ Updated regularly with relevant information

## How to contact Council

Maxine Imrie  
Media Officer  
Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council



**P:** 1300 459 689  
**M:** 0407 539 870  
**E:** [Maxine.Imrie@cgrc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Maxine.Imrie@cgrc.nsw.gov.au)  
**W:** [www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au)

- ✓ Council phone number, website link, physical address, email address and Facebook link are displayed prominently in all printed material.
- ✓ Consistent electronic signatures, showing contact details, role within the organisation and pointer to website.



## Direct Contact



- ✓ Customer Calls attended to in timely and relevant manner, by appropriate personnel who can answer queries.

## BRANDING

Every Council sign, letter, leaflet, uniform, building, and website is part of the corporate brand. To strengthen the image of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC), the brand reflects a defined, professional logo and visual identity that embraces our shared values and our vision.

The elements of the logo are outlined below.

- Outer charcoal ring: Bound by local industry and the roads that connect us.
- Blue ring: Surrounded by waterways, the lifeblood of the region.
- Green centre: Green pastures and healthy landscapes.
- Seeds: Growth, productivity, and healthy community spirit. We are proud of our roots and look towards future growth.



A strong brand is more than just a logo — it is reflected in everything from your customer service style, staff uniforms, business cards and premises to your marketing materials and advertising.

The CGRC logo should reflect the vision statement –

***A vibrant region attracting people, investment and business through innovation, diversity, and community spirit.***

Which will create and further enhance the brand that distinguishes the organisation from others outline the specific future Council has created for itself and give shape and direction for the organisation to achieve the desired outcomes and objectives.





## SIGNAGE

The effective use of signage will assist with community engagement and with the identity of the Council and reinforce brand awareness. A review of all Council signage will be required to ensure there are no remnants of the former Council's signage to ensure consistent representation. A stocktake of all items requiring Council's identity should be drawn up. Signage and logo branding on relevant:



- Banners
- Infrastructure
- Vehicles
- Uniforms / badges
- Road / place signs
- Buildings
- Information signs
- Printed and Electronic materials
- Marquees
- Temporary event signage

The review process should consider the priority of each and note an appropriate time frame for refresh.

Consideration should be given to supplying local organisations and events with appropriate signage, banners, shades and other material to acknowledge Council's support either in kind or monetary.



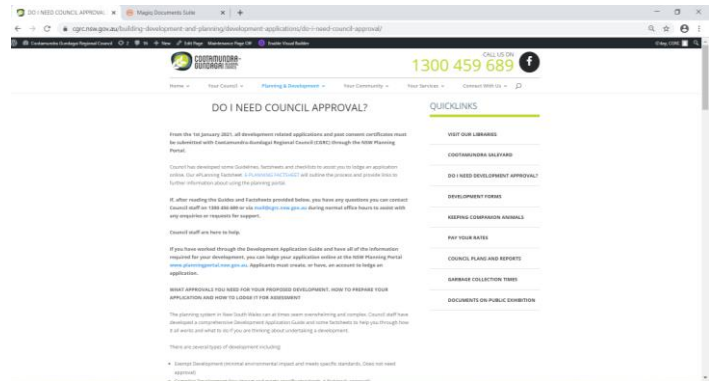
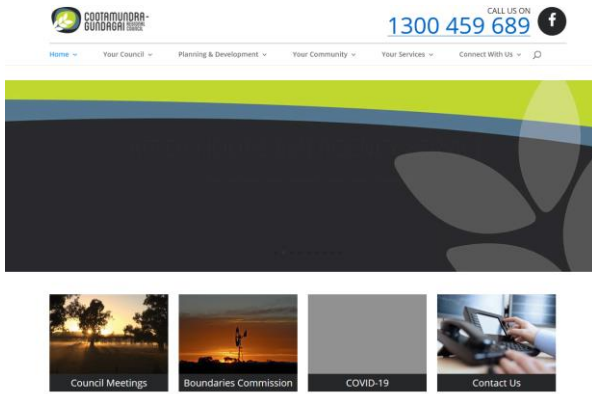
*The Cootamundra Beach Volleyball Competition brings many visitors to town. Council's input into the event is extensive. There is little visible evidence of Council involvement throughout the event. Photo Cootamundra Herald*

## WEBSITE

The website should act as a central hub (and single source of truth) and include information and services for residents, local business, potential investors, and visitors to the Cootamundra-Gundagai Region. It will also be positioned as being the key point of referral. It is now widely expected that council websites host a variety of information and online tools and meeting this expectation will ultimately increase user/customer satisfaction, while also benefiting the Council's internal resourcing.



To ensure the Council website meets the needs of the community and other users, it should as much as is practicable, include online best practice for Local Government websites.



## WEBSITE STRATEGY

The critical nature of an updated and interactive web presence has been demonstrated through the Covid-19 pandemic. Residents are encouraged through media releases and social media posts to visit the website for more information relating to Council announcements and COVID-19 information.

To meet what will only be an increasing need for accessible online information, the following strategies will be employed to ensure Council's website meets community and stakeholder needs:

- Continued monitoring and updating of website to ensure the most recent information is available to residents.
- Development of the website to enhance functionality is continuing, including on-line payment forms and other interface functions to assist with savings on resources.
- Additions such as live support. Councils that provided live support ranked higher overall across all others in the findings from the 2014 Building Better Council Websites evaluation criteria.
- Renewing photos and including further links to relevant and topical public information.
- Regular posting through social media encouraging residents to have their say via the website.

## TESTIMONIALS AND CASE STUDIES

Testimonials and case studies can be powerful in articulating the benefits of the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional area. Brief testimonials can very quickly show a potential investor or visitor about a particular aspect of the region.

Council should consider developing testimonials and case studies for use on the website and in other marketing materials. Case studies are most likely to be relevant to attracting investors or new businesses to the area; these might speak to the opportunities presented by the recent new investment in the area.

Testimonials which tend to be shorter are more suited to articulating the benefits of visiting the area, the tourist drawcards, or why it is a great place to live.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Conversations on social media can be influential. Users have the potential to share valuable experiences with a wide audience and positive online commentary can build trust in a brand and take it to new audiences quickly and efficiently with limited resources. However, social media also needs to be monitored to keep content relevant and fresh.

There is significant potential for the Council to interact with customers, provide information about services and activities in the area, as well as reach an audience beyond the Council area who may be interested in visiting the region. There is also the possibility that tools such as a blog or Facebook page are used by disgruntled individuals to post negative comments about the Council, or its services and this risk needs to be managed. A separate Social Media Strategy and Policy has been developed.



Council's Social Media platform is primarily used for providing information, not for protracted or prolonged engagements. Brief replies to users direct questions are the only replies given via this medium. Staff are prohibited from entering arguments, offering opinions or fuelling contentious issues via this medium.

Council can monitor other social media sites to gain an insight into community sentiment and opinion on issues that members of these sites are raising.

## Statistics

Overall – 2560 people like the CGRC Page. 2877 people follow the page. In the period January to February 2021.

An Average 1552 people the Page reached broken down by how many times people saw any content about the Page. (Unique Users).

An average 7876 people who had any content from the Page or about the Page enter their screen. This includes posts, check-ins, ads, social information from people who interact with the Page and more. (Unique Users).

## MAINSTREAM MEDIA

This communication channel offers a valuable, 'earned' (i.e., not paid) way to deliver key messages to key audiences and beyond. Council enjoys good relationships with local and regional media in both Gundagai and Cootamundra, and these should continue to be developed with the delivery of targeted media releases and stories. These relationships will be important to continue to foster as part of an overall marketing and communications strategy. Sound relationships based on mutual respect facilitate opportunities to mitigate potential issues before they gain traction.

Whilst local newspapers, regional radio and TV outlets might be the usual channels, state-wide rural publications like The Land, or national reach publications such as specialty tourism, business publications or special features in national newspapers could be included in the current media mix and development of further contacts is ongoing.

- Announcing local Government services, funding programs or news.
- Announcing new or expanded investments or facilities.
- Advocating on behalf of the region.
- Promoting successes in the region such as local businesses achieving awards.
- Celebrating successes among community groups.

Good working relationships with local and rural journalists should be maintained, with Council executives being open to providing comment where appropriate and identifying issues in the media of relevance to the area, for example plans for new infrastructure. Such comment needs to be cognisant of the role of local Government in relation to the NSW and Australian Governments. Retaining sound relationships with the media will enable the Council to proactively clarify any misinformation in the community via stories through relevant media.

# ADVERTISING

Council is bound by Government regulations to ensure residents are advised of information that relates to Council business and activities carried out by Council, recent changes to the legislation have seen the removal of mandatory newspaper advertising.

Advertising in local newspapers, radio and TV are tactics to be employed to meet certain goals advertisements for positions vacant, calling for tenders and various events that are Council operated or endorsed may require advertising in mainstream media outlets to reach targeted audiences.

Due to the structure of the council region, with two vastly different towns in terms of demographic, geological location and collaboration, newspaper advertising must be spread across two publications. The nature of both publications one being an incumbent in the Gundagai region with a loyal and devoted readership. The other, a new publication to the Cootamundra area is still building readership and reach numbers and has yet to establish customer and brand loyalty.

Conventionally the two local newspapers – The Gundagai Independent and the Cootamundra Herald were the choice for the respective Gundagai Shire Council and Cootamundra Shire Council to get their message out to residents. The printed version of the Cootamundra Herald has ceased with the latter replaced by a new independent publication The Coota Times. Council can continue to advertise in each town's respective print products.

Both publications have been very receptive to Council media releases and a good relationship exists amongst all stakeholders. However, the relatively low numbers reached by these publications and the high cost of advertising in both publications requires Council to look at alternatives that achieve the desired result. Council continues to advertise "Snippets" in these publications for mandatory notices.

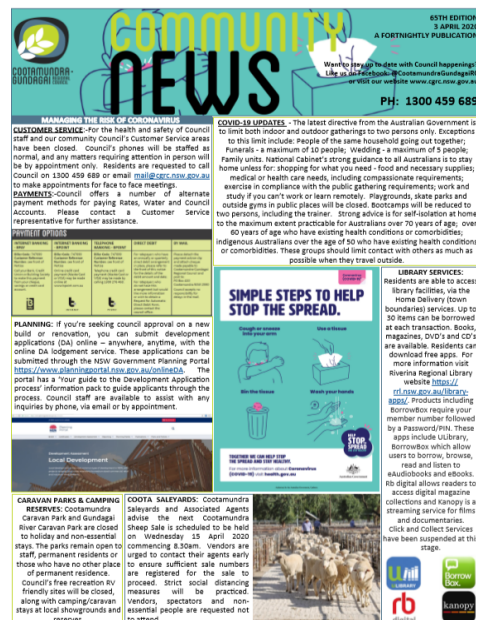
## DIRECT MAIL

Council introduced a regular newsletter that has been mailed directly to all postal addresses within the region. The newsletter does meet with NSW Government OLG mandatory advertising guidelines, advising residents of Council works, public notices, advertisements and other information relating to Council. The newsletter has also been a source for the promotion of events either organized or endorsed by Council or conducted by local community not for profit organisations.

The newsletter allows Council to present a positive and co-operative approach with the capacity to encourage community engagement and input. The direct mail approach ensures Council's information reaches everyone within the region.

A recent survey has revealed:

- 65% of respondents indicated the community newsletter was their source of information from Council.
- 40% of respondents indicated "other" as their source of information from Council citing local newspapers in their written response. *Please note: Some respondents indicated both mediums in their responses.*
- 36% of respondents were in the 40-to-50-year age group.
- 45% of respondents were in the 50+ year age group.
- 68% of respondents had access to a computer.
- 36% of respondents indicated they wanted the community newsletter to be directly mailed to them.





Delivery and production costs dictate the frequency of newsletter. Distribution has been to reduced monthly in 2021. The publication is distributed directly after the Ordinary Council meeting to ensure residents are aware of Council resolutions and items on public exhibition.

**COMMUNITY NEWS**  
82nd EDITION  
16 August 2021

Want to stay up to date with Council happenings?  
Like us on Facebook: @CootamundraGundagai or visit our website [www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au)  
PH: 1300 459 689

**It is now mandatory for people in NSW to sign-in to businesses and retail premises using the QR code system. Fines are applicable for businesses and patrons who fail to comply. Fitted face masks must be worn when entering an indoor area of a non-residential premises in NSW. Please don't abuse our staff. This behaviour will not be tolerated. Failure to comply with these public health orders will result in police action.**

**COUNCIL MEETING NOTES:** At the Ordinary meeting held 27 July 2021 Council resolved the Draft 2021/22 Operational Plan, amended Fees and Charges, be placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days. Council invites public comment on the Draft 2021/22 Operational Plan. Submissions will be received by Council until 5pm 25 August 2021. Submissions must be in writing and addressed to the General Manager, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council PO Box 420 Cootamundra 2590. The Draft 2021/22 Operational Plan can be viewed on Council's website by following the link <https://www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au/connect-with-us/have-your-say/documents-on-public-exhibition/>

**POSTPONEMENT OF THE NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS**  
The Minister for Local Government made an order on 24 July to postpone Local Government elections until 6 December 2021. For more information please visit the NSW Electoral Commission Website.

**COVID-19 SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS & SMALL BUSINESS:**  
If you or your business has been impacted due to COVID-19, there are a number of support packages and advice available. Please check out the Australian Government Business and NSW Government Websites. Regional Development Australia – Riverina NSW is also assisting with information. Website [rdariverina.org.au](http://rdariverina.org.au)

**WET WEATHER CAUSES HAVOC ON COUNCIL ROADS**  
The recent spate of rain, with above average rainfall has seen a number of issues arising on Council's road network. Heavier than normal traffic on the Olympic Highway from Wallendbeen to Cootamundra and Stockinbingal Road, due to the bridge at Wallendbeen being closed has led to rapid deterioration of these sections of road in particular. Due to the prolonged wet weather, many roads within the LGA have shown significant levels of deterioration. Council is working to ensure staff are undertaking necessary maintenance as weather conditions allow but keeping up with demand is presenting challenges. Council would appreciate residents following the correct complaints process by either contacting the office on 1300 459 689, email [mail@cgrc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mail@cgrc.nsw.gov.au) or by messaging us on Facebook, to register potholes or deteriorated road ways.

**NOTICE TO RESIDENTS 2022 RATES NOTICES:**  
2022 Rates have now been levied and ratepayers will soon receive their Rates Notices. The due dates are included on the Rate Notices for those who pay in instalments. The Special Rates Variation (SRV) is reflected in the general rates as detailed on the Rates Notice. Payment options include: internet banking BPAY, BPPOINT, Direct Debit, by Mail or in person at Council Offices in Cootamundra and Gundagai. General Enquiries and further information can be obtained by contacting Council on 1300 459 689 or mail@cgrc.nsw.gov.au

**ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL:** The ordinary meeting will be held on 31 August 2021 at the Abby Schultz Meeting Centre, Cooper St Cootamundra, starting at and livestreamed from 6pm. COVID restrictions as determined by the NSW State Government will be in place and enforced, please refer to Council's website or call Council for information on meeting restrictions prior to attending open forum. Meeting agenda on CGRC website.

**Above: Burro Road currently closed due to damage to pipe culvert.**

**Above from left: Cr Dennis Palmer (Deputy Mayor), Cr Linda Scott (President Australian Local Government Association), Phillip McMurray (General Manager) and Cr Abby McAlister (Mayor) at the 2021 National General Assembly of Local Government held in Canberra 21-23 June, 2021.**

**A MESSAGE FROM THE COOTAMUNDRA ANTIQUE MOTOR CLUB (CAMC):**  
CAMC has cancelled the Fathers' Day Swap Meet for this year. The Club has considered the risk of introducing COVID-19 into the community, from visiting stallholders and patrons, plus the impracticability of complying with all the current and uncertain future rules and regulations. CAMC understands and appreciates the support the community has provided in the past and is appreciative. CAMC are hoping for a year-on-year degree of 'normality' will be restored, enabling the club to run the successful Swap Meet that it has been in the past.

**NEW HOURS FOR COOTA TIP**  
Cootamundra Landfill operating hours Monday to Friday – 7:30am to 5:30pm Saturday to Sunday – 10am to 3pm.

**The Muttama Hall Management Committee welcomes families and friends to join them in a DEDICATION OF THE ROLL OF HONOUR BOARDS CEREMONY**  
Saturday 25 September 2021 at 10.00am  
Dedication Address: Mayor General the Honourable Justice P. G. Brennan, AN RFD (Rd)

**GUNDAGAI LIBRARY NEWS:**  
The library will be hosting the Riverina Local Land service's 'The Magic of Wiradjuri Country' photographic exhibition and will be on display throughout August. SCVR 2021 is coming on Saturday 21st August. You can register for FREE at the library to receive your virtual reality headset, sticker, and instructions. Then join Professor Alan Duffy and Dr Rebecca Allen at 11am on the 21st for the VR live stream where you will explore the solar system and check out some of the most explosive events to take place in our universe. The library will be hosting an 'IT High Tea' Fri 22nd October for Get Online week. It will be a showcase of the many ways that you can get online and experience what the internet has to offer. From the humble desktop computer to immersing yourself a whole new world with virtual reality. Bookings unfortunately, Tech Savvy Seniors course start date has been postponed until the 1st of September. To register for this free training call the library on 694040270. Sessions cover things such as: Smart phones, laptops, Web browsing, Internet Banking, Online Shopping, Storytime, Music, Mahjong are on hold.

**Give life. Give blood in Cootamundra & Gundagai**  
Blood donors are needed for the Blood Donor Drive on Friday 24 August to Friday 27 August 2021 9.00am – 2.30pm  
Call 13 14 75 or visit [donorblood.com.au](http://donorblood.com.au) give blood

**TEMPORARY CLOSURE**  
DOG ON THE TUCKERBOX COFFEE SHOP  
Please be advised that the Dog on the Tuckerbox Coffee Shop will be temporarily closed until further notice due to the current COVID-19 restrictions in NSW and VIC. The proprietors apologise for any inconvenience caused and hope to re-open when travel restriction ease.

**COUNCIL MEETING NOTES:** At the Ordinary meeting held 27 July 2021 Council resolved the proposed Masterplan for Gundagai War Memorial Olympic Pool, be placed on public exhibition. Council invites public comment on the Masterplan for Gundagai War Memorial Olympic Pool. Submissions will be received by Council until 5pm 25 August 2021. Submissions must be in writing and addressed to the General Manager, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council PO Box 420 Cootamundra 2590. The Masterplan can be viewed on Council's website by following the link <https://www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au/connect-with-us/have-your-say/documents-on-public-exhibition/>

**NEW VISITOR GUIDES:** Council have released the new visitor guides, covering the whole Local Government Area (LGA). The printed book flips and has Cootamundra information on one side and Gundagai information on the other side. This is a commemorative of twelve months work for CGRC Tourism Administration Trainee Casey Polson. Casey organised the photography and completed the graphic design in house. Printed copies are available from Customer Service counter in Cootamundra and the Gundagai Visitors Centre or go on line to: <https://www.visitcootamundra.com.au/visitor-information/2020/7/18/maps-and-guides>

**FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK TO GET UP TO DATE INFORMATION AS IT HAPPENS**  
WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY? Register your email address to Council and receive newsletters, media releases and other information delivered directly to your inbox. REGISTER VIA MAIL@CGRC.NSW.GOV.AU Mark Send Me Media in subject line.

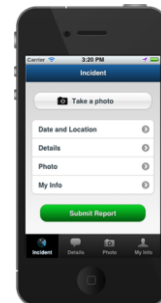
**Mayor Abby McAlister, Deputy Mayor Dennis Palmer, Cr Leigh Bowden, Cr David Graham, Cr Gill Kelly, Cr Penny Nicholson, Cr Doug Phillips, Cr Charlie Sheahan, Visit [www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au)**

## DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Council can further engage with the community in a cost-effective manner by increasing its digital audience. Encouragement of the community to sign up for email notifications, text message alerts and use of reporting apps such as Snap, Send & Solve or Neat Streets.

Many Councils have developed their own reporting apps, for example the Moreton Bay Regional Council's app notifies council of playground repairs, graffiti, or other local issues. Using artificial intelligence, council can allocate and respond to requests faster and keeps the reporting resident informed of progress. Residents can report on:

- Fallen trees.
- Potholes.
- Footpath damage.
- Illegal dumping or missed bin collection.



To date these applications have proven to be problematic in this area. The limitations of the app and lack of information contained when Council receives a report, is often a time-consuming exercise for the staff on the ground attending to the report.

The demographics of the area (being a large proportion of over 60 years of age), have not fully embraced the digital connectivity applications. Information entered to these applications requires accuracy and a sound knowledge of the exact area in which the report is being made.

Further investigation into these types of communication could be a further enhancement to community engagement strategies going forward.

## DIGITAL COMMUNITY PANEL

Council has created a Digital Community Panel. The panel is broad cross-section of representatives within the community to ensure all groups have the opportunity to be engaged and involved in raising community ideas and solutions.

This local knowledge and insight supports the continuation of the good work that has already taken place in building a strong future-focused Council, with a view to building a community that has solid, community-lead foundations which deliver a dynamic future to this region.

## VIDEO

Video is an excellent way to speak directly to an audience and to demonstrate personal warmth and commitment. It could be effectively engaged to introduce the key personnel, Councillors, and others to the community and staff to deliver key messages about the progress of Council works projects and future plans.

In the longer term, video messaging is a powerful means of promoting the Council area by displaying the natural beauty of the region. A library of video and still images can be used as content for a wide range of media including TV advertisements, website, brochures, and banners. To be inclusive and illustrate the range of landscapes, features and people of the Council area it is recommended that images be shot / filmed across the region.

Short video clips can also be used as shareable content on the website and Facebook. These could highlight certain aspects of the area, for example the sheep industry or the opportunities arising from the meat processing sector. They could also form testimonials with people providing short insights to the area, for example why their business operates in the area, explaining a particular historic feature such as Bradman's birthplace, or praising the virtues of bringing up children in the region.

## RESULTS & MEASUREMENT

To determine the success of any communication plan, it is important to determine appropriate KPIs for each of the tactical elements of the communication strategy. Specific indicators will be set to reflect the individual tactics employed once this strategy is approved by Council. However, in general the program should be measured against the five characteristics of a strong Council:

- **Outstanding Service Provision** – Council's ability to provide residents and businesses with an efficient, convenient, and satisfying experience when using Council services, information, and infrastructure.
- **Strong Performance** – The Council is a robust, flexible, and capable organisation that delivers on the needs of the community.
- **Sound Organisational Health** – Council staff, leadership and culture directly contribute to the Council's success and to positive customer-centric culture and delivery.
- **Strategic Capacity** – Council is a strong partner in the system of government, with a strategic outlook, confidently representing and progressing matters of local and regional significance.
- **Robust Community Relationships** – Residents and businesses have a voice in the vision for their community and there is meaningful, open dialogue between Council and community on solving local issues.



Monitoring and reviewing Council's engagement activities is essential to identify areas for improvement and to realise goals more efficiently. Council will use a variety of evaluation and reporting methods to assess and communicate its progress including:

- Undertaking annual audits to check progress against the objectives identified in this strategy.
- Reviewing the strategy, policy, and toolkit every four years.
- Undertaking a community satisfaction survey annually and reporting these outcomes.
- Reviewing participation levels in engagement activities.
- Reviewing verbal and written feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness of our engagement activities.
- Quantitative and qualitative information collected.
- Quarterly executive level reporting to improve visibility of engagement delivery.

## RESPONSIBILITIES & BUDGET

The Communications team is a supporting function within council, providing access to the communication channels available, online panel, providing advice on resources, engagement design, and engagement planning and communicating with the community through a variety of resources.

A dedicated budget for communications and community engagement activities regarding key Corporate Planning documents, such as the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework suite, sits within the Governance portfolios.

The overall effectiveness of our Communication and Engagement Strategy is measured by Council decisions and actions that acknowledge and reflect quantifiable and evidence-based community input. This also includes stakeholder understanding of those decisions and actions, even if there is not always a shared agreement regarding the outcome.

In top-level terms, success will mean:

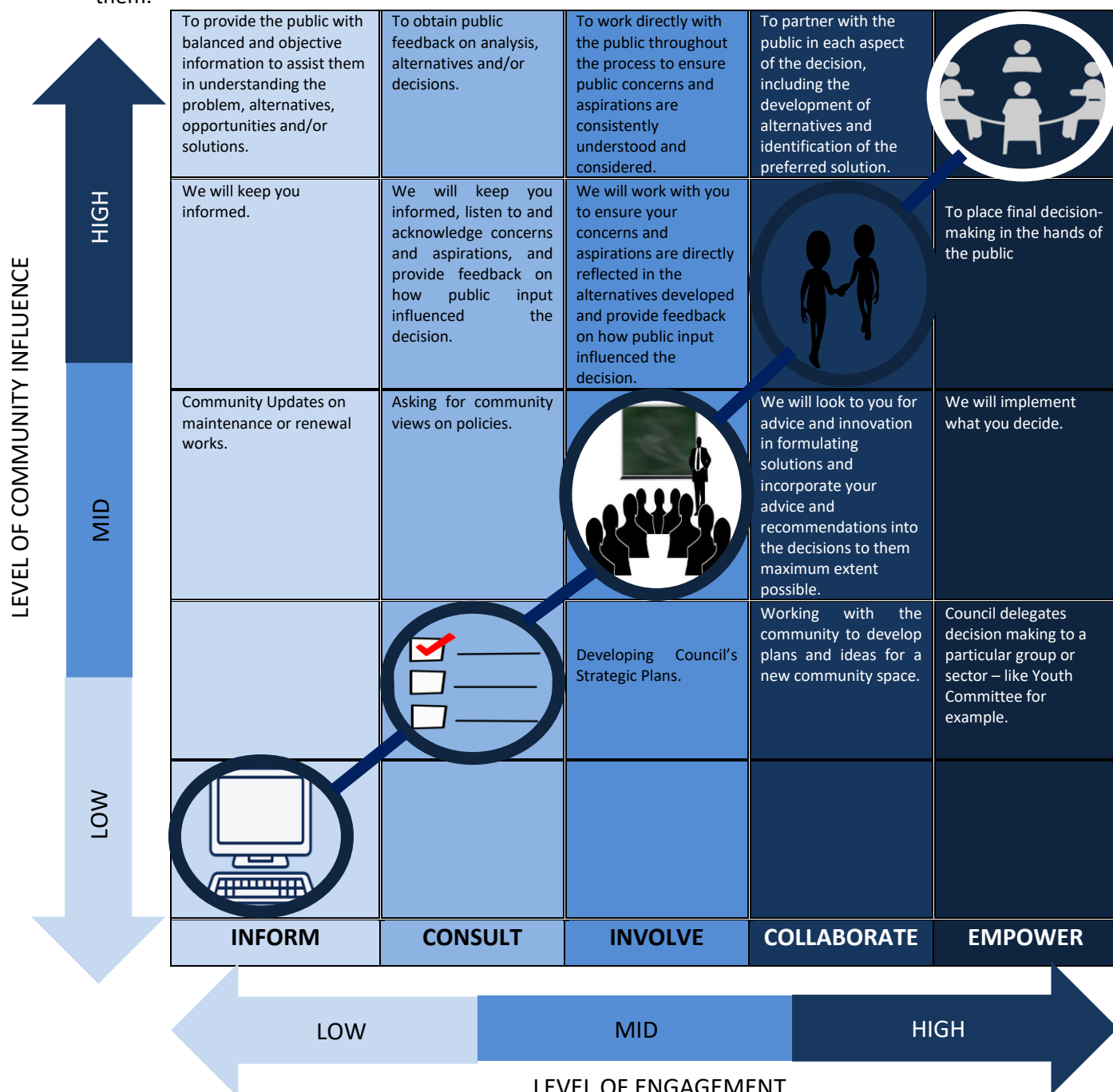
- There is a commitment by Councillors and staff and a common understanding of when to engage with the community in a meaningful and appropriate way about decisions that affect them.
- We have consistently reached the participation targets in our engagement processes (number of participants/captured views etc).
- Council decisions and advocacy activities are evidenced by community engagement findings.
- We have utilised online communication and engagement techniques, complementing traditional engagement methods.
- We have provided a consistent and easy-to-understand process to guide staff through the engagement process for services, activities, projects or decisions.
- We have met and, in some cases, exceeded legislated engagement requirements.

Implementing this Strategy is the shared responsibility of the entire Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council organisation and applies to Councillors, staff, contractors, and consultants. The Strategy recognises that the key to successful community engagement is a productive and collaborative partnership between all stakeholders.



# COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – ENGAGEMENT METHOD

CGRC will use the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum principles to develop engagement strategies to ensure that community and stakeholders are appropriately involved on projects or matters that affect them.



TIME FRAME	ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	METHOD OF ENGAGEMENT
Quarter 1 -	Listening Posts Held in townships & villages.	Consult & Involve Community Participation.
Quarter 2 -	Meet with selected community/service/sporting clubs in towns & villages across the LGA.	Inform & collaborate with Community
Quarter 3 -	Media Releases, Social Media Posts, Advertising: Invite Public Comment.	Consult, Involve, Empower Community Input.
Quarter 4 -	Monitor & Evaluate	Advise, Collaborate & Inform

# COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Department.....Contact Person.....

Project..... Description.....

Timeline/Date..... Is this project a regulatory notice?.....

Project Overview.....

.....

.....

Please attach any photos/flyers or other information you have regarding this project.

Please supply any other contact details if interview/comments/photo shoot opportunities exist for this

project.....

Do you require? (Please indicate number and frequency)

Media Releases Facebook Posts

Digital Notice Board Website updates

Listening Posts in CBD Contact with local media outlets

Inclusion in Snippets advertising Inclusion in Community Newsletter

Is your project time sensitive? Date

Will this project require any additional advertising outside of Councils regular advertising?

If yes, please provide frequency and work order number

Facebook Scheduling please provide dates and frequency

Distribution of information and flyers at Customer Service Centres

Public Meetings/Community Interest Group Meetings

Invitation to dignitaries ie Member of Parliament/Mayor/Councillors

Follow -Up. Will there be opportunities for further positive messages to our communities when your

Project is completed.\_\_\_\_\_If yes, please provide details and timeline.

\_\_\_\_\_

Other information

## CONCLUSION

There are many opportunities to increase the community's awareness of the Council brand and develop positive connections between Council, the community, and stakeholders. However, for any engagement strategy to be effective, it must be embraced by staff, Councillors, and the community.

Encouragement, acknowledgement, and recognition of the communities' right and need for information will assist with effective communication channels between Council and the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Short-term:

- Staff awareness of communication channels available to them.
- Continuous improvement on communication between staff and departments.
- Public relations training for staff and councillors.
- Review media policy, writing and branding guidelines with staff and councillors in workshop environment.
- Website development.
- Encourage quick responses to community requests.
- Follow up and report on issues.

### Long-term:

- Investigate other digital means of communication.
- Expand newsletter content. More pages or more frequently.
- Continue with website development.
- Engage with community to help understand changing media habits.
- Key communication staff to undertake IAP2 training. (Cost implications).



## **COOTAMUNDRA-GUNDAGAI REGIONAL COUNCIL**

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