



two ways :: one outcome

Community Engagement Strategy & Policy

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1 Introduction

Community engagement is a way of including the views of our community in our planning and decision making processes. In other words, we engage with our community to identify, understand and develop strategies to address and respond to their needs and concerns for now and in the future. Engaging with the community is part of the Central Deserts Shire's undertaking to operate with "high standards of communication, transparency and openness" as indicated in the Council's strategic plan.

This means that Council needs to be open and accountable to the community and provide ample opportunity for feedback. Council acknowledges that by involving a cross section of the community in a consultative process, it can make better decisions. Council also knows that strong relationships with the community is integral and is built on trust, goodwill and respect with the community.

It is intended that this Community Engagement Strategy and Policy framework will give the community a clear understanding of:

- Council's commitment to Community Engagement
- When Community Engagement will occur
- What level of engagement will occur
- How the Community Engagement process will be managed.

2 Governance Principles and Representation

As part of the formation of the Shire a set of governance principles were adopted that guide the activities of the Shire. The following principles are also directly applicable to community engagement activities:

Respect for cultural diversity

- We recognise and respect the culture of the Anmatjere, Warlpiri and Arrernte people who make up the vast majority of residents, have cared for the country and have been here since time immemorial.
- We recognise and respect the culture of non-indigenous people who first arrived as pioneers in the 1850s, economically developed the region and play a significant role in the region today.
- We accept and use democratic (non-Indigenous) system for decision making for formal council business whilst encouraging consensus at all times.
- We acknowledge that decision making based on cultural traditions of the Anmatjere, Warlpiri and Arrernte people is normally practiced by the majority of residents.

Service all residents

- We serve all our residents by doing an impartial professional job to the best of our ability.
- We will be fair, honest and reasonable in all our dealings – particularly when making difficult decisions.
- We believe that the provision of basic community infrastructure, reasonable housing, decent roads, good waste management facilities, secure employment, and the provision of training and professional development opportunities contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

Working together

- We work together with the Australian and Northern Territory government and representative organisations in the best interests of our residents.
- We welcome and support private enterprise being established throughout the region and believe a strong, diversified regional economy will encourage better employment outcomes.
- Our leaders are accountable to their constituents and make responsible decisions about the sustainable use of natural resources, sustainable development and protection of the environment.

Rules and laws

We follow Australian and Northern Territory laws, Council policies and our code of conduct and we respect industrial democracy and natural justice principles.

3 Policy Objectives

The Central Desert Shire Council has identified as a specific Strategic Objective to establish “High standards of communication, transparency and openness”. This Community Engagement Strategy aims to support this strategic objective and make the Shire’s Community Engagement activities more effective by ensuring:

- Effective and respectful communication and engagement with all stakeholders
- Residents and stakeholders are meaningfully involved in shire planning
- Residents receive support to give feedback that informs ongoing improvement of service delivery
- A responsive organisation that values and supports linguistic and cultural diversity
- Residents and other stakeholders are aware of the shire’s activities and achievements
- Constituents understand how to access representation and receive support to do so
- Staff and stakeholders understand and respond to constituents’ aspirations and concerns
- Strong collaborative relationships between elected members, staff and external stakeholders
- Staff have the information and support required for effective team work.

4 Council’s Commitment

4.1 Principles

All activities in this plan will observe the following principles:

- Communication and engagement are a two-way street and everybody’s business
- Communication and engagement are not an afterthought but an integral part of shire planning
- Our communication and engagement activities will meet the diverse linguistic, cultural, educational needs and community development aspirations of our residents
- Our communications will be clear, open, truthful and respectful of all target audiences.

4.2 Standards

Central Desert Shire Council strives to be a legitimate, representative, effective, responsive, transparent, inclusive and accountable local government and service delivery organisation. It is guided by the values of its elected members:

- Respect for each other
- Strong and good leadership
- Community and families
- Our cultures and languages
- Environment, our country
- Teamwork
- Accountability and the law – 2 way
- Honesty
- Trust
- Openness.

5 Who is our Community?

Council defines ‘Community’ as people who live within the Central Desert Shire and all who wish to visit, work or invest in the area. The community includes residents, rate payers, state and federal government agencies, private sector and non government agencies.

The following table indicates some of the major community groups as identified in “Our Partners” graphic in Shire’s Empower Kit.

Residents	Residents and families Aboriginal communities, outstations and organisations Royalty Associations Rate Payers (businesses, Aboriginal Land Trusts, Department of Local Government, Housing and Regional Services)
Governments/Service Providers and Funders	Australian Government NT Government Other Local Government Organisations
Industry	Business groups, e.g. Cattlemen’s Association, Tourism CA and Tourism NT Horticulture Businesses Mining Businesses Pastoralists Training and Employment Agencies Shire suppliers Chamber of Commerce
Internal Stakeholders	Councillors Local Board members and Committee Members Staff
General Public	Children (0-11 years old) Youth (12-24 years old) Older people People with a disability People from culturally and linguistically diverse

	backgrounds (CALD) NT residents Visitors
Non Government Organisations/Peak Bodies	LGANT/ALGA Central Land Council and other NGOs (Desert Peoples Centre, Outback Way Development Council, Tangentyere Council/CAYLUS, Mt Theo, World Vision, Waltja Tjutangku Palyapai) Research Organisations Other community service delivery organisations and peak bodies.

6 When will Community Engagement Occur?

The Council will engage the community when ever it believes that community consultation is warranted. The following are indicative of the occasions when community consultation would be undertaken:

Strategy Planning

This refers to the development of strategic plans and projects that informs the Management Plan and Business Plans

Policy Development and/or Implementation

This includes any policy development that has a direct impact on the community.

Community specific issues

This refers to any changes to a community that may have impact on the community.

Service Planning

This includes the development and /or improvement of a service.

Areas of Improvement

This refers to any improvement required to increase the quality of lifestyle for the community eg shopping areas, open spaces, etc.

Where Legislative Requirements indicate

This refers to all prescribed plans and projects under the Local Government Act and other relevant Acts that indicate that community consultation is required. This may include for example, Electoral Representation Reviews, Rating Reviews etc.

7 What Level of Engagement will Occur?

The Council will determine the level of engagement required depending on the issue, and its immediate or long term impact on the community. The levels of engagement with the community are:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public and private concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Tools that could be used			
Ward Councillors Fact sheets Web sites Displays Newsletters Media releases Community meetings Shop Front.	Local Board meetings Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings Resident feedback Stalls Submissions Web based information and feedback forms.	Local Board meetings Workshops Community meetings.	Local Board meetings and workshops Community workshops.

The appropriate level of engagement and its financial implications for each project will be advised in the Council papers.

8 How will Community Engagement be Managed?

Community Engagement activities will include the following elements:

Management of the Community Engagement Activity

- Each community engagement activity will be the responsibility of the Manager or Coordinator within the unit
- When planning community engagement, the responsible officer needs to ensure that resources (staff and finance) for engagement activities across Council are effectively allocated and managed. Where possible engagement activities should be combined with other activities that target similar community groups.

Community Representation

In planning community engagement, Council will ensure that every effort is made to:

- Be sensitive to the cultural traditions within the Shire
- Attract and reach a cross section of community by using a wide range of communication methods

- Invite specific targeted community groups as identified in the project
- Accommodate participants' cultural, language and special needs through the use of interpreters or other services as required.
- Involve community groups who are sometimes hard to reach ie children, young people, people with disabilities, women and people from various cultural backgrounds.

Reporting Back to the Participants and the Community

- Upon completion of a community engagement activity, outcomes from the activity will be communicated to all participants and the community.
- A report will be developed outlining the community engagement outcomes, considerations and recommendations made by Council.

Evaluation of the Community Engagement

Upon completion of a community engagement activity, an evaluation will be conducted to assess:

- Community representation
- The type of communications publicity methods most suitable
- The method utilised for engaging the community
- The timing ie promotion time and time of the actual activity
- Information about the number of engagement activities undertaken and participation rates and also information about the type of feedback and input gained and gathered.

These assessment results will be used to improve future engagement plans and processes.

9 Related Policies, Plans and Legislation

- Central Desert Shire Council Shire Plan (in particular Appendix 4 and 5)
- The Community Engagement Implementation Plan
- Local Government Act 2008 and regulations
- Electoral Act
- Local Implementation Plans and Regional Management Plans
- Code of Conduct
- Good Governance Handbook.