

Muswellbrook Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy

2016-2017

Muswellbrook Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan 2027 Community Engagement Strategy 2016-2017

Under NSW Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) legislation, a newly elected Council is required to endorse its new 10-year Community Strategic Plan within six months of the local government election. The Muswellbrook Community Strategic Plan 2027 needs to be endorsed by the elected Council no later than March 2017. The Community Strategic Plan 2026 will be actioned through the Delivery Program and Operational Plan, these strategic planning documents are required to be implemented from 1 July 2017.

Council's strategic planning documents sit within the Integrated Planning Framework and include:

- The Community Strategic Plan 2027 (a 10 year horizon)
- Resourcing Strategy which is made up of the long term financial plan, workforce management plan and asset management plan
- Delivery program 2017-2020
- Operational Plan 2017-2018

Purpose of the Community Engagement Strategy

The community engagement strategy articulates how Council will engage with the community to ensure that the Community Strategic Plan is developed in line with the community's needs and reflects the community's vision for the future of the Muswellbrook Shire.

Objectives

- To identify the community's priorities and vision for the Muswellbrook Shire, its towns and villages over the next 10 years
- Develop a Delivery Program and Operational Plans to realise the community's vision and priorities
- Test the relevance of the pillars and themes of the draft 2027 Community Strategic Plan

Guiding principles

- Comply with 'The council charter' as per the NSW Local Government Act 1993 section 8
- Apply a deliberative democracy approach (see definition below) to community engagement
- Address social, environmental, economic and civic leadership issues in an

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integrated manner applying the 4 pillars of sustainability in the planning and reporting process.



Four pillars of the Community Strategic Plan 2027

2016-2017 Community Engagement Activities

- **Media releases**
Local radio and newspapers will be kept informed about the range of opportunities to provide feedback and "have your say"
- **Council newsletter**
Council's community newsletter will inform the community about the engagement process and how to get involved
- **Website feedback forum**
Council's website will include information about listening post sites; post it walls and a portal to lodge submissions and ideas
- **Listening Posts**
Council staff will collect community feedback at listening posts that will be set up at shopping centres
- **Post it walls and boxes**
Post it walls and feedback boxes will be provided at the libraries and swimming pools

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- **Submissions**

Local individuals and groups from across the Shire will be invited to make submissions for the consideration of the Community Panel

- **Community Panel**

Residents will be invited to join a group of 30 to 35 individuals that will meet regularly over a 2 to 3 month period to prepare a set of recommendations for Council on what the vision and priorities for Muswellbrook Shire should be. Individuals will be randomly invited to form a demographically representative Panel of residents drawn from across the Shire. The Panel use a 'deliberative democracy' approach. Once the Community Panel process is complete the Panel will present their views to the Council. The findings of the community panel and feedback collected from all the Community Engagement activities will inform the Community Strategic Plan 2027.

What is a deliberative democracy approach?

A deliberative democracy process provides the opportunity for considered discussion by a representative community group that is informed by detailed and accurate information. Discussion and contrary views are encouraged. The participants (community panel members) should be willing to talk and listen, with civility and respect. All views are to be considered sincerely on their merits, not by how they are made or who is making them. All points of view held by significant portions of the population should receive attention.

Following are the five characteristics of deliberative democracy that will be used in Council's Community Panel:

- *Information:* Accurate and relevant data is made available to all participants
- *Substantive balance:* Different positions are compared based on their supporting evidence
- *Diversity:* All major positions relevant to the matter are considered
- *Conscientiousness:* Participants sincerely weigh all arguments
- *Equal consideration:* Views are weighed based on evidence, not on who is advocating a particular view

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Time frame

When	What
September 2016	Local Government Election
October 2016	Begin preparation of detailed documentation on councils plans and services for the Community Panel process
October 2016	Council endorse a Community Engagement Strategy
October 2016	Launch consultation activities; Listening posts, Media releases etc
November 2016	Invitations sent to community members to participate in Community Panel
November 2016	Community engagement activities
December 2016	Community Panel Meets
20 December to January 14	Christmas Break
January and February 2017	Community Panel Meets
March 2017	Exhibit draft Community Strategic Plan 2027
March 2017	Community Strategic Plan 2026 is endorsed by Council