



Uralla Shire Council
Community Engagement Strategy
Draft Update 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land and recognise their sacred connection to Country. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

About this Document

Date Adopted by Council:		Resolution:	
Document Owner:	Manager - Development & Planning		
Review Timeframe:	4 years		
Last Review Date:	December 2024	Next Scheduled Review Date:	December 2028

Document Reference: UINT/22/11216

Document Control

Version	Date Amended	Details/Comments
3	September 2022	Review and update of CES 2017.
4	December 2024	Review and update of draft update CES 2022

Related Documents and Legislation

Local Government Act 1993

Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979

NSW Office of Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines

Uralla Shire Council Community Strategic Plan

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1 Introduction

The Uralla Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy outlines the process for involving the Uralla Shire community in Council's strategic planning and decision-making processes, ranging from the development of Council's long term strategic planning set out in the 10-Year Community Strategic Plan to day-to-day Council activities and services. Council supports the right of citizens to participate in the decision making that affects their future.

This strategy:

- 1) Defines community engagement and outlines Council's engagement principles
- 2) Identifies the methods of engagement Council uses for different levels of engagement
- 3) Identifies the broad categories of Council projects which require engagement, and
- 4) Provides an Engagement Matrix to align the methods of engagement with the category of Council projects and services.

1.1 Background

Part of Council's core role is to engage with the community every day in a variety of ways. From Shire-wide high impact projects to locality-based low impact projects, this strategy will outline Council's commitment to keeping the community informed, consulted, and involved.

Community engagement is how Council connects with the community to seek feedback on plans, projects, and policies being developed. It ensures community opinion is reflected in the decision making process. A coordinated and strategic approach to community engagement and communications aims to:

- Inform decision making
- Build relationships and trust
- Strengthen community
- Build a sense of belonging, and
- Keep the community informed.

Community engagement improves the efficiency and effectiveness of Council by ensuring that Council is aware of and responsive to community concerns. It also ensures that the community has a broad understanding of the functions and constraints of local government.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to provide the framework to enable the Uralla Shire community to be actively involved in Council strategy, decision making and activities, and to provide a consistent and transparent approach to consultation and engagement.

The strategy aims to give all stakeholders opportunities to participate so that no sector of the community is disadvantaged. It includes measures to involve groups that are at risk of exclusion from public debate, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people, youth, people with a disability, low socio-economic groups, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

1.3 Scope

The principles outlined in this strategy pertain to all engagement and communication activities undertaken by Council.

Engagement specific to planning matters is detailed in Council's Community Participation Plan ('CPP'). The CPP is required under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and attached at Appendix 1 to this strategy.

1.4 Strategy Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- 1) Involve the local community in shaping, implementing, and reviewing Council's strategic planning and decision-making processes.
- 2) Provide a framework for a coordinated and well-planned approach to engagement that is genuine, accessible, and inclusive, catering to the specific needs of each stakeholder group.
- 3) Continuously monitor and evaluate Council's engagement activities, using feedback to improve and strengthen future engagement efforts and capabilities.
- 4) Build a positive reputation for Uralla Shire Council by showing that Council listens to, informs, and is guided by the whole community—not just the most vocal contributors.
- 5) Ensure Council gathers high-quality information that reflects the views of a diverse range of community members, using multiple methods to support effective decision-making.
- 6) Ensure Council's strategic decisions represent the community fairly and that resources are allocated in an equitable way.



2 Why we engage

2.1 What is Engagement?

Community engagement is an inclusive, planned process that provides individuals and groups the opportunity to participate in the service delivery, planning, problem solving and decision making which affects them or may be of interest to them.

For the purposes of this strategy, community engagement is defined as the processes and structures in which Council:

1. Communicates information to the community; and
2. Seeks information, involvement, and collaboration from the community with the primary aim of shaping Council's decision making.

2.2 Benefits of Community Engagement

Effective engagement makes communities feel more connected with their council, strengthening trust, goodwill, and respect. Community involvement improves decision making. Using community knowledge and ideas enables local governments to respond better to the needs of the community, design better services, and respond to change.

Community engagement benefits both Council and the Uralla Shire community, by:

- Keeping the Council open and accountable;
- Helping the Council plan services that meet the community's needs and goals;
- Supporting the Council to prioritise services and use resources wisely;
- Allowing more views to be shared, more information to be gathered, and more solutions to be considered before decisions are made;
- Helping the Council and community work together to make fair decisions;
- Giving residents a chance to have their say and influence outcomes that affect their lives; and
- Building greater community support and understanding for Council decisions.



3 Principles

3.1 Social Justice Principles

The *Local Government Act 1993* requires Council to consider social justice principles in its decisions. Engaging effectively with the community ensures Council's plans, programs, and services uphold these principles:

Equity: Decisions, priorities, and resources should be distributed fairly, especially to support those in need. Everyone should have an equal chance to contribute to the community's future, with special attention given to involving and safeguarding the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.

Access: All individuals should have equal access to services, resources, and opportunities that enhance their quality of life.

Participation: Everyone should have meaningful opportunities to be involved in decisions that impact their lives.

Rights: Equal rights must be upheld and promoted, ensuring people from all linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds can fully participate in community life.

3.2 Engagement Principles

The following principles guide community engagement at Uralla Shire Council. They shape all engagement processes and activities, ensuring that engagement is meaningful, inclusive, and accessible for everyone in the community.

- 1. Community engagement is focused on providing input to solve challenges.**
We recognise that Council decision-making is improved with community feedback, and actively seek input from the community and stakeholders.
- 2. Community engagement is relevant and authentic.**
Community engagement will be undertaken where there is an opportunity for the community to influence Council's decisions or actions. Engagement has a clearly defined objective and scope, and the community is provided with objective, relevant information to inform their participation.
- 3. Community engagement is timely.**
We will commence community engagement as early as possible to ensure the community has reasonable time to provide input and that Council has adequate time and resources to consider community feedback. Engagement stages will be clearly defined and communicated so that community input can identify issues and opportunities.
- 4. Community engagement is open, inclusive, and respectful.**
All community members, stakeholders and staff have the right to participate in a respectful environment and behave in a manner that supports everyone's right to present their point of view. Our engagement is accessible and inclusive and seeks input from 'hard to reach' groups. We use a range of tools and techniques, balancing technology with traditional methods.
- 5. Community engagement is transparent and meaningful.**
We will communicate to the community how the engagement process will influence Council's decision making. We will explain how input was taken into consideration and ensure the response is relevant and proportionate. Council will close the loop on engagement and report back to the community on engagement outcomes. Council protects privacy, respects confidentiality, and is guided by its Privacy Management Plan.

6. **Community engagement is easy to understand.**

Information will be provided in a variety of formats. It will be clear, concise, and written in plain English.

3.3 *Communication Principles*

Communication is an essential part of community engagement by keeping the community and key stakeholders informed of all aspects of Council business including services, projects, programs, plans, and decisions of Council.

Council's commitment to communication is underpinned by the following principles:

- Communication will ensure that stakeholders are well informed about Council business and activities, and opportunities to connect with Council on a variety of matters.
- Communication promotes projects, services and key decisions of Council.
- Communication supports and complements Council's community engagement activities.
- Communications are accessible and in formats to reach the whole community taking into consideration language, location, format, platform, and time.

3.4 *Public Participation Principles*

Council believes that all citizens should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives. Council follows the best practice guidelines developed by the *International Association for Public Participation* ('IAP2') to ensure that engagement is genuine. The IAP2's core values of public participation are set out below.

Public participation:

- 1) Is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2) Includes the promise that the public's contribution will inform the decision.
- 3) Promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4) Seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5) Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6) Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7) Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision made.

4 Who we engage

4.1 Our Stakeholders and Community

Stakeholders are any individual or group who have an interest in decision-making. They may be residents, ratepayers, business owners, customers, community interest groups, agencies or hard-to-reach groups.

Many people belong to more than one 'community' and will engage with Council on issues that are relevant to them at a particular time. A 'community' may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest or a community of affiliation or identity (such as clubs and community organisations).

Uralla Shire Council stakeholders include:

- **Uralla Shire residents:** Those who reside in the Uralla Shire Local Government Area.
- **Uralla Shire ratepayers:** Those who own rateable land located in the Uralla Shire Local Government Area.
- **Community organisations and groups:** This includes not-for-profit, civic, cultural and religious organisations, groups and networks, and village progress associations.
- **Councillors and Council staff:** The elected body of Council and Council employees.
- **Schools, education and training institutions:** This includes vocational and training providers, language classes, schools and tutoring college, and lifelong learning groups.
- **Businesses and Industry:** Owners, operators, and employees of small, medium, and large businesses, business groups, utility companies, economic development and tourism industry groups.
- **Government agencies and statutory authorities:** State and Federal government agencies and statutory authorities, including emergency services.
- **Other North-West councils and regional bodies:** Armidale Regional Council, Glen Innes Severn Council, Gunnedah Shire Council, Gwydir Shire Council, Inverell Shire Council, Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Moree Plains Shire Council, Narrabri Shire Council, Tamworth Regional Council, Tenterfield Shire Council, Walcha Council, and Regional Development Australia Northern Inland NSW.
- **Interest groups:** Representative groups with an interest in particular issues, such as sporting or cultural organisations and peak bodies, youth organisations, disability advocacy and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.



5 How We Engage

Council will aim to involve all sections of the community in decision-making and planning processes, ensuring opportunities for feedback are accessible and appropriate.

Council will create a safe and welcoming environment so everyone, regardless of their background or experiences, feels supported to share their views. Special efforts will be made to seek input from people facing disadvantage, discrimination, marginalisation, or those in hard-to-reach groups.

Engagement will be purposeful and strategic. Council will clearly define the scope, purpose, and goals of each activity to ensure genuine engagement. This approach will ensure Council can respond effectively to feedback and use the most suitable methods and tools for each activity.

5.1 Levels of Community Engagement

Engagement opportunities provided by Council will vary depending on the significance, complexity of projects, and level of interest, impact and influence that stakeholders have on decisions being made. Engagement may be the gathering of information and data on service needs, or the collaboration between Council and stakeholders to meet the needs of the community.

Council uses the Public Participation Spectrum developed by IAP2 to guide our engagement approach. The Spectrum identifies five different stages of consultation relative to the level of impact the community should have on decision making.

1. **Inform:** The inform level is for day-to-day use, often when Council has already made a decision, to communicate the outcome or status of projects, or when there is only one way that Council believes it can progress a project. At the inform stage Council will give stakeholders balanced, accurate and relevant information on decisions, policies, plans and strategies.
2. **Consult:** At this level, Council seeks feedback to identify important community issues and perspectives that can influence and assist decision making. Informing is a prerequisite for consultation. Council will generate active two-way communication between Council and the community to inform Council decisions.
3. **Involve:** At the involve level, the role of Council is to facilitate involvement of the community to shape decisions that affect community life. Feedback from the community is directly reflected in Council's decisions.
4. **Collaborate:** At this level, Council will create a collaborative relationship or partnership between the community and Council to shape Council services, plans, and decisions. In collaborating with the community, Council seeks advice and innovation from the community and incorporate into Council's decision making as much as possible.
5. **Empower:** As Council operates under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*, engagement activities conducted at the 'empower' level are unusual. As such, Council provides the community with the opportunity to participate in a transparent flow of information and feedback to Councillors, who have been empowered as the elected representatives to make Council's strategic decisions in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*. However, an example of this might be when a matter is put up for referendum for the community to vote on.

		Increasing level of public participation				
		Consultative Engagement > > > >			Deliberative Engagement	
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations 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	To give the public a real voice in the final decision making*	
Our Promise to the Community	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions, and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible. We will provide feedback on Council's decisions.	We will implement what you decide.	
Role of the Community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead	
Possible Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Centre • Website • Social media • Newsletter • Advertisements • Media • Publications • Fact sheets • Signage • Letters/Email • Phone • Presentations • Events • Public Notices • Videos • Displays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening Posts • Surveys • Community forums • Public exhibitions • Submissions • Site meeting/tours • Personal briefings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Committees • Workshops • Focus groups • Reference groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory committees • Stakeholder meetings • Co-design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen jury • Referendum 	
Minimum Standard of Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply community engagement principles and commitments in practice • Ensure accessibility: language, location, format, platform, and time • Identify demographics and priority groups to ensure representativeness of the community, and • Provide time and resources for engagement (planning and time for responses). <p><i>*Council operates under the Local Government Act NSW 1993, therefore only the elected body of Council is empowered to make decisions and implement actions except in very limited circumstances.</i></p>					

5.2 Engaging with Hard-to-Reach Groups

Traditionally some groups of people have been more challenging to engage with effectively. These have included:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse ('CALD') backgrounds
- Older people
- Children & Young people
- People with a disability
- People with low levels of literacy
- People from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds

Council will use a variety of strategies to engage hard-to-reach groups. These include:

- Promoting community engagement activities through a number of different channels & media, e.g. newspapers, free publications, over the radio, online, and through flyers.
- Using plain English, both to promote community engagement and during community engagement.
- Following appropriate cultural protocols and ensuring that the person/s involved in engagement have the authority to speak on behalf of their community or group.
- Avoiding using assumptions, generalisations, or insensitive language about people from CALD backgrounds or their beliefs.
- Seeking the support of agencies (including sections of Council) that provide services to special needs groups.
- Providing incentives to encourage groups and/or individuals to become involved in community engagement.
- Using age appropriate methods for children and young people.
- Taking the opportunity to carry out engagement at activities, events, or festivals in the community.
- Conducting Listening Posts with Councillors and staff in different geographic communities.



5.3 Communication and Engagement Methods

Council uses a variety of communication methods and tools in its engagement. Some of Council's communication tools are listed below; these are not exhaustive.

- *Service Centre:* Council's Service Centre in the administration offices provides a 'one-stop-shop' for Council services using customer service, visual displays, and printed materials for Council related business.
- *Uralla Shire Council website:* One of Council's primary communication tools, the website should be a comprehensive source of information for all Council services and programs.
- *Uralla Shire Council social media:* Information is provided on Council social media platforms to extend the reach of other electronic information or communications, for example information or notices on the Council website.
- *Uralla Shire Council Newsletter:* The newsletter is distributed monthly to email subscribers to provide general Council information to residents.
- *Advertising and Features:* Council will consider the use of advertising and features with any local media servicing the area, e.g. the Northern Daily Leader, Armidale Express, Inverell Times, Uralla Wordsworth.
- *Media Releases:* Regular media releases ensure Council provides reliable, timely and accurate information to all media servicing the Uralla Shire, including print and broadcast.
- *Publications and information material:* Uralla Shire Council publications about Council specific programs, services and initiatives are a valuable source of information.
- *Council facilitated community events:* Council-hosted events which provide opportunities for Councillors and staff to provide information to the community. Council also strongly supports and participates in other community events.
- *Letterbox Drop:* Non-addressed letter or flyer that advises citizens of an outcome or works to be undertaken and informs how feedback can be provided.
- *Targeted Direct Mail (Letter or Email):* Addressed letters sent directly to the customer. This is usually specific to a project, geographic location, or members of a particular group or demographic.
- *Presentations and Public Speaking:* Councillors and staff speak at relevant meetings or events such as community events.
- *Community Notice Boards:* At Council facilities, designated community noticeboards (e.g. outside the supermarket) and areas relevant to audience.
- *Site Specific Signage:* Erected temporarily or permanently to inform the public of the project and relevant project details.
- *Videos:* Informational video which can be distributed via electronic means or used in a display.
- *Listening Posts:* Councillors and Council officers are available at a nominated venue and for a specific period of time, encouraging citizens to attend and discuss various topics.
- *Community Forums:* These provide an opportunity for members of the community to attend a structured two-way information session hosted by Council, usually about specific projects and topics.

- *Surveys:* Target audience surveys should be integrated with broader consultation for larger projects.
- *Public exhibitions:* Exhibitions may be required by legislation for certain types of issues. Items on exhibition and development applications are open to submissions from the public. Information is made available for the public to comment on within a certain time frame, while informing citizens how they can make their submissions or comments to Council. Exhibitions timeframes may be prescribed in legislation while others are at Council's discretion.
- *Submissions:* Citizens are encouraged to make submissions to Council and Councillors.
- *Site Meetings and Tours:* Interaction at specific locations, usually facilitated by Council for invited participants.
- *Personal briefings:* Inform relevant community groups, ratepayer associations, businesses, or individuals that they may request a personal briefing with Councillors or Council staff to discuss a particular issue.
- *Meetings by invitation:* Community leaders, stakeholders and representatives meet with Councillors and Council staff for discussion, debate and exchange of views on a specific issue.
- *Meetings with Council advisory groups:* Formal consultation between councillors and Council staff with members of advisory groups with expertise in particular areas. Engagement will be governed by the groups' terms of reference.
- *Large Group/Stakeholder Collaboration:* As forums to address a strategic issue or plan, these collaborations bring together councillors, Council staff, stakeholder groups and individuals with relevant expertise and knowledge to formulate a response.



5.4 Engagement Matrix

Consultation methods vary according to the type of project or issue. Council projects and issues can generally be described as the range of extent (locality based or Shire-wide) and the range of impact (high or low.) The strategy sets guidelines for engagement on projects and issues which are classified into four categories:

1. **Shire-wide / High Impact:** Strategic plans, major projects and resource issues. For example, Community Strategic Plan, Local Environment Plan, Development Control Plans, Local Strategic Planning Statement.
2. **Shire-wide / Low Impact:** Management plans and policy development, minor projects and major projects with limited impact. For example, major festivals and events, Council policies.
3. **Locality Based / High Impact:** Locality improvement and site-specific matters and events. For example, development applications in accordance with statutory requirements, construction of Council facilities, and works in central business districts.
4. **Locality Based / Low Impact:** Council service, program planning and delivery. For example, local road works, operational services such as traffic management and general maintenance of public areas, or upgrade of parks and recreational areas (minor works level).

To help Council staff with the engagement process, a Communications Plan will be prepared for all High Impact projects. These plans should outline:

- Communication objectives,
- Engagement principles,
- Key stakeholders and audience,
- Key project partners and representatives,
- Communication tools, schedule and responsibilities,
- Critical issues and risk management, and
- Reporting and evaluation.



The engagement matrix below sets out general guidelines based on the categories above to assist Council staff with allocation of engagement resources.

Engagement tools in the involve and collaborate stage will vary depending on the nature of the project.



	What to do?	When you are dealing with...			
	1 = every time	Shire-wide / High Impact	Shire-wide / Low Impact	Locality Based / High Impact	Locality Based / Low Impact
	2 = in most circumstances				
	3 = on specific occasions				
	4 = if necessary				
INFORM	Service Centre	1	1	1	1
	Uralla Shire Council website	1	1	1	2
	Social Media	1	1	1	2
	Council Newsletter	1	2	1	3
	Newspaper/Advertising/Features	1	2	2	3
	Media Release	1	2	2	3
	Publications/information material	1	2	2	4
	Council facilitated events	4	4	4	4
	Letterbox Drop	4	4	3	3
	Targeted Direct Mail	3	3	2	3
	Presentation/Public Speaking	2	4	3	4
	Community Notice Boards	2	3	3	3
	Site Specific Signage	3	3	3	3
CONSULT	Community Forum	3	3	2	3
	Listening Post	1	3	4	4
	Public exhibitions	1	2	2	2
	Community displays/information sessions	2	2	3	4
	Surveys	2	4	3	4
	Site Meeting/Tour	2	3	2	4
	Personal briefing	2	3	2	3
INVOLVE/ COLLABORATE	Meetings by invitation	1	2	2	4
	Workshops	2	3	3	4
	Focus Groups	3	4	4	4
	Reference Groups	2	3	3	4
	Meetings with Council advisory groups	1	3	3	4
	Advisory Committees	2	3	3	4
	Large Group/Stakeholder Collaboration	2	2	3	4

Uralla Shire Council Engagement Matrix

5.5 *Engagement Evaluation and Feedback*

After completing an engagement project at the involve or consult level, Council will assess how well it reached the intended audience and met its objectives. Feedback will then be shared with participants to explain how their input was considered in decision-making and the outcomes that followed.

Providing clear and timely feedback enhances transparency and strengthens Council's relationship with the community. It also helps improve future engagement efforts by deepening understanding of the process.

6 Document Review

This strategy will be reviewed every 4 years or as required by relevant legislation.



Appendix 1 – Uralla Shire Council Community Participation Plan

1 WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is a process with a specific purpose to identify and work with groups of individuals with an interest in addressing issues affecting the community's well-being. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed the 'IAP2 public participation spectrum' to assist in defining the public's role in any public participation process.

Community engagement by Uralla Shire Council will be made up of one or more of the IAP2 five strategies:

- Inform,
- Consult,
- Involve,
- Collaborate, and
- Empower.

Collaboration will be the most significant part of the Uralla Shire Council's engagement. It involves working with key stakeholders and the community to find solutions and alternatives. This stage comes after all the information has been sought through consultation and understood clearly during the involving stage.

2 WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAN ('CPP')?

Community Participation Plans ('CPPs') are a requirement under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* ('the EP&A Act') and are designed to make participation by the public in planning matters clearer.

Community participation is a vital aspect for planning and development across Uralla Shire. The CPP is an invitation to the community to communicate with Council about planning decisions, to achieve better economic, environmental and social outcomes for present and future stakeholders.

2.1 Objectives of the CPP

- To provide the community with appropriate information;
- To capture community input;
- To work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure that ideas, concerns and aspirations are listened to and understood; and
- To partner with the public to ensure the decision-making process considers alternatives and identifies, minimises or avoids negative impacts.

2.2 CPP principles

The principles of a CPP as outlined by the EP&A Act are as follows:

- a) The community has a right to be informed about planning matters that affect it.
- b) Planning authorities should encourage effective and on-going partnerships with the community to provide meaningful opportunities for community participation in planning.
- c) Planning information should be in plain language, easily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation in planning.
- d) The community should be given opportunities to participate in strategic planning as early as possible to enable community views to be genuinely considered.
- e) Community participation should be inclusive and planning authorities should actively seek views that are representative of the community.
- f) Members of the community who are affected by proposed major development should be consulted by the proponent before an application for planning approval is made.
- g) Planning decisions should be made in an open and transparent way and the community should be provided with reasons for those decisions (including how community views have been taken into account).
- h) Community participation methods (and the reasons given for planning decisions) should be appropriate having regard to the significance and likely impact of the proposed development.

2.3 How will the CPP be used?

The CPP explains the level of engagement the community can have for the different types of development, planning and assessment projects. It also provides transparency and accountability in the development, planning and assessment process within Uralla Shire.

2.4 Where does this CPP apply?

The CPP only applies to the Uralla Shire Council Local Government Area ('LGA') and Council's exercise of its planning functions under the EP&A Act and the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)* ('the LG Act').

2.5 What are Council's Planning responsibilities?

Development Assessment

- a) **Local Development** (other than Complying Development Certificates, Designated Development and State Significant Development): The Uralla Local Environmental Plan ('Uralla LEP') outlines those types of development and land uses that require development consent before development can take place.
- b) **Integrated Development:** This is development (not being State Significant Development or Complying Development) that requires development consent and one or more approvals.
- c) **Designated Development:** These are generally high impact developments (or development) located in environmental sensitive areas. Development which is declared as Designated Development are listed in Schedule 3 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2021* or can also be declared in a Local Environmental Plan or State Environmental Planning Policy.

Strategic Planning

- a) **Community Participation Plan** - The CPP sets out when and how Council will engage with the community across all planning functions and the minimum requirements for community participation.
- b) **Regional or District Plans** - The New England North West Regional Plan applies to the Uralla Shire and as developed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to plan for future infrastructure, housing, employment and health needs for the region.
- c) **Local Strategic Planning Statements** - The Local Strategic Plan is a long-term visionary document which plans for future land use based on where the shire will be or would like to be in 20 years.
- d) **Local Environment Plan** -The Uralla LEP guides planning decisions for Uralla Shire. It provides a framework for the use of land and the main planning tool used to shape the Uralla community and ensure that local development is achieved in an appropriate and sustainable way. Local Environmental Plans are generally reviewed every 5 years.
- e) **Development Control Plan** - A Development Control Plan provides detailed guidelines and specific controls that apply to development proposals in the Uralla Shire. A Development Control Plan may be periodically reviewed to amend or introduce new controls relating development types, legislative changes or to clarify intent.
- f) **Developer and Infrastructure Contribution Plans** - Contribution plans allow Council to levy contributions on developments to assist in the provision or maintenance of community facilities or infrastructure on which the development impacts.

2.6 State Significant Development

Under the EP&A Act, projects can be declared State significant development ('SSD') of State Significant Infrastructure ('SSI') if they are important to the State for economic, environmental, or social reasons.

SSD is listed in Chapter 2, Part 2.2 —Schedule 1 and Schedule 2—of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021* ('Planning Systems SEPP').

SSI is listed in Chapter 2, Part 2.3 —Schedule 3 and Schedule 4— of the Planning Systems SEPP.

Environmental Impact Statements for SSD projects must be exhibited for at least twenty-eight (28) days.

All SSI applications are exhibited to the public for at twenty-eight (28) days.

Council is not the responsible authority for development of infrastructure that is declared to be State Significant. SSD/SSI projects require development consent from the Independent Planning Commission or the Minister for Planning (or delegate) as the case may be.

However, Council will endeavour to facilitate awareness and engagement with State Significant projects by sharing relevant information from State departments and agencies in accordance with our Community Engagement Strategy.

Council will undertake to assist residents to make submissions through the Major Projects Portal, where practicable.

3 WHAT ARE THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION TIMEFRAME AND NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS?

There are both mandatory and non-mandatory requirements that apply to public exhibition of a development application or planning document.

Mandatory requirements legally protect the community’s right to make submissions on planning decisions that affect them.

Non-mandatory requirements reflect best practice approaches in ensuring that there is an intention to actively involve the community in the planning process.

3.1 What are the requirements for public exhibition of planning documents?

Council endorsement is required before public exhibition of a draft planning document can be released for comment. Engagement for these planning documents will include:

- Public exhibition at Council service centres;
- Notice on Council’s website;
- Notice on Council’s social media;
- Targeted stakeholder consultations/meetings;
- On-line surveys;
- One-on-one engagement with Council staff;
- Open days/drop-in sessions;
- Notices to stakeholders;
- Notices within other regional newspaper/s;
- Notices on the land; and
- Any other suitable method advised by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

Table 1 - Mandatory plan making public exhibition timeframes

Planning Document	Mandatory Timeframes
Draft Development Control Plan	28 days
Planning proposals for LEPs, subject to a gateway determination	28 days – unless otherwise specified in the gateway determination
Draft Contribution Plans	28 days
Local Strategic Planning Statements	28 days
Draft Community Participation Plan	28 days
Planning Agreements	28 days
State Significant Development and Designated Development	28 days
Local Approvals Policy	14 days
Reclassification of land	28 days and a public hearing

3.2 Notification of Development Applications and Modification Applications

Who will be notified

Council will notify owners of adjoining or neighbouring land when a Development Application ('DA') or an application to amend a DA is received if, in Council's opinion, the proposed development may affect their property in areas such as:

- Views to or from their property;
- Overshadowing;
- Privacy;
- Noise;
- Appearance of the development in relation to the existing streetscape;
- Proximity to property boundaries;
- Stormwater drainage and potential drainage impact on neighbouring sites;
- Installation of fuel-burning equipment or mechanical devices;
- Compatibility with existing development;
- Traffic generation and site capacity to manage traffic; or
- Impacts on future neighbourhood amenity.

When a DA or modification application is lodged, the Planning Manager or delegate will decide if notification is required and identify the recipients.

Written notices will include weblinks to supporting documents, such as site plans and elevations. The full application can be viewed at Council upon request.

For residential or sensitive developments, such as police stations or women's refuges, floor plans will not be made accessible.

When development will not be notified

If Council determines that development the subject of a DA or modification application is of a minor nature and will have minimal environmental impact, notification or public exhibition may not be required.

Examples of development that will **not** be notified include:

- Exempt or complying development as set out in *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008* (the 'Codes SEPP').
- Minor boundary adjustments.
- Strata subdivision proposals.
- The change of use of buildings (in a commercial and industrial zone), except at Council's discretion.
- New detached single-storey dwellings or alterations that are compliant with the DCP.
- Ancillary structures associated with residential development, including carports, pergolas, garden sheds that are compliant with the DCP.
- Private swimming pools.

Notification Period

Application for development consent

The minimum notification or public exhibition period for an application for development consent (other than for Designated Development, for Nominated Integrated Development¹, for Threatened Species Development² or for State Significant Development) is **fourteen (14) days**.

The submission period is the same as the notification period.

Application for Designated Development

The minimum notification or public exhibition period for Designated Development is **twenty eight (28) days**.

The submission period is the same as the notification period.

Application for Nominated Integrated Development or Threatened Species Development

The minimum notification or public exhibition period for development consent for Nominated Integrated Development or Threatened Species Development is **twenty eight (28) days**.

Council-related Development Applications

Council-related DAs, such as a development on Council-owned land, will be publicly exhibited for at least **twenty-eight (28) days**.

Modification Applications

The minimum public exhibition period for a modification of development consent is **fourteen (14) days**.

3.3 *Advertisement of Development Applications*

In addition to the notification and public exhibition requirements outlined above, Council may choose to advertise or exhibit any development it deems to have local or regional significance.

Examples of Development Applications that may be advertised include:

- Demolition of a building or structure that is a listed Item of Environmental Heritage or within a Heritage Conservation Area;
- Licensed clubs or gaming venues;
- Telecommunication facilities in residential or rural residential areas;
- Education or health facilities;
- Neighbourhood shops.

Methods of notification will be the same as for planning documents described at Section 3.2 above.

¹ EP&A Act, schedule 1, cl 7(2)

² EP&A Act, schedule 1, cl 7(2)

4 HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY GET INVOLVED WITH A TOWN PLANNING MATTER?

4.1 *Making a submission*

Anyone may make a submission to support or object to a planning matter during the public exhibition, notification, or advertising period.

Submissions regarding notified or exhibited planning documents and/or planning applications should:

- Be in writing and addressed to the General Manager.
- Include the name and address of the person making the submission.
- Clearly reference the proposal being addressed.
- Provide reasons for any objections raised.
- Be received by Council by close of business on the final day of the submission period.

Council will acknowledge all written submissions received during the public notification period as soon as practicable.

For petitions, the head petitioner—or the first listed petitioner if none is nominated—will be acknowledged in writing and serve as the primary contact for updates on the matter.

For transparency and accountability, the names of those making submissions will be published in Council reports but addresses and other contact details will remain confidential.

Submissions made outside the notification period may be considered at the discretion of the consent authority e.g. the Planning Manager. Council may choose to re-exhibit a planning application.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered.

Raising an objection

An objection to a planning application should focus on valid environmental planning issues relevant to the assessment under s 4.15 or s 4.55 of the EP&A Act as relevant.

Objections should address potential negative impacts of the proposal on the natural or built environment, social or economic impacts in the area.

Examples of valid concerns that will be considered:

- Negative effects on amenity, such as privacy, overshadowing, noise, setbacks, traffic, or stormwater impacts.
- Whether the site is suitable for the proposed use or development.
- Non-compliance with the LEP or DCP.
- Cumulative impacts of multiple developments or uses in the area.
- The public interest.

Examples of concerns that cannot be considered:

- Effects on property values.
- Complaints that are vexatious or defamatory.
- Issues unrelated to the specific development under application.

Supporting a development application

Submissions in support of a planning application are welcome and will be considered. Supportive submissions should address any (or all) of the following:

- Potential benefits to the natural or built environment.
- Positive social or economic impacts in the area.
- How the proposal serves the public interest.
- Improvements to amenity.
- Compliance with the LEP or DCP.
- Suitability of the site for the proposed use or development.

4.2 Consideration of Submissions

When assessing and determining a planning application, Council will consider all submissions received during the notification period.

Submissions will be included in the assessment report prepared by Council's Planning staff, which is either considered by the assessment manager if the decision is delegated; or reported to Council for consideration if triggered for decision by Council. This report becomes part of the public Business Paper, available for download on Council's website (www.uralla.nsw.gov.au) or upon request.

In making its decision, Council must balance the content of submissions with its statutory obligations and considerations. Each application is assessed on its merits, with submissions forming a key part of the assessment process.

Council will notify submission makers in advance if their matter is to be discussed at an upcoming Committee or Council meeting.

After a decision is made on a planning application or the adoption of a strategic plan, all who provided written submissions will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the decision.

Council will only consider submissions that address relevant environmental planning matters.

When a matter will be referred to Council

In certain circumstances, a planning matter and any submissions may be referred to a Council meeting for consideration.

Council can also decide to call up any Development Application for determination.

DAs will be referred to Council for a decision and will not be determined under delegated authority if they meet the following criteria:

- Attract three (3) or more written objections; or
- Involve a value greater than \$2million; or
- Propose a subdivision creating five or more additional allotments; or
- Are the subject of a review under Division 8.2 of the EP&A Act

Speaking at a Council meeting

Council may hold a Public Forum at each Ordinary Meeting to hear oral submissions from the public on agenda items, or in support of a written submission regarding a DA or planning matter.

Applications to speak at the Public Forum must be received one day prior to the meeting to be held and must identify the item of business on the agenda of the council meeting the person wishes to speak on, and whether they wish to speak 'for' or 'against' the item.

Details on Public Forums are outlined in section 4 of the *Uralla Shire Council Code of Meeting Practice*.

Notification of Objections to the Applicant

Written submissions are not confidential and may be shared with the applicant to assist in discussions or included in Council business papers. The applicant will be informed of the content of objections and can review all submissions received.

If the application is amended in response to objections, Council may seek further comments from the original objectors.

4.3 *Privacy*

Under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, submissions on planning applications are considered open access information.

Anyone, including the applicant, can request copies of written submissions. If the author wishes to keep details confidential, they must provide a valid reason in their submission.

When sharing submissions, Council will follow the guidelines of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. Personal contact details, such as addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses, may be withheld if disclosure is deemed not in the public interest.