



Community Strategic Plan 2040

Community Engagement Strategy



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Executive Summary

The Community Strategic Plan is a document that captures the voice, the values, the challenges and the ambitions of our local community.

The Community Strategic Plan is not a Council driven document, however, it is Council's role to facilitate and independently record the community's current values, challenges and ambitions on behalf of the community.

The Community Strategic Plan is a document to be 'owned' by everyone: the community, agencies, government and non-government stakeholders. We all have a role we can play in working towards the future of our place and supporting the ambitions of our collective community.

The purpose of the Community Strategic Plan is to capture the ambitions of the community, and to independently document these, so that they can be worked towards and reported back to our community.

The purpose of this document, the Community Engagement Strategy for the Community Strategic Plan is to outline *how* we will be engaging our community and our stakeholders in developing this plan.

The development of the Community Strategic Plan is an opportunity to bring the voice of our community forward in shaping the future of 'Our Place' and Council is committed to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to be involved.

Background

Under the Local Government Act 1993, Council is required to review the current Community Strategic Plan by June 2017. Under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines, Council will develop a revised Community Strategic Plan in conjunction with Council's stakeholders and the community. This Plan will be supported by a Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

The review and development of the Community Strategic Plan 2040 consists of five main activities:

- Research and Review - Development of 'Indicators' report
- Community Engagement Phase 1 – Understanding and Visioning
- Development of 'Understanding Our Place' report
- Community Engagement Phase 2- Goal and Priority setting
- Development and Exhibition of Draft Plans Phase 3 – Exhibition of CSP

During each stage of the development of the Community Strategic Plan, evaluation and review will be undertaken to ensure:

- Engagement methods and techniques have reached all relevant stakeholders
- Data and information gathered through engagement activities is of high quality and integrity and informs the development of the Community Strategic Plan
- The views, visions, aspiration and priorities of the community are heard and accurately recorded
- Council's legislative requirements are met

Purpose

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines how Council is going to engage individuals, community groups, Government agencies and other organisations in both community engagement phases of development of the Bega Valley Community Strategic Plan.

The Strategy:

- Outlines how Council will listen, involve and seek feedback from the community
- Is based on feedback from the Communications and Community Engagement Reference Panel, and lessons learnt from previous engagement undertaken by Council
- Involves collaboration with Government agencies and non-Government organisations
- Follows social justice principles to ensure that a broad range of community members are engaged to reflect the Bega Valley's demographics
- Follows good practice for engagement in alignment with Council's Communications and Community Engagement Strategy, and the principles of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
- Utilises techniques researched and presented through Council's Community Engagement Toolkit
- Ensures Council delivers a variety of engagement activities across the Bega Valley to maximise access
- Includes input from internal staff from across the organisation

- Meets Council's requirements under the Local Government Act 1993, the Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Manual

Guiding Principles

Community engagement is any process that involves the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to assist in making decisions (International Association for Public Participation, 2006). Community engagement does not necessarily mean consensus, however; it does involve seeking broad agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community.

Council has based this Community Engagement Strategy on the engagement spectrum developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2): Inform; Consult; Involve; and Collaborate; as recommended by the Department of Local Government.

This Community Engagement Strategy relates to the development of a Community Strategic Plan and does not override Council's Communications Strategy or related documents.

Social Justice Principles

Social Justice Principles include rights, equity, access and participation. The Strategy is designed to ensure that all members of the community have the opportunity to actively participate.

The Strategy includes:

- A wide range of engagement methods which will allow us to reach a range of target groups
- Engagement activities delivered in various locations across the Bega Valley to maximise access
- Promotion of engagement activities through community media and local networks
- Engagement information prepared in plain English with key information translated into the relevant community languages and interpreters provided at relevant engagement sessions
- The delivery of additional engagement activities which directly target particular communities if there has been insufficient representation of a community group
- Educating Council staff on the Social Justice Principles and the relevance to the planning process
- The involvement of specialist staff with a comprehensive understanding of the Principles of Social Justice and experience in engaging with diverse communities

Who Are Our Stakeholders?

Stakeholders include all individuals and groups based in and outside the Bega Valley Shire Local Government Area who have an interest in the future of the Bega Valley Shire including residents, ratepayers, landowners, organisations, businesses and government agencies.

Council has conducted a comprehensive stakeholder analysis to ensure that all stakeholder groups will be provided with an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Community Strategic Plan. These major stakeholder groups and their involvement in the development of the community Strategic Plan are outlined below.

Our local community

At 6,279 square kilometres, our Shire is currently the largest coastal Council in NSW of which 75% comprises National Park and State Forest. Despite the size of the Bega Valley, our population is relatively small and is dispersed amongst six main towns/residential areas, 12 smaller villages and hamlets and around 25% of the population living in rural areas.

The Bega Valley is growing slowly and steadily at a rate of 0.7% per annum over the last 10 years and the estimated population in 2015 was 33,500 people. Population growth in the Bega Valley is through migration rather than natural increase. The Bega Valley has a higher proportion of older people over 65 years compared to the rest of NSW, as well as a much lower proportion of people between the ages of 20-34.

In terms of demographics of the Bega Valley community, the largest changes are forecast to be an increase in the proportion of people aged under 15 and over 65. Household types are predicted to remain stable with the exception of an increase in the amount of couple only and lone person households.

Bega Valley's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population make up 2.8 per cent of the residents which is slightly higher than the NSW average.

The Shire has a long history of multiculturalism and although below NSW state average, the 2011 Census showed that 17% of the Bega Valley's population were born overseas.

Bega Valley Shire as a whole has a lower than average score on the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage meaning that many residents in the Shire are more socio-economically disadvantaged than the NSW average. However there are differences in the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas between the various towns within the Shire with the Bega District being well below the average NSW score. Compared to NSW as a whole, Bega Valley residents on average, have lower incomes and are less likely to have undertaken tertiary studies or be in a skilled occupation.

Community engagement phase 1 will engage the broader community of the Bega Valley to capture ideas and aspirations based on our diverse range of skills, talents, interests, and stories through conversations, pictures and surveys.

Community groups

There are numerous community groups, clubs, organisations and informal networks operating within Bega Valley. These include activist, environmental, welfare, recreation and social groups. These groups will be utilised as 'community connectors' to engage with the general community to start conversations and encourage participation in phase 1 community

engagement activities including completion of the survey. Some community organisations may also be involved in targeted discussions in community engagement phase 2.

Business

Bega Valley features a wide variety of business types including manufacturing, construction, accommodation and food services, health care and community services and retail trade. A large proportion of the Bega Valley's 2,800 local businesses are home businesses and 53% of the Bega Valley's population are employed.

There are number of chambers of commerce and professional organisations linking these business networks. These groups can help identify perceived and real barriers to current growth as well as the aspirations of the future for local and regional businesses. Involvement in both phase 1 and phase 2 of the community engagement will enable the Community Strategic Plan to reflect strategies to meet the needs of the business community.

Advisory groups

Council works with the community through an extensive network of advisory, reference groups and committees who provide input into Council's decision-making process. These advisory groups will be used in both phases of the community engagement for the Community Strategic Plan: to distribute information about engagement activities to their networks and the broader community as well as hosting conversations in conjunction with their activities and events in phase 1; and as participants in engagement activities in phase 2.

Government

Federal and State Government departments and agencies have a strong stake in the future of the Bega Valley community in the areas of education, health, family and community services, transport, policing, emergency services, environment, and industry. Government agencies will play a key role in setting goals and priorities for the Community Strategic Plan through Community Engagement Phase 2.

Visitors

Over 400,000 people visit the Bega Valley each year from neighbouring Council areas, throughout Australia and overseas. Visitors to the Bega Valley will be included in community engagement phase 1 through promotion via Visitor Information Centres.

Internal

Within Council, engagement with general staff will be included in phase 1 community engagement as members of the Bega Valley community and by participating directly in engagement activities including listening posts at markets and central business districts and town hall drop in sessions. Phase 2 community engagement will involve relevant professional staff in workshop style discussions focussing on key issues that emerged through the phase 1 engagement.

What role will Council have?

Council staff and elected Council members are also valued members of our community. To ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute, the following principles have been established to understand and articulate our roles:

Elected Council Members: Elected Members of Council will play a role in promoting engagement activities to highlight the opportunity to the broader community. Elected Members can participate in the feedback process through contributing to the survey as a member of the community. Elected Members will not be participating in engagement activities as an opportunity for Election support.

The endorsement of Community ambitions raised under the Community Strategic Plan and the development of supporting strategic actions under the Delivery Plan will be considered for the new Council term commencing late 2016.

Executive and Management Staff of Council: Executive and Management staff will have the opportunity to participate in the feedback process in their individual capacity as a member of our community. Comments, values and issues raised by Executive and Management staff will be collected through the same process as the broader community and stakeholder groups and will hold no additional weighting. Internally, Executive and Management staff will support the engagement process through assisting in promotion and supporting on ground staff who are involved in the delivery process.

Council Staff: As members of our community, many of our staff also play a role in local sporting groups, parenting groups, health and welfare support groups. Members of staff are encouraged to participate in the engagement process in the capacity of their own community life. Comments, values and issues raised by staff will be collected through the same process as the broader community and stakeholder groups and will hold no additional weighting.

Staff directly involved in community engagement: A number of staff across all sections of Council will be involved directly in the community engagement process. By utilising a number of staff, this provides the opportunity to delivery engagement activities across the Shire reaching a broad audience. Staff that are involved in the promotion of engagement and collection of feedback are strictly in the role of 'listening and receiving' information without guidance or predisposition. Their role at Council is to be the 'funnel' of the community, to listen and document the feedback, with every individual voice having equal value and merit.

Key Considerations for Community Engagement

It is intended that all stakeholders will be provided with the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the development of the Community Strategic Plan. A range of methods will be employed to maximise involvement. Consideration will also be given the diversity of the Bega Valley community and those whose voices may not normally be heard in community discussions (hard to reach people). This includes:

- people with disabilities
- Aboriginal communities
- people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)
- children and young people
- people in geographically isolated areas
- single parents
- the elderly

With regard to the development of the Community Strategic Plan three key considerations for community engagement are:

- connecting with hard to reach groups and individuals
- ensuring a balance between the towns, villages and rural areas
- maximising connections and community knowledge

Connecting with hard to reach groups and individuals

To engage with hard to reach people Council will:

- ensure cultural protocols are followed and the person we are 'engaging with' has authority to speak on behalf of their community
- avoid using assumptions, generalisations, insensitive language about people/beliefs from culturally diverse backgrounds
- utilise existing newsletters and existing forums
- design engagement and workshop activities that factor for low literacy levels and access for people with disabilities
- use age appropriate methods and materials considering competency levels of participants
- provide workshops and activities outside business hours
- provide incentives to encourage groups and individuals to get involved

Ensuring a balance between the towns, villages and rural areas

To ensure a balanced representation between towns, villages and rural areas Council will:

- conduct engagement activities in all towns and villages within the Bega Valley
- utilise public spaces and buildings such as libraries, community halls and sporting facilities
- maximise on-site visits to community group meetings (eg service clubs, youth groups, recreation and sporting clubs/organisations)

- provide incentives to encourage groups and individuals to get involved
- utilise web-based interactive engagement activities (and provide access to internet in libraries)

Maximising connections and community knowledge

To maximise existing connections and community knowledge within the Bega Valley, Council will:

- use interagency networks, working groups, Council committees, community organisations, business networks, industry networks
- use 'community connectors' and Leaders within the community
- maximise opportunities to piggy back on activities, events and festivals occurring in the community
- utilise a range of communication methods (not just written material) including the internet and radio and ensure written communication uses plain English and is jargon free
- provide incentives to encourage groups and individuals to get involved

Community Engagement

Phase 1 – Understanding and Visioning

Community engagement Phase 1 is the major community engagement phase in the development of the Community Strategic Plan. The focus is on developing alternative future visions for communities and the Bega Valley as a whole, understanding community values, identifying emerging issues and understanding community ambitions.

The aim of Phase 1 is to start “community conversations” and connect with as many community stakeholders as possible to gain information via questionnaires, conversations and pictures.

Community conversation starters:

- *What do you value most about the Bega Valley Shire?*
- *What are the most important issues for the Bega Valley Shire at the moment?*
- *Can you remember what the Shire was like 20 years ago?*
- *How do you imagine it in 20 years time?*

Participants will be encouraged to complete a questionnaire either on paper or online. In addition a multi-media advertising campaign will also direct people to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire follows on from the “community conversations” and asks a series of questions that will provide Council with information about the communities’ values and aspirations.

Phase 1 uses three methods to engage:

- The general community
- Hard to reach people
- People who prefer non-written communication

General community conversations

1. Listening posts in the CBDs of the 4 major town centres (Bega, Merimbula, Eden and Bermagui) during the day
2. Listening posts at 9 weekly or monthly markets throughout the Bega Valley
3. Town hall drop in sessions in villages (11 villages including Tathra & Pambula) evening sessions generally from 4-7pm.
4. Attend community group meetings and contact community connectors

Targeted community conversations

Contact hard to reach people by:

1. Working with staff from key organisations / NGO’s to host a conversation and providing appropriate incentives for participation
2. Delivery of age specific engagement techniques for pre-school, primary school and high school children.
3. Tailoring questions and meeting formats for the local aboriginal community and providing appropriate incentives for participation

4. Attending the 'Golden Gig' event in Bega to engage with people over 60 years
5. Attending Council's Access Committee meeting
6. Contact various support networks for CALD
7. Contacting parent/carer/play groups and providing appropriate resources to encourage participation
8. Reaching people in geographically isolated areas by holding meetings in rural villages throughout the Bega Valley and promotion through 'Council's Village Newsletter'

Photo Competition

To capture non-written feedback from people who might not otherwise participate, a competition will be held for people to submit photos showing what they love about the Bega Valley Shire.

Phase 1 community engagement schedule

Week	Task	Date	Location / Time	Time
1	Childcare Centre and Preschool engagement activities		Ongoing throughout consultation	
	Local Primary School engagement activities		Ongoing throughout consultation	
	Local High School engagement activities		Ongoing throughout consultation	
	Exisiting community group / community networks		Reach out activities to be undertaken throughout consultation	
	Library display to promote		Ongoing throughout consultation	
	Local LALC's and Aboriginal Elders		Ongoing throughout consultation with advice from Council's Aboriginal Liasion Officer	
	Exisiting agricultural networks		Ongoing through networks Bega Cheese and Local Lands Services	
	Golden Gig		Bega Valley Commerative Civic Centre	
	Market listening post	Sat 23 April	Nethercote Market, Cnr Back Creek & Nethercote Rd, Nethercote	8am - 12 noon
2	Market listening post	Sun 24 April	Wyndham Village Market, Wyndham Hall, Cnr Clarke and Gordan St, Wyndham	8:30 - 1pm
	PUBLIC HOLIDAY (ANZAC)	Mon 25 April		
	Community Hall drop in session	Tues 26 April	Wonboyn Fire Shed, Gleeson Road Wonboyn	5pm - 7pm
	Council Meeting (no iPad)	Wed 27 April		
	Community Hall drop in session	Thurs 28 April	Wolumla Memorial Hall, Cnr Scott & Bega St, Wolumla	4pm - 7pm
	Market listening post	Fri 29 April	Bega SCPA Market, Littleton Gardens, Zingel Place, Bega (Boots for change)	8am - 1pm
	Market listening post	Sun 1 May	Candelo Market, Mogilla Rd, Candelo	8am - 1pm
3	CBD listening post	Mon 2 May	Bermagui, Lamont St near old IGA	9am - 4pm
	Community hall drop in session	Tues 3 May	Cobargo School of Arts, 18-20 Bermagui Rd, Cobargo	4pm - 7pm
	Community hall drop in session	Thurs 5 May	Pambula Town Hall, Quondola Street (Princes Highway)	5pm - 7pm
	CBD listening post	Fri 6 May	Merimbula, Cnr Market and Beach St, outside Twyford Hall	9am - 4pm
	Market listening post	Sat 7 May	Cobargo Market, Princes Hwy, Cobargo	9am - 1pm
	Market listening post	Sun 8 May	Pambula Rotary Market, Pambula Sports Ground, Narregol Street, Pambula	8am - 1pm
4	Community Hall drop in session	Mon 9 May	Towamba Hall, near sports ground, Towamba	4pm - 6pm
	Community Hall drop in session	Tues 10 May	Pambula Beach Surf Club, Pambula Beach Rd, Pambula Beach	4pm - 7pm
	Community Hall drop in session	Thurs 12 May	Quaama School of Arts, Cobargo St, Quaama	4pm - 7pm
	Market listening post	Fri 13 May	Bega SCPA Market, Littleton Gardens, Zingel Place, Bega	8am - 1pm
		Sat 14 May		
	Market listening post	Sun 15 May	Merimbula Seaside Market, Ford Park, Merimbula	8am - 12:30pm
5	CBD listening post	Mon 16 May	Bega: Carp St end of Ayers Walkway	9am - 4pm
	Community Hall drop in session	Tues 17 May	Tathra Surf Club, Andy Poole Dr, Tathra	4pm - 7pm
	Community Hall drop in session	Thurs 19 May	Wyndham RFS Fire Shed, Monaro St, Wyndham	4pm - 7pm
	CBD listening post	Fri 20 May	Eden: Imlay St near post office	9am - 4pm
	Market listening post	Sat 21 May	Eden Produce Market, Chandos St, Eden	8:30am - 12pm
		Sun 22 May		
6	Community Hall drop in session	Mon 23 May	Bemboka Memorial Hall, Cnr Loftus Street (Snowy Mountains Highway) and Adams Street, Bemboka	4pm - 7pm
	Community Hall drop in session	Tues 24 May	Candelo Town Hall, Cnr William & Eden St, Candelo	4pm - 7pm
	Market listening post	Thurs 26 May	Bermagui Fishermen's Wharf Growers Market, Bermagui	3pm-6pm
	Market listening post (Aust Biggest Morning Tea)	Fri 27 May	Bega SCPA Market, Littleton Gardens, Zingel Place, Bega	8am - 1pm
		Sat 28 May		
	Merimbula Fun Run	Sun 29 May	Ford Oval, Ocean Drive Merimbula	8am - 12pm

Community Engagement

Phase 2 – Goal and Priority Setting

Community engagement Phase 2 is the second community engagement phase in the development of the Community Strategic Plan. The focus is on holding targeted engagement activities with special interest groups and key government agencies on the issues identified during the Phase 1 community engagement to identify goals and set priorities.

To set future goals and priorities workshops will be held on key sectoral groups including but not limited to:

- Community wellbeing
- Recreation
- Arts and Culture
- Economy
- Environment
- Health
- Education
- Youth
- Built environment

Key stakeholders will be encouraged to participate in these workshops to influence policy, goal setting. It is envisaged that the Phase 2 engagement will take place over a number of key focus group meetings, providing the groups with the opportunities to discuss issues in context of the 'Understanding Our Place' report, to hear from and gain knowledge from industry advice on for their sector group, and to establish and draft goals and present back to the broader group of phase 2 and Council.

The workshops will be facilitated by independent people and Council will play a leading role as a host and participant in this process and not the owner.

Phase 2 of community engagement will be held from late 2016 into early 2017, and the schedule and identified sector groups will be published prior, including process for nominations to participate in the sector groups.

Community satisfaction survey

Phase 2 community engagement will be complemented by the fourth community satisfaction survey which will be conducted toward the end of 2016. The survey will provide importance and satisfaction results for various Council services and assets. The telephone-based survey uses a sampling process designed to encompass a cross section of people from different areas within the Bega Valley who are aged over 18 and have lived here for over 6 months.

The results of the community satisfaction survey will be used in the development of the Community Strategic Plan as well as the Resourcing Strategy, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Community Engagement

Phase 3 – Exhibition of Draft Plans

Following intensive community engagement, and Council engagement in the months of late April – May 2017, Council will place all Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, including the Community Strategic Plan 2040, Council's Delivery Plan and Operational Plan and Budget on public exhibition for a period of 28 days. During this public exhibition period any member of our community has the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed documents prior to finalisation and Council adoption.