

Penrith City Council Community Participation Manual

*Adopted 16 October 2006
Last Updated 30 October 2007*



Penrith City Council

Community Participation Manual

Procedures, Guidelines and
Toolkit for Staff

**Adopted 16 October 2006
Last Updated 30 October 2007**

**Prepared by Catalyst Consulting Solutions
For the Corporate Development Unit**



ABOUT THIS MANUAL	5
THE “MUST DO’S” OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AT PCC	6
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION POLICY	7
STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	11
BASIC RULES	11
PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM	12
MATRIX OF TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS	14
GAINING APPROVAL.....	20
ACCOMMODATING DISADVANTAGED GROUPS.....	22
SAFETY ISSUES.....	23
PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO PARTICIPANTS	24
GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.....	25
HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?	25
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION.....	27
RESOURCES: EXPERTS, STAFF, TIME AND MONEY	30
ANTICIPATING CHALLENGES AND CONFLICT	31
CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS.....	33
CONDUCTING EVALUATION	34
TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS.....	37
COMMUNITY REPORTS	37
COUNCIL PARTICIPATION COMMITTEES	38
FACILITATION	38
FOCUS GROUPS.....	40
INTERPRETER SERVICES.....	40
LETTERS.....	41
MEDIA	43
OPEN DAY	45
PRESENTATIONS.....	45
PUBLIC EXHIBITION	47
PUBLIC MEETINGS.....	48
REFERENCE GROUPS	50

SUBMISSIONS.....	50
SURVEYS.....	51
WEBSITE	52
CASE STUDIES.....	53
SUSTAINABILITY STREET – 2005	53
LIBRARY CUSTOMER SURVEY	55
PEOPLE’S LIFESTYLE ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS STUDY (PLANS)	58
KINGSWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE	59
FORMATION OF THE CHILDRENS’ SERVICES PARENTS’ CO-OPERATIVE	62
EXPANSION OF JAMISON PARK.....	63
PROPOSED SKATE PARK IN GLENMORE PARK	64
PENRITH RURAL LANDS STUDY	65
FURTHER RESOURCES	68
COMMUNITY RESOURCES.....	68
RELEVANT COUNCIL DOCUMENTS	68
WEB RESOURCES.....	69



ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This Manual has been designed for staff at Penrith City Council who have responsibilities for organising community participation programs, and aims to present to them both Council “must do’s” as well as practical guidelines and tools.

Enlisting the participation of the community in Council decisions can be difficult, and Council staff who are experts in their professional fields are often learning new skills required to communicate and engage with the community. Community participation is often an infrequent part of peoples’ roles, can be different from project to project, and has the potential to place staff in the midst of conflict and criticism.

The Manual has been prepared by Catalyst Consulting Solutions for the Corporate Management Unit, who have involved a Reference Group made up of staff from across Council to oversee the project. In preparing the manual staff interviews were held to seek out best practice examples, common experiences, and to identify tools which would be most useful in supporting and improving community participation.

There are some procedures outlined in this Manual which are prescribed for Council staff for governance reasons, and must be undertaken by all staff to ensure the quality and effectiveness of Council’s approach. The approach described in the Manual combines these obligations with a high level of flexibility for staff, providing guidelines and a toolkit supporting staff to design and implement the best possible program of engaging the community on each project. Case studies are also presented to provide examples of thorough and successful community participation programs organized by Penrith City Council.

This Manual is designed to be used by staff when:

- ✓ Starting at Council to find out how things are done around here;
- ✓ Thinking about how to design a community participation program;
- ✓ Confirming obligations and Council “must do’s”; or
- ✓ During a community participation program to seek tips and tools.

THE “MUST DO’S” OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AT PCC

An issue or proposed change within Council is likely to be sufficiently significant for community participation if:

- ✓ it directly and significantly affects a large number of people, for example all the residents in a street, or people living in a particular area, or most members of a particular interest group, or people who live throughout the local government area; or
- ✓ the proposal will significantly affect the rights or entitlements of local citizens; or
- ✓ community participation is prescribed in legislation; or
- ✓ it is an issue about which significant numbers of particular people or groups in the community are likely to have strong views; or
- ✓ the change or issue is likely to directly affect the physical, psychological and social well-being of people within the local government area or region.

When any of the above conditions apply, then staff who are responsible for coordinating a community participation program must do the following:

1. **Policy** - Read and understand the content and the spirit of Penrith City Council’s Community Participation Policy;
2. **Legislation** - Research and comply with any legislative obligations with regards to timeframes, techniques or any other prescriptions relating to enlisting community participation;
3. **Basic Rules** - Understand and comply with Penrith City Council’s Basic Rules of Community Participation;
4. **Planning** – Think through and plan your community participation program;
5. **Techniques and Tools** - Consult the matrix of techniques and tools for your process to find out which are compulsory, and which may be considered;
6. **Guidelines** – Consult any aspect of the guidelines which may be useful in assisting in planning or implementing community participation;
7. **Approval** - Obtain management approval for your community participation program prior to commencing;
8. **Disadvantaged Groups** – Adopt measures which will allow the participation of disadvantaged groups within the community;
9. **Safety** - Consider and address any safety issues which may arise during community events; and
10. **Community Feedback** - Provide feedback to the community participants about Council’s decision on completion of the community participation program.

Community Participation Policy

The following policy was adopted by Penrith City Council in August 2003

Why does Penrith City Council undertake Community Participation?

Council values the diversity of skills, views and expertise in the community and aims to use these to improve its decision-making. Effective community participation is good democracy, good business and good management.

Who are the Community ?

Council broadly defines community as those who have an interest in or are affected by the business of the Council and the way it operates and may include :

- residents and landowners
- service providers
- users of Council services
- business operators
- visitors (including tourists and shoppers);
- associations and organisations based locally or in the wider region.
- people who work in the Local Government Area
- statutory and government agencies

What is Community Participation ?

Council broadly defines community participation as any process that values and facilitates community input to help Council make better-informed decisions.

Community participation does not replace, but enhances, the formal decision-making functions and responsibilities of Council as an elected governing body.

What are Council's Principles for Community Participation ?

Council acknowledges that effectively incorporating the views of a diverse community is not always easy. The following principles will guide Council's approach.

Council recognises :

- the community's wish and right to participate in the decisions made by Council;
- the importance of assisting the community to understand what they are being asked to participate in and what influence they can have on Council's decision-making;
- that successful community participation depends on mutual trust, respect, and effective communication between the community, elected members and Council Officers;
- that it is not the purpose of community participation to win support for, or defend, a decision already made by Council;
- that it must provide equal opportunity for participation to all parts of the community;
- its responsibility to ensure that the community's input, when obtained, is carefully considered and informs Council's decisions.

What are Council's Objectives for Community Participation ?

Council aims to :

- ✓ use the community's input to make better, more sustainable decisions;
- ✓ make clear the nature of the decisions to be made that involve community participation,
- ✓ make clear any matters that are non-negotiable and why;
- ✓ inform members and groups in the community of their ability and limits to influence Council's decision-making;
- ✓ provide members and groups in the community with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way;
- ✓ build on any previous relevant community participation carried out;
- ✓ carefully plan and structure community participation processes to make it easy for people and groups to obtain information and provide input;
- ✓ make use of the expertise and diverse perspectives within the community;
- ✓ use methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate for those participating;
- ✓ seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected including those who often face barriers to participation;
- ✓ gather, listen and respond to, community views, aspirations, and concerns;
- ✓ build positive relationships between Council and all sections of the community;
- ✓ facilitate mutual understanding between groups and individuals with differing perspectives and interests;
- ✓ work toward consensus where possible; and
- ✓ provide feedback on how the community's participation informed Council's decisions.

When will Council invite Community Participation ?

Council will invite community participation :-

- in response to community interest,
- to help it identify community needs,
- when required to meet its statutory obligations, and
- when it believes that community input will enhance its decision-making.

How will the Policy be Implemented ?

- Council will at all times design and implement Community Participation processes using the Community Participation Manual, which is based upon this Policy;
- Council will support and train its staff to facilitate community participation in line with this Policy, and to use the Community Participation Manual;
- Council commits to review and continually improve its practice of community participation; and
- Council will review this policy each year to ensure that it continues to be relevant and useful.

What Framework will Council use for Community Participation?

Some decisions require more participation by the community than others. There are many ways for conducting community participation. Council often has limited resources and time with which to meaningfully seek the participation of the community. Devoting substantial resources toward community participation when the community has very limited influence on a decision, or when a decision is straightforward or of minor significance, is generally an unwise use of resources.

Similarly, allocating insufficient resources for community participation over very important and complex decisions will mean that Council is deprived of potentially valuable contributions by the community.

To help Council make decisions on how it will approach community participation for a given issue, it will use the framework shown below and select the most appropriate level. This framework has been adapted from that developed in 2000 by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Level	Aim	Promise to Communities
1. Inform	To provide the community with balanced, objective information to assist them to understand Council issues, alternatives and decisions.	Council will keep you informed
2. Consult	To obtain community feedback on issues, analysis, alternatives and decisions being considered by Council	Council will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your aspirations, concerns and issues, and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision
3. Involve	To work directly with communities throughout the process to ensure that community aspirations, concerns and issues are consistently understood and considered	Council will work directly with you to ensure that your aspirations, concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.
4. Collaborate	To partner with communities in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution.	Council will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating issues, alternatives and solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into Council decisions to the maximum extent possible.
5. Delegate	To delegate certain functions to community representatives.	Council will enable you to exercise the delegated function within agreed charters

When is Community Participation required ?

- ✓ A legislative requirement such as under the Local Government Act or the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (as amended) and Regulations (2000);
- ✓ A requirement in the Strategic or Management Plan;
- ✓ A request from Council for community input into a decision they will be making;
- ✓ A previous request from Council for input to a similar decision made in the past;
- ✓ A need for Council to understand community values and priorities to inform policies, planning or service delivery;
- ✓ A Council decision that will have significant social, environmental and/or economic impact for one or more stakeholders;
- ✓ A request from community members for participation in a Council decision or issue;
- ✓ An opportunity to establish partnerships to collaboratively address Council issues;
- ✓ An opportunity to build community capacity and improve understanding between Council and members of the community; or
- ✓ A need for the community to be informed about an impending or past Council decision.

Types of Council decisions

Council makes a range of decisions, which include :

- Formal decisions with legislative or regulatory requirements for community participation; or
- Less formal decisions where Council requests input from the community.

Council makes decisions on :

- ✓ Policy development, strategies and plans
- ✓ Land use planning
- ✓ Urban land planning – development applications
- ✓ Economic development opportunities
- ✓ Development and delivery of services
- ✓ Management and use of Council assets
- ✓ Areas of Council activity and community interest such as transport, recreation etc.

Statutory Requirements

Council has a multitude of statutory requirements for notifying or consulting with the community. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Environmental Planning and Assessment Act;
- Code of Meeting Practice;
- Fees and charges;
- Leases and licenses;
- Management Plan;
- Notification of DAs and LEPs;
- Plans of Management for Community Land;
- Rezoning;
- Social Plan; and
- Tendering.

The website of the Australian Legal Information Institute (AUSTLII at www.austlii.edu.au) is a resource of legal materials, including a law-specific search engine, links, Australian cases, law and other legal matters. Further questions can be answered by Council's Legal Officer on ext 7659.

Basic Rules

Some basic rules of community participation are:

Give people time	Provide early notification, ensure that people have enough time to participate and to consult their own representative groups, and meet them at a time of the day and week best suited to the group
Define the negotiables	Be clear at every step about Council's decision-making process and responsibilities
Consult with internal people first	Ensure that all interdepartmental and Councillor consultation has taken place before going out to the community
Deal with individuals	If possible speaking and listening to individuals is preferable
Empathise	Consider your audience, and try to anticipate their concerns
People are different	To access a diverse community, provide a variety of opportunities to participate
Be Clear	Use clear information and language that everyone can understand
People are unique	Don't pitch to stereotypes or make assumptions about peoples' lives

Be flexible and responsive	As people become involved and you learn about their needs and expectations, you need to consider making adjustments to the process as it progresses
Give feedback	Always provide feedback to participants after a decision is made
Go to them	Make an effort if you can to go to where people are
Legal proceedings	If legal proceedings are underway or being contemplated by the Council, then community participation will be managed within the legal process

Planning Your Program

Work through each of the following stages when undertaking community participation:

1. Assess what stage the issue is at, and the appropriate level of engagement	<p>Information – Provide information on Council decisions</p> <p>Consultation – Obtain feedback on information and alternatives</p> <p>Involvement – Work together to generate alternatives</p> <p>Collaboration – Work together to select a solution</p> <p>Delegation – Delegate decision-making to community</p>
2. Assess the importance of the issue and the possible scale of response	The scale of the participation program should match its importance or impact, and the likely scale of the Council's response. Determine resources and timeframe. Identify stakeholders. Contact groups and committees that may be utilized to reach their members on behalf of Council
3. Plan the detail of the participation program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify information to be provided • Identify and gather skills needed eg facilitation, presentation, survey etc • Determine whether you have these skills, and if not source them internally or externally • Select a range of techniques and tools • Consider and address any risk factors • Contact stakeholders including key interest groups to seek feedback on proposed processes • Identify additional resources required • Map the proposed timeframe for each stage of the participation program
4. Seek approval for your objectives and proposed process	Complete the program template and gain approval. Usually given by managers, senior management or the Council depending on the scale of the issue

5. Implement the participation program and manage controversy and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise your program to maximize the participation of “hard to reach” and disadvantaged groups • Advertise meetings, forums etc with adequate time for participation • Conduct meetings, forums etc • Record information objectively and protect privacy and confidentiality • Keep stakeholders informed of emerging issues if they impact on timelines • Manage risks: control the scope, emphasise constraints, address misinformation/misunderstandings, mediate conflict • Monitor progress and evaluate process, making adjustments to initial plans if necessary
6. Analyse community contributions	Assess the validity of the data, weigh according to importance and objectivity, and assess the representativeness of the process. If the data is not adequate, go back to step 4
7. Council decision made	Announce the Council’s decision (media release, advertisement etc)
8. Provide feedback to participants	Provide letters, reports, debriefing session etc to provide feedback on the outcome of the process, linking their input to the final decision and explaining how it affected the final outcome
9. Evaluation	Were major outcomes achieved? Was the process satisfactory? What lessons are to be learnt for future community participation?

(Reference: ACT Government Community Engagement Manual)

Matrix of Techniques and Tools

Consultation Matrix	Consultation Methods													Comments
	Inform					Consult					Involve			
✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of Notification	Advertise-ment	Media	Public Exhibition /Display	Signs On-site	Website	Notification/ Report to Councillors	Individual Contact	Survey	News-letter	Interest Groups	Public Agencies	Public Meeting	
Governance														
Council's Management Plan		✓	✓	✓		●	✓		●	●	●	●	✓	
Community Reports		●	●	✓		●	✓			●	●	●		
Strategic Plans		✓	●	✓			✓							
Policies	●	●	●	●		●	✓						●	
New or changed Council services – major impact	●	✓	●	●	●	●	✓	●	●	●	✓	✓	●	
Land Use Planning														
Area based planning eg release areas, studies and strategies	●	●	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	●	●	●	✓	✓	●	Landowners, Govt Agencies, Residents, Utilities, PVEDC, Community interagencies, ATSI

Consultation Matrix	Consultation Methods												Comments	
	Inform				Consult				Involve					
✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of Notification	Advertise-ment	Media	Public Exhibition /Display	Signs On-site	Website	Notification/ Report to Councilors	Individual Contact	Survey	News-letter	Interest Groups	Public Agencies	Public Meeting	
Statutory Planning – LEPs, DCPs, Major Rezoning	✓	✓	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	●	●	●	✓	✓	●	Landowners, residents, Govt agencies, identified interest groups, ATSI
Thematic Based Plans (eg biodiversity strategy, heritage study)	●	●	✓	✓	●	✓	✓	●	●	●	✓	✓	●	Landowners, residents, Govt agencies, identified interest groups, ATSI
Operations														
Major Capital Works	✓	●	●	✓	✓		●	✓	●	●	●	●	●	Residents, Businesses, RTA
Roadworks – Major Impact	✓	✓	●		✓		✓	✓	●	●	●	●	●	Residents, Businesses, RTA, Traffic Committee
Roadworks – Minor Impact	✓							●						Residents, Businesses
Footpath Construction – Roads	✓			✓	✓		✓	●			●			Residents, Businesses
<i>Note : Where there is an emergency or the public is endangered, consultation methods may not proceed or be carried out after the event.</i>														

Consultation Matrix	Consultation Methods												Comments	
	Inform					Consult					Involve			
✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of Notification	Advertisement	Media	Public Exhibition / Display	Signs On-site	Website	Notification/ Report to Councilors	Individual Contact	Survey	News-letter	Interest Groups	Public Agencies	Public Meeting	
Footpath Construction – Natural Areas/ Reserves #	●	●	●	✓			✓	✓			✓	●		Residents, DNR, Land Councils, DEC
Traffic and Transport Management	✓	●		●	✓		✓	●	●		✓	✓	●	Residents, Businesses, RTA, Traffic Committee
Public Domain Lighting	✓							●			●	●		Residents, Businesses, Integral Energy
Infrastructure Planning and Design	✓			●			●	✓	●		●	●	●	Residents, Businesses, Traffic Committee, State Government
Tree Planting – Road Reserves	✓						●	●			●	✓		Residents, Businesses, Residents' Groups
Tree Removal – Road Reserves	✓						●	●			●	✓		Residents, Businesses, Residents' Groups
Parks Improvement Program							✓	●			✓			Sporting Clubs and Associations
<i>Note : Where there is an emergency or the public is endangered, consultation methods may not proceed or be carried out after the event.</i>														

Consultation Matrix	Consultation Methods												Comments	
	Inform				Consult				Involve					
✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of Notification	Advertise-ment	Media	Public Exhibition /Display	Signs On-site	Website	Notification/ Report to Councilors	Individual Contact	Survey	News-letter	Interest Groups	Public Agencies	Public Meeting	
Sporting Facilities Improvements							✓	●			✓			Sporting Clubs and Associations
Bushland Management	●				✓	●	✓	●		●	✓	✓		DNR, DEC, DPI, HNCMA
Land Management														
Leases – Community Land	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓						
Reclassification of Community Land	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓					✓	
Plans of Management for Community Land	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				●	●	✓	
Development of Operational Land	●	●			●		●						●	
<i>Note : Where there is an emergency or the public is endangered, consultation methods may not proceed or be carried out after the event.</i>														

✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of notification to affected persons	Notice in Local Press	Councillor Notification	Notification To Local Chamber of Commerce and Police	Newsletter	Resident or Community Groups (Schedule 3 of DCP)	Site Notice	Sec 101- Public Notice of Consent
Development Assessment								
<i>Development Types</i>								
Single Dwelling	●					●		●
Home Business/ Industry	●							
Multi Unit Housing/ Seniors Living	●	●	●		✓	●		●
Dual Occupancy	●					●		●
Hotels/Motels	●	✓	●	●	✓	●	●	●
Child Care Centre	●					●		●
Schools	●	✓	●		✓	●	✓	●
Churches	●	✓	●		✓	●	✓	●
Hospitals	●	✓	●		✓	●	✓	●
Clubs	●	✓	●		✓	●	●	●
Professional Consulting Rooms	●			●		●		●
Stables	●					●		●
Public Buildings	●	✓	●			●		●
Amusement Centres	●	✓	●	●		●	●	●
Dams	●							●
Seniors Living	●	●	●			●	●	●
Designated Development	●	●	●	✓		●	●	●

✓ - Essential ● - For Consideration	Letter of notification to affected persons	Notice in Local Press	Councillor Notification	Notification To Local Chamber of Commerce and Police	Newsletter	Resident or Community Groups (Schedule 3 of DCP)	Site Notice	Sec 101- Public Notice of Consent
Development Assessment (continued)								
Heritage Items	●	✓				●		●
Heritage Items Section 90A	●	✓				●		●
Landfill/ Earthworks	●							●
Modification of Consent Section 96	●	●	✓			●		●
Review of Determination Section 82A	●	●	✓			●		●
Rural Sheds	●					●		●
Subdivision	●	●	●			●		●
Tennis Courts with lights or external lighting to tennis courts	●					●	✓	●
Integrated Development	●	●	●	✓		●	●	●
Complying Development	✓							●
<i>Note : Where there is an emergency or the public is endangered, consultation methods may not proceed or be carried out after the event.</i>								

Notes to the Development Assessment Matrix:

1. Section 101 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 applies to all Integrated, Designated and Complying Development. Where the development does not fall into those types the total cost of development must be over \$50,000.
2. Consultation for modification of consent does not apply if notification or advertising is not required under clause B18 of the Penrith Notification and Advertising Development Control Plan.
3. Where there is an inconsistency between this matrix and any Development Control Plan (DCP)/ Environmental Planning Instrument (EPI) the provisions of that DCP or EPI shall prevail.
4. This matrix shall be read in conjunction with Penrith Notification and Advertising Development Control Plan.

Gaining Approval

In order to ensure that community participation is well-organised and have the endorsement of Council, the following template is required for completion, approval and documentation prior to commencement. The completion and filing of the template will ensure that Council is in a defensible position should the process be challenged, and will need to be approved by management before community participation commences.

These two pages, 20 and 21, can be printed out for completion, approval and lodgment on Council's filing system:

Community Participation – Program Planning Template

Project Name : _____

Project Coordinator's Name : _____

Date : _____

1. What is the purpose of the community participation ? (Refer to the Policy on pages 7-10)

2. Who are the people affected by Council's final decision ?
(Refer to pages 7,14-19, 22,23,27-29)

3. What is the minimum level of community participation have you chosen for this program?
(Refer to Policy framework on page 9) Tick box below

Level 1: Inform	Level 2: Consult	Level 3: Involve	Level 4: Collaborate	Level 5: Delegate

4. How will these people be informed/consulted/involved/invited to participate ?
(Refer to Techniques & Tools pages 37-52)

Community Participation – Program Planning Template *(Continued)*

5. Which techniques and tools will you use in your community participation program ?
(Refer to Techniques & Tools pages 37-52)

6. What staff, budget and external resources will you require ? *(Refer to pages 30-31)*

7. How will you feedback information to participants after Council has made its decision ?
(Refer to page 24)

8. Have you developed an evaluation process for this community participation ?
Yes No *Please tick* (If Yes, describe how you intend to do this ?)
(Refer to pages 34-36)

Signed : _____

Date : _____

Accommodating Disadvantaged Groups

In order to allow everyone in the community to participate, some measures may be necessary to include more disadvantaged groups:

General

- ✓ Is every encouragement being given to individuals attending to participate fully in the proceedings? Groups who are marginalised may be reluctant to participate or involve themselves.
- ✓ Consider timing of meetings. The following groups would have constraints on their time to attend meetings:
 - working families
 - families with children
 - families with sporting commitments on Saturdays
 - older people
 - people with a religious faith (see calendar of religious dates)
- ✓ Offer childcare for parents attending. A separate room may be needed, and a worker or two depending on numbers. Bookings are needed to determine the number of workers, so put this on your promotion.
- ✓ Promote your program through specialised groups and services to reach particular target groups- eg Disability organisations, Migrant services etc.
- ✓ Use inclusive language and plain English in all promotions.
- ✓ Is a large meeting suitable for all groups in the community? It may be possible to meet with individuals and small groups or people as well as the larger meeting? Focus groups may be needed for newer CALD communities who would not feel comfortable speaking out if they are not confident in English

Venue

- ✓ Consider venue accessibility. The venue may need a hearing loop, will need to be accessible for people with a disability, and will need to be accessible for people using public transport.
- ✓ Ensure adequate venue lighting at night.
- ✓ General consultation could be held at a place particular groups like to meet, for example Aboriginal people may prefer to attend at the Land Councils' Office.

Multicultural Access

- ✓ Remember to be culturally sensitive and aware of cultural or other differences.
- ✓ Consider promotion through various media including ethnic radio. The following websites may assist: www.sbs.com.au/radio/popsched.html and www.crc.nsw.gov.au/ethnicmedia/index
- ✓ How many language groups are there in your stakeholder group? Consider the smaller groups such as the Sudanese and Arabic communities. Do you need printed material

in other languages? Are the communities literate in their own written language? Many refugee groups are not eg Sudanese, Afghanis.

- ✓ Interpreters may be required. You will need to look at statistics for the community and the language competency, or speak to Council's Multicultural Access Officer on extension 8096.

Other special needs groups

- ✓ Consider the deaf and sight impaired community, and if necessary provide information in alternate formats
- ✓ Can shorter special consultations be held for such groups as the frail aged?
- ✓ Consider dietary requirements – eg is halal meat or kosher food needed for Muslim or Jewish communities? Is the meeting during Ramadan when Muslims do not eat until sundown? Also consider people with Diabetics or people with gluten or peanut intolerances. [Note : Council's caterers can provide meals to suit people with special dietary requirements if they are ordered before an event]

Safety Issues

As with any public event, you must consider the safety of everyone who participates. This includes yourself and other Council staff, Councillors and community members. You will need to think about the following safety considerations:

- ✓ Always secure equipment cords to the floor so that there is no possibility of tripping over electrical cords;
- ✓ Ensure that there is sufficient lighting both inside and outside your venue for people coming to night meetings;
- ✓ Do not select venues where your participants have access to alcohol eg local clubs, as this may exacerbate any conflict or anti-social behavior;
- ✓ If you are expecting conflict amongst your participants, you may wish to consider arranging security for your event. In extreme cases you may also wish to notify the police of any potential disturbances; and
- ✓ If you are arranging a night-time event, then it is desirable that you work with another staff member and that neither of you are alone at any time
- ✓ When holding a meeting in a confined space (eg inside a building at Council or elsewhere) everyone attending must be informed as to how to safely leave that area in the event of an emergency. Assistance must be available for disabled persons. (*Australian Standard AS 3745-2002 "Emergency Control Organization and Procedures for Buildings, Structures and Workplaces"*)

Providing Feedback to Participants

Participants in a consultation process should be provided with clear timeframes showing when the outcomes will be known. Timeframes should be developed during the initial planning process and in conjunction with advice from key informants and participants where possible. The planning process should identify which participants need feedback and how this will be given. There needs to be recognition that not all participants will require feedback on all issues.

Feedback on the outcome of decisions following consultation needs to be provided to participants in a timely manner, no longer than two months after the completion of the consultation.

Reports on the outcomes of consultation should be expressed in plain English and include:

- ✓ Acknowledgement of participants' contributions
- ✓ A record of the consultation methods and process;
- ✓ Evidence that participants have been heard;
- ✓ An outline of the decisions made; and
- ✓ A record of how final decisions were made.

The following methods can be used to give feedback:

- ✓ Community meetings;
- ✓ Written reports;
- ✓ Posting reports on the Internet;
- ✓ Posting summary of decisions in public places eg libraries, post offices etc;
- ✓ Summary published in local newspaper; or
- ✓ Letters.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

How Much is Enough ?

Some decisions require more participation by the community than others. There are many ways for conducting community participation. Council often has limited resources and time with which to meaningfully seek the participation of the community. Devoting substantial resources toward community participation when the community has very limited influence on a decision, or when a decision is straightforward or of minor significance, is generally an unwise use of resources.

Similarly, allocating insufficient resources for community participation over very important and complex decisions will mean that Council is deprived of potentially valuable contributions by the community.

To help Council make decisions on how it will approach community participation for a given issue, the framework shown below is included in Council's Community Participation Policy, and will assist staff in selecting the most appropriate level. This framework has been adapted from that developed in 2000 by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Level	Aim		Examples
Inform	To provide the community with balanced, objective information to assist them to understand Council issues, alternatives and decisions.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Public Notices Notification Letters Community Newsletter Council's Website
Consult	To obtain community feedback on issues, analysis, alternatives and decisions being considered by Council	✓ ✓ ✓	Public Exhibition Process Management Planning Process Development Application Process
Involve	To work directly with communities throughout the process to ensure that community aspirations, concerns and issues are consistently understood and considered	✓ ✓ ✓	Facilitated Workshops Rural Land Study Design Reference Groups for Community Facilities
Collaborate	To partner with communities in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution.	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	Charettes Advisory Committees Community Renewal Projects Town Centre Projects
Delegate	To delegate certain functions to community representatives.	✓ ✓	Joint Ventures Facilities Management Committees

You need to undertake research with the decision-makers to establish how much influence they are prepared to give the community.

If Councillors or Council officers do not intend to give the community any influence at all on the decision, but recognise that the community needs to understand the decision, who made it, why it was made and its impact on them, then you will probably work at the Inform level.

In many cases, Councillors or Council officers will make the decision themselves, but may seek input from the community to better inform their decisions. In this case, you will work either at the Consult or the Involve level.

If Councillors or Council officers actually want to share decision-making with members of the community and the community members or groups wish to engage fully with Council in joint decision-making, then you will work at the Collaborate level.

If Council is prepared to delegate the decision-making to members of the community, and members of the community are willing to take responsibility for the decision, you will work at the Delegate level.



Community Representation

Community Profile

Council broadly defines community as those who have an interest in or are affected by the business of the Council and the way it operates and may include :

- * residents and landowners
- * service providers
- * users of Council services
- * business operators
- * visitors (including tourists and shoppers)
- * associations and organisations based locally or in the wider region.
- * people who work in the Local Government Area
- * statutory and government agencies

Source: *Penrith City Council Community Participation Policy 2003*

Penrith City Council's website contains a section titled "All About Your Communities" which contains comprehensive access to statistical information about the community.

The following information comes from the website about the community at the time of the 2001 census:

Total population: 171,870	Males: 49.7%, females: 50.3%
Indigenous population 3,478 or 2%	Born in Australia 72.7%, overseas 21.2%
Australian citizens: 87.7%	Citizens aged over 18: 61%
Institutional population: 2,122	Households: 57,244
Average household size: 2.97 persons	Total unemployed: 5.9% or 5,116
Not fluent in English: 5.5%	Non-English speaking background: 12.5%
Uses the internet: 34.1%	Uses computers: 41.8%
Renting housing: 24%	No vehicles: 8.9%

(Source: *Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 and 2001 Census of Population and Housing*)

Council's website also contains two valuable tools to assist in researching the community profile:

1. The Penrith City Council **Community Profile** includes results from the 2001, 1996 and 1991 Census data. The Penrith City Council Community Profile is designed to inform community groups, Council, investors, business, students and the general public. To achieve this, the Profile is formatted to present the data in simple, clear tables and charts with concise factual commentary.

2. The **Community Atlas** includes key socio-demographic characteristics for the Penrith City Council presented as interactive maps. Based on data from the 2001 Census data, each map is prepared using Census Collector Districts providing the finest level of detail to help identify spatial patterns and trends in the Council.

“Hard to Reach” Groups

People who rent their homes may have less concern about or interest in issues which affect house prices.

However, those who don't have a high mortgage may have more time to participate.

People who are employed full-time have less time to invest in community consultation.

People who are better educated are more likely to participate in consultation. People with poor literacy skills may miss out on information being provided through written material.

Proficiency in English may be an indicator of a person's connectedness to the wider community or to their language group.

People with access to public transport may be more able to participate.

Contact Lists

While there is currently no central database within Council holding community contact information, the following sources of information exist:

Contacts	Description	Department
Bushcare and Landcare groups	Groups and members on Excel spreadsheet; pdf showing location of sites; and word document with meeting days	Parks Construction and Maintenance
Peak sporting groups	Local contacts	Parks Construction and Maintenance
Facility management committees	Contact names and committee members, contact details in word document	Facilities Operations
User groups of community facilities	Contact details in word document	Facilities Operations
'Hard to Reach' groups	Telephone and email contacts	Community Development
Media	Local and metropolitan contacts	Public Relations
Investor community – Sydney and Penrith	Telephone and email contacts	Economic Development
Peak industry bodies	Telephone contacts	Economic Development
Training organisations	Telephone contacts	Economic Development
Library users	Email contact list of users who put their name on a list	Library Operations
Schools	ACT Database	Libraries Operations

In addition the Penrith City Council website holds the Community Services Directory:

“Penrith City Council’s Community Services Directory contains a comprehensive list of local organisations and agencies that provide a community service in the Penrith Local Government Area. Some key regional and state-wide service providers have also been included.

For the purpose of this directory a ‘community service’ is defined as a community organisation or agency that provides a service or services to the community. Some support organisations and government services with a community focus have also been included.”

(Source: www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au)

Involving Councillors

There are three key stages in community participation to consider the appropriate involvement of Councillors :

1. Before the program commences for sign-off and buy-in;
2. During the program to attend meetings; and/or
3. After the community participation has occurred, and before the report goes to Council. This can give you the opportunity to present opposing views or complex data in a forum for more open discussion.

The role of Executive Services is to co-ordinate the involvement of Councillors, and they have a role in:

- Setting meeting dates at which Councillors will be available;
- Identifying the individual Councillors who may be interested in certain issues; or
- Organising additional Council briefings.

If you are inviting Councillors, it is important to ensure that they do not have a clash in responsibilities, and are available to attend on the date you choose.

It is disrespectful to organise a meeting, book the venue, invite community members, and then invite the Councillors at the last minute when they have another important event on at the same time! As with other stakeholders and participants, give the Councillors sufficient early warning regarding dates and briefings.

However, the needs of the community must also be considered when determining an appropriate time for consultations to take place, and the ideal is to find a time which suits both Councillors and participating stakeholders.

Resources: Experts, Staff, Time and Money

Budget

Work out the aspects of the program which can be handled externally, and which need external expertise. It may be cheaper to buy expertise rather than try to be all things to all people, however staff members often make the most informed and committed coordinators of community participation.

Assess the most cost-effective way to get the information needed, then tailor the participation program to the project budget. It is not necessary to spend a fortune on consultation, but money spent on a good survey or effectively facilitated focus groups can save time and achieve good results for a relatively low cost. It can be false economy to allow insufficient funds for the participation process.

Items which will may require a budget allocation include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Venue hire | ✓ Consultants' costs |
| ✓ Printing costs | ✓ Facilitation costs |
| ✓ Advertising costs | ✓ Staff overtime |
| ✓ Refreshments | ✓ Security |
| ✓ Interpreters | ✓ Postal delivery costs of printed material |
| ✓ Stationery eg butcher's paper,
whiteboard markers | ✓ Travel |

Training

Community participation is a component of professional roles which is often infrequent and demanding. The skills required to carry out an effective participation program may be different from the technical skills required on the job. The following skills can be improved by undertaking specific training:

- Facilitation techniques
- Consultation techniques
- Plain English writing
- Conflict and dispute resolution
- Negotiation skills
- Public speaking and presenting
- Survey techniques

Facilitators

Facilitators should ideally have a neutral role in relation to the matters being discussed, so consider using someone from outside the Council. When working with specific population groups such as people with disabilities or young people, try to use facilitators who have previous experience working with these groups.

For some groups such as Aboriginal people or people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, consider using facilitators who are members of these groups or co-facilitating with members of these groups.

Staff within Council often have extensive facilitation experience, and it may be possible to recruit other staff members to facilitate meetings or workshops. Arrangements are subject to workload and individual levels of interest and abilities, but staff members from other units may welcome an opportunity to participate in assisting with projects outside their normal roles.

Anticipating Challenges and Conflict

Challenge	Suggested Response
Confusion and unrealistic expectations about purpose and scope of participation	Clearly define the purpose and scope, and keep re-iterating during the participation process. Emphasize limits and constraints, as well as opportunities.
Community concerns about consultation overload and fatigue	Research and publicly acknowledge previous processes and research to avoid “covering old ground”. Find out about other Council and agency consultation processes occurring during your timeframe.
Community distrust	Operate within Council policy. Ensure there is strong commitment from Council to the process from the outset. Be clear, open, positive and constructive at all times.
Difficulty in obtaining representative participation and opinion	Identify all stakeholders and choose participation techniques to suit each group. Build relationships with people and organizations. Consider views according to representativeness, rather than being influenced by those more advantaged and capable of expressing non-representative views.
Difficulties with implementation	Admit and learn from mistakes, be flexible and adaptable to address emerging difficulties, and keep participants informed at all times.
Emergence of misinformation	Firmly but respectfully correct any wrong information. Give participants the opportunity to correct what has been incorrectly recorded.
Disagreement among stakeholders	Identify all areas of agreement, as well as areas of compromise or mitigation on areas of difference. Report significant differences to Council to assist in decision-making. Give participants the opportunity to comment on proposed recommendations prior to decisions.
Conflict during the process	Recognise emotion as a legitimate response, and try to empathise with participants. Acknowledge people’s issues. Explain to participants how the engagement activity will affect the proposed decision. Offer information that may reduce concerns.

Challenge	Suggested Response
Differing perceptions of decision-making roles	Negotiating outcomes between different individuals and groups requires their trust and engagement. They need to understand that Council will value their input, but also that Council has the final responsibility for making the decision.
Opposition to decisions	Provide feedback that views have been heard, and explain rationale for decisions.
Need to protect privacy and confidential information	Keep private information or views confidential and unidentifiable. Avoid undue intrusion, and restrict information collected to that strictly necessary.

Anticipating Conflict

In order to predict beforehand how much conflict your project will generate, you will need to consider the impact on individuals living in close proximity to a proposal as well as across the broader community. In general, people will perceive as negative something that is coerced rather than voluntary, and industrial rather than natural.

Try and think about the people in the affected community, and how they might respond to the following questions:

- Is it safe for me and my children ?
- Is it fair ?
- Is it expensive ?
- Will the value of my home be maintained ?
- Will my quality of life remain the same ?
- Will it look OK ?
- Is Council independent or does it have a certain bias ?
- Is Council itself affected by the outcome of the decision ?
- Does Council understand my concerns ?
- Will I be kept informed ?
- Will I have access to the process ?
- Are there favourable news reports ?
- Are others saying good things about it ?

Criteria for Success

Transparency of the process	The project, the process and the decision-making process is known and clearly understood. Stakeholders know why they are being involved and what part they have to play
Effective communication	Effective communication is established between Council and all relevant stakeholders, and they receive appropriate information about the project and the process
Reach	All stakeholders are given opportunities to participate
Flexibility and responsiveness	The changing needs of stakeholders and the complex interaction between stakeholders and Council results in adjustments to the process as it progresses
Handling dialogue breakdown	Any conflict which arises is managed. Council listens and acknowledges the concerns of stakeholders and, if unable to accommodate their views, Council makes every effort to explain the decision and minimise impacts.
Cost-effectiveness	There is an appropriate relationship between the cost of community participation and the scale and level of impact of the project.
Effectiveness	The community participation program meets its stated objectives.

Conducting Evaluation

Evaluation is an important tool in determining whether a community participation process has achieved its objectives, and whether the most effective and suitable techniques were used. It is a useful learning and organisational development tool, and can benefit Council in a number of ways:

- ✓ Assist in planning for future programs;
- ✓ Improve effectiveness of community participation techniques;
- ✓ Increase community participation skills of staff;
- ✓ Provide information which encourages organisational and senior management support for community participation and its outcomes;
- ✓ Ensure mistakes are not repeated, and successes are built on;
- ✓ Record the process and outcomes of community participation;
- ✓ Provide information to others; and
- ✓ Assess how the community participation process affected the central issues.

Various methods can be used to gather the material for an evaluation, including:

- informal discussion
- interviews
- questionnaires
- tear-off forms with tick box answers
- observations assessing the quality of participation
- records of processes including lists of participants, issues raised, decisions made, submissions received etc
- evaluation forms designed to be filled in by key informants or participants

Involving the community who participated in the process can provide valuable feedback, and can assist staff to understand the experiences of people who were affected and involved in Council's activities.

The following questions are typical of an evaluation, and pages 34 and 35 can be copied, completed and lodged on file on completion of the evaluation:

Community Participation – Evaluation Form

Project Name : _____

Project Coordinator's Name : _____

Date : _____

1. What went well and why ?

2. What did not go well and why?

3. Did I achieve the criteria for success as outlined on the previous pages :

* Transparency :

* Effective Communication :

* Reach :

* Flexibility and Responsiveness :

* Handling dialogue breakdown :

* Cost-effectiveness :

* Effectiveness :

4. What did I learn ?

5. What might I do differently next time ?

6. Were there any issues or events for which I found myself unprepared ?

7. How might I anticipate them next time ?

Signed : _____

Date : _____

TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

The following section contains information and guidance regarding some of the more commonly used community participation techniques and tools. They are listed in alphabetical order, and include the following:

COMMUNITY REPORTS	37
COUNCIL PARTICIPATION COMMITTEES	38
FACILITATION	38
FOCUS GROUPS.....	40
INTERPRETER SERVICES.....	40
LETTERS.....	41
MEDIA	43
OPEN DAY	45
PRESENTATIONS.....	45
PUBLIC EXHIBITION.....	47
PUBLIC MEETINGS.....	48
REFERENCE GROUPS	50
SUBMISSIONS.....	50
SURVEYS.....	51
WEBSITE	52

If you are looking for information regarding tools not on this list, the last section of the document includes a list of website references of other manuals which may hold the information you are seeking.

Community Reports

Purpose: To present information to a wide audience in a newsletter which is regularly produced by Council, and which may provide a vehicle to promote information about a particular issue or community participation program.

Council's Community Reporting Program provides the best opportunity for Council to provide its residents and ratepayers with contemporary and regular information on Council's operations and achievements as well as the value of the services we provide to them. It forms a key part of Council's Services Marketing Plan and provides an appropriate vehicle to make the community more aware of our achievements, what we provide them and what is happening in their City. Each year four community newsletters and one Year in Review Report are produced and distributed to residents and ratepayers. To request inclusion within one of these documents, contact Council's Services Marketing Coordinator on extension 7645.

Council Participation Committees

Purpose: To access an existing Council structure involving community representatives on a particular issue

The following participation committees are supported by Council, and may be suitable to include in your stakeholder list:

- ✓ Disability Access Committee
Contact - Disability Services Officer
- ✓ Traffic Committee
Contact - Senior Traffic Engineer
- ✓ Parent Advisory Committees and Children's Services Cooperative
Contact - Children's Services Development Officer
- ✓ Sporting Clubs and Penrith Valley Sports Foundation
Contact - Parks Coordinator
- ✓ Economic Development Corporation
Contact - Local Economic Development Program Manager
- ✓ Heritage Committee
Contact – Planning Policy Unit Coordinator

Facilitation

Purpose: A facilitator is a person who makes something possible or easier. Good facilitation is a skill used in many different situations. A facilitator is required in meetings, a series of meetings throughout a project, or at workshops. Facilitation is a vital part of community engagement as it ensures everyone can play a part.

A facilitator holds a large degree of responsibility, and it can be a challenging task. It involves an understanding of different peoples' needs and requirements, and involves planning, understanding the audience, being adaptive, open-minded and ready for anything.

Planning

- Plan your session. Who is coming, where will the meeting or session take place and how will people get there?
- Set out the objectives or purpose of the session. What is it that you want to achieve and how will decisions be made? What approach will best suit the participants?
- Gather the information needed. Who is coming and what is the relationship of the attendants? Is there a history of conflict? Are some people more confident than others?
- Set out the agenda or format of the session. Is the meeting to be around a table in a formal chairing session? Will people break up into groups and give feedback? Will there be presentations carried out by other people and what do they need?
- What equipment will you need?
- Do the people coming have any special needs such as dietary requirements?

- Remember the logistics of the day. How will you get there, what time will food or refreshments arrive, will you need help setting up technical equipment or getting equipment to the location ?
- Look at what has happened before and what information you may need from other meetings.

On the Day

- Set out the objectives for the day clearly;
- You may want to set out ground rules;
- Run through health and safety, toilets, refreshment times;
- Clearly set out the context – does everyone know why he or she is there?
- Set out how the day will run. How long will people be there? What time will lunch be? What will the day involve?
- Keep an eye on the atmosphere. Are people enjoying themselves? Are the objectives being met ? Are actions being set out with responsibilities ? Are there tensions between attendants ?
- Ensure everyone can participate.

Facilitator Behaviour

A facilitator may have to act slightly differently in different situations according to the requirements of the meeting and the people there. One of the most important things to be is you. Some effective facilitation points are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ✓ Use humour if appropriate; | ✓ Listen to what people say; |
| ✓ Summarise and communicate; | ✓ Be observant. Especially of the time; |
| ✓ Lead, but don't take over; | ✓ Listen to points raised and don't interrupt; |
| ✓ Maintain objectivity; | ✓ Treat participants equally; |
| ✓ Listen and observe the feel of the day; | ✓ Practice a five-to-one ratio of appreciation to criticism; and |
| ✓ Ask open-ended questions; | ✓ Encourage participants. |
| ✓ Offer praise and support; | |
| ✓ Be assertive, not aggressive; | |

A facilitator has to be creative, flexible and adaptive. You must meet the challenges when facilitating a group of people who can be very different. How do you deal with a group who remains silent despite the questions being posed? How do you deal with someone who talks all the time or others that don't talk? What does a facilitator do when too many hands go up, or when the group is just not engaged? A well-practiced facilitator overcomes all these situations and is always learning.

Focus Groups

Purpose: To provide guided discussion that allows in-depth and interactive debate on an issue. Focus groups can provide ideas and views from groups with common interests, and can also be used to pilot-test an engagement activity such as a survey

Focus groups are usually made up of 6 to 12 people who can either be randomly selected or invited on the basis of interests. They require multiple groups in order to build up an information base. Special support can be provided for those who need it, such as hearing enhancements or interpreters.

Focus groups may be more expensive if a facilitator is required. They can be dominated by a few members, and attendance may be poor if inadequate support is provided eg transport or childcare. Focus groups may not provide representative views of the target audience, and minority views may be lost.

Checklist

- What is the purpose of the discussion, and how will the information be used?
- Identify the range of interest groups who could form individual focus groups;
- Send invitations and reminders to ensure good attendance;
- Understand and make arrangements for participants with special needs eg transport, childcare, timing of meetings, suitability of venue, catering;
- Arrange for experienced facilitation and recording of discussions;
- Record the full range of views, and classify issues raised under key themes.

Interpreter Services

Purpose: Consultation with groups who have limited facility with English can be facilitated by the use of interpreters.

In group settings it is desirable to have an interpreter present in person, however in smaller groups or one-on-one sessions a telephone interpreter may be considered. For assistance in organizing an interpreter, contact Council's Multicultural Officer on extension 8096 or the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131450.

Tips for using Interpreters

- Brief the interpreter about relevant words and concepts before the meeting whenever possible.
- While interpreters are used for their language expertise, you may also be able to use their cultural expertise by asking the interpreter before the meeting for information on any cultural factors that might affect the meeting. Be aware of gender, class, disability and other issues (such as political, religious) that may impact on the meeting. Seek the participants' permission if you need to obtain additional cultural information from the interpreter during the meeting.
- When complex issues are involved remember to summarise periodically.

- If your participants do not understand what you are saying, it is your responsibility (not the interpreter's) to explain it more simply.
- Always address the participant, for example: 'What do you think?' Do not say (to the interpreter): 'Ask her/ him what she/he is thinking'
- Do not try to save time by asking the interpreter to summarise.
- Be aware that it may take more or fewer words than you have used to convey the message in another language.
- Do not let the interpreter's presence change your role in the meeting. It is not the interpreter's role to conduct the meeting.

Be aware...

- ✓ Speaking louder does not help
- ✓ Gender issues may be relevant and you may need an interpreter who is culturally appropriate to the participants and to the issue at hand
- ✓ Especially when working with people from smaller communities, ask your participants whether they know the interpreter. If they are known to the group or they refuse the interpreter, you will need to book another one - it is often desirable to have an independent person who is not part of the community
- ✓ Allow sufficient time
- ✓ Speak directly to the participants
- ✓ Use 2 to 3 short sentences
- ✓ Use good clear communication
- ✓ Be sensitive and careful when using children as interpreters
- ✓ Do NOT use childish or simplistic English
- ✓ Plain English focuses on the message, and avoids jargon and complex wordings

Letters

Purpose: To provide detailed information directly to individuals in a cost-effective format which can be recorded and kept for future reference.

Before you begin drafting a letter, you need to decide exactly what it aims to do. Who will the readers be? Do they have little or no knowledge of the subject, or a good understanding? What do they want to know? What is the best way to present the information?

Put the reader first

Once you know who your readers are, try to put things from **their** point of view, rather than your organisation's perspective. Write directly to the reader, as though you were explaining the facts in person. Use "we" and "you". It is more friendly than "the department/council" and "the client/customer/ratepayer".

Use words your reader will know

About 50 per cent of adult Australians can't cope with a level of writing more complex than that found in a popular newspaper. So if your documents are aimed at the general public, you will need to pitch your writing at this level.

Avoid jargon

Jargon is a type of language that is only understood by a particular group of people, such as an industry or a profession. You can use jargon when writing to people who will understand the terms and phrases; it can be a useful form of shorthand. But try to avoid using jargon on the general public. Keep to everyday English whenever possible.

Keep it simple

Clear writing should have an average sentence length of 15 to 20 words. This does not mean making every sentence the same length. Make a note of the points you want to make in logical order. Be concise. Imagine you are talking to your reader. Write sincerely, personally, in a style that is suitable and with the right tone of voice.

Avoid over-capitalisation

The unnecessary use of capitals is old-fashioned, and can also be intimidating to the reader. The tendency to over-capitalise persists in some forms of business writing. For example, many government staff would write:

When the Department issued its Annual Report, the Minister tabled it in the Federal Parliament.

Yet reputable publications such as *The Bulletin* and the *Commonwealth Hansard* follow a more modern and readable style:

When the department issued its annual report, the minister tabled it in the federal parliament.

Tell the reader where they can get more information

Your document should provide as much information as your reader needs to know. But many people may still have questions. You should always tell them where they can get more information or advice.

Use active rather than passive voice

Office staff often write in the passive voice. For example:

Applications will be processed within two weeks.

In this sentence, it is not clear who will be carrying out the action. The reader may also be uncertain about what “processed” means. But writing the same sentence in the active voice is far more direct:

We will reply to your application within two weeks.

The reader now knows who will be carrying out the action and what to expect – a reply within two weeks.

Avoid old fashioned words and phrases

These can seem pompous and bureaucratic and set a cold, impersonal tone.

Don't Use	Use Instead
at your earliest convenience	when convenient
with reference to	about
above mentioned	above
in accordance with	because of, under
with effect from	from
with regard to	about, for
forthwith	now, at once
whilst	while
amongst	among

Don't use too many words

Avoid words (in bold) that seem precise but add nothing to the meaning:

- **past** experience
- **originally** built
- **forward** planning
- **close** proximity
- working **together** in partnership
- or **alternatively** go this way
- **both** the Council and the police are working together

Media

Purpose: The media can be used at many stages of community participation, whether it is to raise awareness of an issue, invite interested residents to attend forums and debate, advise the community of council's intentions and reasons for consultation, or to publicise consultation outcomes.

There are two general facets to media liaison: promotion of services and strategic aims and to address issues and concerns of residents.

Council Media Policy

Do not talk to the media directly!

If they contact you refer them to the Media Liaison Officer on X7632. When proposing to harness the media talk to your manager and/or the media liaison officer first.

Council has a media policy. In its simple form it says that only the media liaison officer, managers and levels above can speak directly to the media on behalf of Council. They have specialist training to avoid the potential pitfalls of communication with the media, which are numerous and potentially career destroying.

When can the Media Help ?

- ✓ Media can provide information to the public and harness the opinions and wishes of those residents that may not be contacted through other targeted means such as adjoining neighbourhood leaflet drops or posters in targeted areas.
- ✓ The media will turn complex subjects into simple to understand language.
- ✓ Gives Council an opportunity to answer concerns in a public forum thereby allaying similar concerns from other residents who may not be identified through the consultation process.
- ✓ The media can be used to 'test the water' of public opinion before full consultation takes place.

Disadvantages

- Media cannot go into great depth on issue and must choose only a part of the issue to focus on.
- Council has limited control of final article and where emphasis placed on parts of the issue.
- Articles may raise other issues that are not necessarily related to the consultation currently taking place. For example, a new childcare centre in one part of the city may raise issues about the lack of childcare facilities in another part of the city, or general childcare policy.

Harnessing Media

Media Releases

The most effective way to communicate with the media is through a media release. A media release is communication that is written in a journalistic style, outlines benefits to the community, and contains vivid quotes from a suitable speaker on the issue.

The media release is written in this style so that journalists have little work to do. The better the release is written, the less likely that an alternate view will be sought or questions asked thereby increasing the chances of an unedited version of Council's view being put to the public.

A media release will be usually about 250 words long and contain all pertinent facts and an explanation of the issue. This requires some skill and the media liaison officer is there to draft such releases on your behalf.

Mayoral weekly column

The mayor's weekly column is an ideal forum to use for community consultation. The mayoral column is a paid advertisement and therefore the paper won't change copy. This ensures an unedited Council version of the issue is put forward. The column appears in the majority of local papers. The Media Liaison Officer can draft the message for you.

Photo opportunities

Although not always easy to arrange for community consultation, an interesting photo will help ensure an article is published. Generally, media like to send their own highly professional photographers to take photos and it is our responsibility to give them an opportunity to do so.

Newspapers generally have at least one picture on each page of editorial copy to make the paper appealing to readers. If your media release can be accompanied by an opportunity for a good photo it will quite often replace other, sometimes stronger, stories that do not have a photo. The Media Liaison Officer can help with advice on what makes a good photo or what opportunities may be available.

Other media

The most relevant media in most cases is the local print media. However, other media can be harnessed where appropriate including electronic media, metropolitan media, and niche media. The media liaison officer has access to lists of existing media that can be used where appropriate.

Open Day

Purpose: Council's Open Day offers an opportunity to display information and explain issues to the large audience who are attracted to this annual event.

Open Day has become a key component of Council's Services Marketing Plan. This event that is very popular with the public represents one of Council's best opportunities to interface with large numbers of the general public.

Open Day provides Council with the opportunity to showcase itself to the local community and inform them about the services and facilities we provide in a fun and entertaining way as well as promoting a better understanding of the importance of the role of local government in the community.

On the day there are many displays of Council services for visitors to look at as well as entertainment and activities for the whole family. The event regularly attracts in the vicinity of 5,000 people to the Penrith Civic Centre.

Presentations

Purpose: To provide clear, interesting and relevant information to a gathered audience. Good presentations require skill in both preparation and delivery.

Presentations can be daunting. For some, speaking in front of people comes more naturally, to others it doesn't. However there are some important things that you can do to make presenting easier. Good presentation skills develop with practice. The tools below will help, but make sure that you give yourself every chance to practice them. Get some friends or colleagues together to hear your ideas and your delivery. Get their feedback and thoughts. Then after you delivered to your audience, reflect on what worked and what didn't. Learn what works for you and what doesn't and you'll get better and better. Virtually every great speaker has improved over time through learning, planning and practicing. Some sort of training is helpful, but skills to use are set out below:

Planning

Planning is the most important part of a presentation. A well-planned presentation feels good, looks good and it shows that you've made an effort to give and receive information. Key questions that you should ask yourself before planning a presentation include:

- What do you want to achieve?
- Who will your audience be?
- What does your audience already know and what will interest them?
- How will you achieve what you want?
- What information will you need to achieve your purpose?
- What visual aids will you need?
- What will you need to make your presentation space right for your needs?
- How will you make your presentation accessible (for example translations, access around the room)?
- For an easy to remember checklist, try :
 - **Who? What? Where? Why? How?**

A key part of planning a presentation is to develop a structure or plan of how it will all work out. This should include how long you will speak for, what points you will make and how you'll summarise what you said with opportunities for questions and discussion. The following table may help you with planning :

Introduction	Point One	Point Two	Point Three	Summary

Delivering a Presentation

- Give yourself time for a practice run through;
- Arrive with plenty of time at your presentation space to make sure that everything is the way you want it. If it's not, ask for it to be changed. This is very important if you're using technology. Test it out to make sure it's all working and you know how to use it. Always remember to have back up hard copies of electronic information in case the power or technology fails;
- Ensure that you're physically comfortable in your setting, remember your presentation style and make sure everything's all right for you and that your audience will be comfortable (no squeaking or wobbly chairs!);
- Be confident when you start your presentation and maintain this throughout your presentation – never start with an apology;
- Use your visual aids, but remember, do not speak to them and forget your audience.

It is important to remember that while you are presenting, the attention of your audience will waver. The attention of people can be influenced by external factors beyond your control, such as a lack of sleep, sickness, stress at work or at home, or who won the football match. Below is a list you can build into your planning and delivery:

- ✓ Eye contact: Don't just speak to the back of the room, the whiteboard or your feet;
- ✓ Humour: helps to increase understanding;
- ✓ Enthusiasm: What is worse than a bored presenter?
- ✓ Stories: Make what you're saying real by adding your experience or anecdotes;
- ✓ Pauses: A pause here and there helps people digest what you're saying and shows that you're thinking while you make your presentation;
- ✓ Difference: How can you make your presentation that little bit different so that people will sit up and take notice?
- ✓ Rapport: How can you build a relationship with the listener?
- ✓ Be confident and be yourself: while you are presenting, you are the boss.

Public Exhibition

Purpose: To display and make available information to the public, often meeting requirements of legislation for public exhibition. High volume venues are chosen to maximise the number of people who see and access information.

Libraries

- Contact the library in advance, particularly St Mary's as there is a space issue;
- Prepare a checklist for the library staff to better assist them with customer enquiries. This checklist should include:
 - A list of the material the library should be holding;
 - The format of the exhibition eg booklet form (which will be behind the desk) versus full display (which will be on a board or wall);
 - When the material might arrive. This is important when the exhibition may already be advertised but has not yet reached the library;
 - A list of the material council holds but which is not in the library.;
 - A time limit for your exhibition or program; and
 - A contact person for the removal of the exhibition;
- Notify library staff (particularly St Marys) when you arrive to put up or remove a display; and
- Use email box `LIB DESK ALL' for communicating about new exhibitions etc. This will notify all library branches of what's happening.

Post Offices

- If there is sufficient lead time, information for display can be mailed to the 19 post offices in the LGA;
- If there is not sufficient lead time, the information can be delivered to all the Post Offices. Delivery to all the venues takes two days;
- On completion of the exhibition period, the information can be collected again, or the Post Offices can be instructed to dispose of the information.

Front Counters

- Display information can be displayed at the customer service counters either at Penrith or St Mary's or both;
- The foyer of the administration building is large, and can accommodate several displays;
- Exposure to the community is limited, with the most common customers being builders and developers. Display at the library provides a higher exposure to a broader community base and longer hours;
- To arrange a display, contact Council's Customer Service Supervisor. He would prefer a month's notice, with two weeks a minimum amount of time;
- The Customer Service Supervisor can provide display boards, tables, chairs or lighting. It is your responsibility to put up and take down the display material;
- If the display is likely to generate enquiries, then it will be necessary to brief the Customer Services Team leader regarding:
 - Aims of the display;
 - Issues and information; and
 - Contact person and backup.

Public Meetings

Purpose: A public meeting provides information to the general community, and allows questions and answers, as well as the expression of views and concerns. It allows members of the public to hear what Council and others in the community have to say.

Planning the Meeting

Promotion

- Consider the timing to allow for people to come after work, after school depending on the issues for discussion;
- Advertise the meeting clearly and publicly, allowing people enough time to plan their attendance;
- Consider the provision of childcare to allow parents to participate. In order to plan staffing, request bookings in promotions;

Venue

- Make sure parking is available and the meeting room is clearly identifiable, access via lifts, Toilet facilities etc.
- Check that the room is clearly signposted if needed;
- Check the lighting in the rooms. Avoid bright lights or uncovered windows behind trainers or participants, or shining onto screens;
- Ask for external lighting to remain on throughout evening meetings;
- Make sure there are spare chairs in case you have more people than you expect;
- Make sure you have enough refreshments if the meeting runs overtime;

During the Meeting

- Have people on hand who can run errands and solve unforeseen problems;
- Introduce who the presenters, staff and elected officials are that are in attendance;
- Have a firm agenda and set out the rules at the beginning of the meeting (and before arrival) ;
- Begin and end with clarity about the scope of Council's decision, and the decision-making process;
- Be clear about whether minutes will or will not be provided afterwards;
- Provide a closing "where to from here" statement;
- Try to finish on time, but allow extra if it means that everyone comes up with a better solution. Alternatively you could agree to re-convene at a certain date and time to discuss other issues;

Technology

- Keep technology to a minimum and let people speak instead - that is why they came along to "have their say";
- Always test the technology in advance, and ensure you know how to use it. Have a hard copy of presentation material in case technology malfunctions;
- If using PowerPoint presentations, check that the colour scheme works in that lighting, and text is not obscured by bold background images or colour;
- Use black or very dark blue flipchart pens for maximum contrast;

For Potentially Contentious Meetings

- Brief key managers and the mayor beforehand about the agenda and key issues and stakeholders in the matter;
- Use an independent facilitator - either someone external to Council, or someone like the Public Officer who can conduct meetings with Council's protocol - rather than the elected representatives or the officers dealing with the issue;
- Use a venue which allows groups to separate and re-convene after private discussion;
- Have the meeting at a neutral venue, that is neither at Council or at the site of a contentious proposal;
- Provide a microphone for large groups and ask for a spokesperson rather than everyone yelling out individual comments;

For Development Applications

- An on-site meeting is preferable to look at the site with 5-15 people but is not suitable for large groups or poor weather (>15 people); and
- Brief the applicant and the resident spokesperson about how the meeting will be run and ask them to limit the presentations and number of speakers on the night.

Reference Groups

Purpose: A Reference Group is a committee convened for a specific project. It provides for detailed and regular input by a small group of representative stakeholders (up to 12) in the development and consideration of proposals by the Council.

The range of representatives on a Reference Group is determined by the Council, and can be by individual invitation or by invitation to stakeholder groups to nominate a representative. The role and operations of the reference group are governed by terms of reference.

The benefit of a Reference Group is the provision of regular and timely interaction amongst stakeholders, and between the stakeholders and the government. It also improves the credibility of government analysis and ownership of outcomes.

Reference Groups are less effective when representatives do not liaise adequately with their constituencies. The skills and resource backing of stakeholders may vary substantially, as will the amount of time they have to devote to issues. A Reference Group requires sufficient support in provision of information, organizing meetings, reviewing issues and providing feedback.

Checklist

- Develop terms of reference for the group to ensure that all members understand their roles and the objective of their participation. The terms of reference can be discussed or negotiated with members to provide improved understanding and ownership;
- Select members or invite nominations from key stakeholders;
- Identify and provide adequate financial and other resource support to maximize the effectiveness of the committee;
- Invite members to identify any special needs or support required to ensure all members have equal opportunities to participate;
- Develop a protocol with the group on how members engage with their constituencies;
- Establish a clear protocol on the confidentiality of reference group papers;
- Meeting papers will need to be provided well in advance of meetings; and
- Be prepared to allow for the representation of views which are critical of Council policies or programs.

Submissions

Purpose: Encouraging people to make submissions offers staff an indication of community concerns, ideas and preferences. Submissions can be accepted and processed to summarise ideas and issues, and allow people to respond to particular proposals.

Submissions require a level of confidence, motivation and literacy from the community. It is an open process available to all members of the community, and provides a low-cost method for the Council of allowing people to participate and put forward detailed information and arguments. Sometimes unknown people with expertise on specific issues can contribute information and opinions through a submission.

One of the disadvantages of the submission process is the exclusion of those who are not comfortable or able to make written submissions. The process can be swamped by people with vested interests.

Checklist

- Targeted questions can help when the issue is complex;
- Respondents need sufficient time to develop and provide their input;
- The invitation to lodge submissions needs to include:
 - timeframes
 - how the information will be used
 - whether the issue is confidential
 - whether it will be publicly released
 - contact details
- All submissions will need to be properly registered and acknowledged; and
- Consider whether a public forum may be appropriate for submissions to be presented and discussed.

Surveys

Purpose: To gather quantifiable information from the community including their attitudes, values, levels of satisfaction and the prevalence of a problem. Surveys can target a representative cross-section of the community or of a particular group within the community.

Surveys are a form of one-way communication, or limited two-way communication if a survey invites a response to government proposals. They require structured questions and answers which can be tabulated, and can be gained through:

- ✓ Mail
- ✓ Email
- ✓ Telephone
- ✓ Face-to-face

The strength of the survey method is that it can provide a valid cross-sectional view of a whole population, and can elicit information on perceptions and values that cannot be readily gained in other ways. A survey reaches the general population, not just activists in the field or those who are willing to attend a meeting.

However, a survey often requires assistance from an expert in data analysis to guarantee the usefulness and the validity of the information. Achieving a high response rate can be difficult, and surveys can not be used when detailed knowledge of an issue is required to give valid responses to questions. The structure of a questionnaire does not always allow scope for respondents to raise issues of their own choosing.

Survey Checklist

- What information do we want and how will that information be used?
- Do we have the skills to design survey questions that are simple, clear, and likely to elicit the required information? If not, it may be necessary to engage a survey expert;
- Have we road tested the draft survey?

- How do we select a random sample of the target population? Often the telephone directory or the electoral roll is used as the primary source, but if the target group is not represented in these sources (eg young people) then other sources will be required;
- Have we explained how the information will be used?
- Have we ensured privacy and confidentiality in the use of responses?
- If using interviewers, are they trained to be consistent, avoid bias and provide for responses in languages other than English?
- Have we arranged to provide feedback either individually or generally?

Website

Purpose: To use Council's Website to provide information and opportunity for feedback on Council issues and decisions via the internet.

The 2001 Census recorded that 34% of the Penrith population had access to the internet, with 20% of those users having access at home. Most common users of the website are architects, builders and those interested in planning information; people looking at the positions vacant section; and school aged children undertaking assignments. The website offers a variety of possibilities for staff who are inviting community participation:

- Notices of events, activities and decisions;
- Email links;
- Interactive forms;
- Separate pages within the website; and
- Document display.

Each department has a departmental contact, who is a designated person to load information onto the website. Council's Web Coordinator on ext. 7882 can assist in designing more complex websites and forms.

CASE STUDIES

Sustainability Street – 2005

Council's Sustainable Penrith Action Plan (2003), Greenhouse Gas Reduction Action Plan (2001), Education Policy (2003) and Strategic and Management Plans all identified the need for community greenhouse gas emission abatement education within Penrith City. The Sustainability Street project was put in place to address this issue, with the resulting objective of the project being to encourage behaviour change to reduce household emissions and achieve emission reductions.

What Happened

Previous activities undertaken by the Sustainability Unit, such as the Energy Home Rating Tool pilot, identified the effectiveness of community-based education. In addition, the effectiveness of the Sustainability Street approach was evident where it had been employed in Victoria and Wollongong and Council saw this as a valuable way of engaging local communities on sustainability issues with the end benefit of behaviour changes.

Initially an \$8000 community abatement grant from the Australian Greenhouse Office enabled the program to get off the ground. The program was launched at Council's Australia Day celebrations in 2005 and a far-reaching marketing and promotion campaign was developed.

Interested residents within the Penrith LGA were asked to seek interest from their neighbours and demonstrate commitment. Four nominations were received and two pilot streets were selected based on pre-determined criteria, which included commitment and enthusiasm.

The first introductory 'community spirit' session were held on 12 March 2005. Three additional workshops were held on a monthly basis in the homes of participants within each street. Following completion of this component of the project the participants 'graduated' from the program and were recognised for their commitment to sustainability.

In 2006 the streets are continuing to meet and have now tackled the issues of water and waste in addition to energy, which was the initial focus of the program. Both streets have been responsible for applying for grant funding to undertake additional works within their communities to address sustainability issues. Their success in obtaining a \$10000 grant for the installation of a range of rain water tanks was recently announced.

Methods Used to Engage the Community:

The program utilised best practice Education for Sustainability techniques to achieve behavioural change and demonstrated best practice as a collaborative project by establishing partnerships between Council, Integral Energy, the Penrith Press and importantly, the community.

Community engagement was undertaken primarily through the concepts of peer education, participation and group activities.

Each session followed a 'purposefully informal' structure designed to remove the focus of the educator as the lecturer or expert, rather the educator's role was as a facilitator to encourage the participants to share their knowledge and experiences among the group.

The participants had excellent stories to share and these things were reported in the Sustainability Street newsletter which was distributed not only to the participants but to all houses within the two 'Sustainability Streets'. Some of these tips included information on the installation of energy smart bulbs, how to get a cheap water retrofit and encouraged others to take up excellent offers spotted in the local area. The stories from the participants were instrumental in inspiring and encouraging the participants towards behavioural changes in their own homes.

Another example of community engagement used during the program again focuses on peer learning. Session two saw the 23456 raffle take place. This involved one participant in each street taking up a challenge to spend \$234.56 to improve energy efficiency in their home, culminating in a tour of their home so they could demonstrate and explain how and where they had made the savings. Some of the purchases were innovative and included slippers, shower timer, draught excluder, tap aerators and weather stripping. The focus of this activity is on self learning and building the capacity of the participants as peer educators.

Successes of the Program

A significant success of the Sustainability Street program has been in developing connections between neighbours and building community spirit around the shared goal of sustainability. Many neighbours had not met before the program began and community links, engendering a sense of community and ownership of place have been forged.

In addition, the program has been successful in building connections between the program participants and Council. The program has resulted in an ongoing dialogue between the participants and Council staff on sustainability issues. The participants of the program continue to be an excellent source of information and contact for Council educators when developing future initiatives and programs. This success is evident by the willingness of the participants to come along to events such as Council's Open Day and information sessions to speak about the program and encourage others to join.

Other achievements of the project include:

- ✓ 30% emission reduction target adopted by participants
- ✓ Expected 10.6 tonnes of CO₂ saved per year, equivalent to \$1119 per year
- ✓ Increased understanding of the links between climate change and energy use
- ✓ Ongoing program for sustainable living established
- ✓ Increased capacity of Council educators
- ✓ Partnerships developed and enhanced
- ✓ Expansion of program in Penrith LGA in 2005/2006 financial year
- ✓ Extensive media coverage promoting the issues and program to a wider audience

Written by Carmel Hamilton - Sustainability Research Officer ext 8050

Library Customer Survey

The information gathered, and the processes set in place by this project, assisted the library with its strategic planning. The aim was to become more efficient, effective, responsive and accountable.

The major outcome from this project was better strategic decision making by the Library Management Team, which will enable PCL to become more efficient, effective, responsive and accountable to its customers. This improved decision making capability was based on the discovery of strategic customer insights from the components of the project.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The qualitative and quantitative research provided answers to and recommendations regarding the following key questions about current and prospective customers (users and non users), their behaviour, needs and perceptions:

- Who are the users of the library in the community, i.e. profile of users?
- What are the current levels of satisfaction of current library users with
 - the products, services and facilities provided by the library?
 - customer service provided by library staff?
- What are the reasons for these levels of satisfaction?
- What are the library service use priorities of library users?
- In what library products, services and facilities is there a gap between the level of customer expectations of service and the library's level of service delivery?
- What can be done to bridge these gaps?
- What products, services and facilities, not currently provided by the library, is the community suggesting that it could provide?
- Who are the non-users of the library in the community, i.e. profile of non users?
- Why don't they use the library?
- What does the library have to do to attract them as customers?

In answering these questions, the project clearly identified the following, with regard to currently provided library products, services and facilities:

- Awareness levels of the library users and non users of library products, services and facilities;
- Perceptions of the users and non users of the accessibility, level and quality of library products, services and facilities;
- Key drivers of usage and non usage of library products, services and facilities;
- Key drivers of users and non users satisfaction with library products, services and facilities.

Electronic Customer Feedback System

The system trialled allowed library customers:

- to provide information at the library's physical and virtual service points, i.e. both at branches and online through the library's website.
- the choice of providing their feedback in electronic or written form.

The consultant managed, stored and analysed the data and provided a report to the library management on the nature and significance of the customer feedback for its strategic priorities.

The library had never conducted thorough market research of its current and prospective customers. It planned to engage a consultant to assist it to produce a strategic plan. In order to produce a meaningful and relevant library strategic plan, it was vital to have accurate and up to date data about current and prospective customer behaviour, needs and perceptions.

Methods Used

Stage 1 - Qualitative research.

The first stage involved the use of focus group discussions. These were conducted with both library users and non users and included adults, young adults and children. These sessions provided an insight into:

- current usage patterns
- satisfaction with existing services
- awareness of library services
- identified gaps between current services and evolving community needs.

Findings from these sessions were used to assist in the development of the second stage of the study.

Stage 2 - Quantitative research.

The second stage involved a broad-based community telephone survey of library users and non users aged 16 years and over. This process allowed:

- statements to be tested
- opinions and assumptions from the Stage One focus groups to be quantified
- new data to be gathered on awareness of library services.

Stage 3 - Customer feedback system trial

Whilst the second stage quantitative work was underway, the consultant developed a shortened questionnaire which was used as the basis for the trial of an electronic customer feedback system.

The customer feedback system trial used web based technologies to store and analyse survey data provided by customers. Customers over 16 years of age filled out a questionnaire either online (at the council website or dedicated PCs at library branches) or on paper (on survey forms provided at library branches). Paper based surveys were later entered on the survey database by library staff. The data, once entered into the database, was hosted on a server provided by the consultant. Using specially designed software for the purpose, the data was then available to library management to view online in real time from their desktops.

This survey on the trial customer feedback system was available for a period of 4 weeks. Library users were encouraged (by staff and by poster advertising) to log onto the site or to fill out the survey form and provide additional customer feedback.

Trialling the customer feedback system was designed to determine:

- the response to the system by customers including preferences, if any, for paper or electronic input
- the accessibility, simplicity and usefulness of the system and the data that it provides to library management
- the cost/benefit to the library of such an outsourced system versus buying software, setting up and maintaining a system and developing and maintaining the requisite expertise inhouse

Successes

The research confirmed some ideas that library management had about customer perceptions, behaviours and needs from anecdotal staff information and observation. It also identified new ideas and information that had not been considered.

The trial of the electronic customer feedback system worked. The decision to include paper based versions of the questionnaire as well as the electronic version proved to be useful. Approximately half of the completed questionnaires were on paper.

A key insight to come from running the research was the identification of the different perceptions, needs and behaviours of “heavy users” of the library as opposed to “ordinary” users of the library. Participants in the customer feedback system trial survey were identified as “heavy users” by their responses. Their needs, perceptions and behaviours were significantly different to the “ordinary users”, i.e. the telephone survey respondents.

Lessons learned

- ✓ Planning is obviously essential.
- ✓ Clear specifications for the consultant in the original brief are vital. When consultants get off the track, it is easy to refocus by referring to specific goals, objectives and outcomes when these are clearly specified in writing.
- ✓ Timelines can blow out for various reasons, both from the organization and the consultant, and should be expected.
- ✓ Ask to see a copy of a report that they have prepared as early as possible, ie. ask for one to be included with their response to the tender or request for quotation. This gives you time to read it closely and check that they provide well-structured, coherently written reports with professional design and layout. Doing this at the interview stage doesn't give you enough time to scrutinize their report. In the end, this may be the only written record that you have left from the project, so it needs to be good. This will also minimize the time that you will need to spend rewriting the report later. Even if consultants have done similar work for other councils and their referees highly recommend them and their reports, check that the report writing meets your standards, NOT some other council's.
- ✓ Create templates for the project process so it can be recreated at any time. The library created templates for the brief, consultant interview and selection process, report.
- ✓ Copies of the questionnaires used are also valuable for the future when the research is to be run again.

Written by Peter Goodfellow – Service Development Librarian, ext 7631

People's Lifestyle Aspirations and Needs Study (PLANS)

The PLANS project commenced in July 2002 with the assistance of a consulting team and in partnership with a range of community stakeholders. The study aimed to evaluate the planning of recreational, cultural and other urban services and facilities and establish new plans and strategies underpinned by detailed assessment of community needs and aspirations to conserve and enhance the quality of life within the City of Penrith.

The study stages were :

1. Strategic Research
2. Audit of infrastructure and services
3. Community consultation and development of preliminary strategies
4. Analysis of information and documentation of draft strategies
5. Preparation of draft strategies and consultation
6. Finalisation of strategies and plans

One of the key features of the study process was the focus on gaining an understanding of the needs and aspirations of the community through a comprehensive range of social research and community consultation processes. Council recognises that strong community involvement and a transparent and inclusive process is essential if future plans are to effectively address community needs and aspirations.

An extensive program of community consultation included -

- ✓ the formation of an internal project team comprising of a multi-disciplinary group of Council staff who provided input throughout the study
- ✓ the formation of a community project reference group who were regularly consulted at key stages throughout the study
- ✓ the formation of a key stakeholder project co-ordination group who provided guidance and advice throughout the study
- ✓ a random phone sample survey of residents
- ✓ meetings with public sector and non government service providers
- ✓ delivery of 65,000 fliers direct to each household informing the community about the project and how to contribute their feedback
- ✓ seven general community workshops at accessible venues in both urban and rural communities
- ✓ seven targeted community focus group discussions including women, older people, people from non English speaking backgrounds, young people, youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with disabilities
- ✓ all private and public schools were surveyed regarding the use of their sports , recreation and cultural facilities
- ✓ surveys were delivered to all sports clubs, recreation and cultural facility groups
- ✓ information was distributed at key community events and festivals and members of the community surveyed

- ✓ information was listed on Council's web site and feedback sought through an email link or by writing to Council
- ✓ consultation with the community on the draft Plans prior to their finalisation and adoption by Council in March 2004

The feedback obtained from this broad range of community consultation was collated into the PLANS Report and is available to the public on Council's web site at www.penrithcity.nsw.gov.au

Despite the complexity and challenges associated with developing an integrated planning study (ie not just a "Recreation Study"), the outcome provided a range of practical strategies to guide infrastructure and facility development within the City. Challenges included effectively managing the range of stakeholder expectations and ensuring that the process was closely monitored. This was achieved through the development of a communication protocol, which the consultant team and all external stakeholders agreed to prior to the project inception. The initial study timeframe was also not strictly adhered to, in favour of delivering a high quality outcome. This was achieved through detailed assessment of the key study phase reports and payment to the consultant team upon the successful completion of agreed project deliverables.

Overall, the PLANS project provides an example of an integrated planning study that involved a wide range of both internal and external stakeholders and community members. The PLANS Report documents the community needs and aspirations and provides strategies to guide the implementation phase of community infrastructure, recreation and cultural facilities and services over the next fifteen to twenty years. All stakeholders involved expressed satisfaction with the outcomes and this approach and the methods used to actively invite and involve the wider community have been recognised by both local and state government authorities.

Written by Grant Collins – Recreation and Cultural Facilities Planner, ext 7947

Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre

Background

In May 1995 Council identified Kingswood as a priority area for the location of a neighbourhood facility. The need for this facility was identified through social planning research undertaken by Council and by community demand. Neither funding nor land had not been set aside for this facility. Council faced two major challenges in delivering this facility

- Clarifying community needs – this information was required before Council could determine the types of activities that would be held in the facility, which would then inform decisions regarding the design and size of the facility.
- Identifying the most suitable location for the facility – this could only be done once Council had clarified the size and function of the facility.

Clarifying Community Needs

A comprehensive community needs assessment of the Kingswood area was undertaken in 1998 to determine the type of community facility that would best meet the needs of local residents. This included:

Community Profile - An analysis of the 2001 Census data was conducted to develop a broad understanding of the community and considered such things as age, gender, income, home ownership etc.

Random telephone survey - A casual employee of Council was engaged to conduct a random telephone survey of 200 residents living in the Kingswood area. This work occurred over a two week period with most surveys being conducted in the evening and over the weekend. Three hundred households were advised in writing one week prior to the survey being conducted that Council was going to undertake the survey, the purpose of the survey and that they may be randomly selected to receive a phone call from Council.

Public consultation - Two community meetings were held at the local school (which was the only wheelchair accessible venue in the area). One meeting was held in the morning and one in the evening. Childcare was offered at both meetings. The purpose of the meeting was to obtain feedback and further clarification regarding the identified local needs.

Questionnaire for Service Providers and Community Organisations – A written questionnaire was mailed out to local service providers who provided services or could potentially provide services in the Kingswood area. Those services that did not return the questionnaire were followed up with a telephone call.

The findings of this research clearly indicated the need for a neighbourhood centre in Kingswood rather than a community hall. The key outcomes of this consultation strongly supported the need for a neighbourhood centre that would provide a focal point for community development programs and small group activities such as playgroup, craft groups, and coffee mornings.

The survey of service providers and community organisations reaffirmed the need for a venue that had typical design features of a neighbourhood centre with two meeting rooms (one large/ one small), two offices and plenty of storage space, outdoor fenced area, children's toilets, small kitchen etc.

Site Identification

Twenty-five sites were identified and assessed as possible sites for the proposed neighbourhood centre. All of the sites were in Council's ownership and identified as having the capacity to accommodate a facility of approx 300m² in size, fenced outdoor area, parking and landscaping. The assessment criteria was developed in consultation with a number of Council departments and considered elements such as adequate size, serviced by public transport, drainage, community safety, centrally located, high visible etc.

Community Consultation

Once the type of facility and preferred location for the facility had been identified the following steps were undertaken:

Community Newsletter - A newsletter was developed and hand delivered to every property located within a 1klm radius of the proposed site. This newsletter was bright, colourful and easy to read. It outlined Council's proposal to build a neighbourhood centre on the site, the proposed size of the centre, what types of activities happened in neighbourhood centres, the proposed hours of operation etc. A map indicating the location of the site and contact details Project Coordinator if they required further information.

Street Meeting - A street meeting was organised for local residents who lived immediately adjacent to the proposed site. This meeting was attended by the Mayor, the Director of City Planning, and the Project Coordinator. The purpose of the meeting was for Council to directly hear the concerns that these residents had about the proposal.

One to one interviews - Every household located on the streets that bounded the proposed site received a letter from Council advising them that two Council Officers would be visiting their home or shop in the next week to talk to them about the proposal and discuss any concerns that they might have had. These Officers carried official identification and left 'calling cards' if the resident was not home. If the resident was not home on the second visit they were left a letter inviting them to contact the Project Officer if they wish to discuss Council's proposals.

Report to Council and establishment of a Community Design Reference Group

Once all of the information obtained from the above processes was collated and analysed, it was presented to Council for a decision to proceed with the project. A community design reference group was established and included broad representation from the residents living adjacent to the site and local service providers. This group of local people were extensively involved in the design and fitout process. Many of the members became Management Committee members, once the facility was operational.

Outcomes of the Process

The research and consultative process took approximately 6 months to complete with a further two months required to inform and report to Council. This work added approximately 8 months to the Project timeline.

The process had a number of outcomes including:

- ✓ Council developed a good understanding of the needs in the community
- ✓ Information gathered through the process supported an application to the State Government for funding for a worker for the centre
- ✓ Contact was established with local service providers and potential users of the centre
- ✓ Community developed an understanding of what a neighbourhood centre was for and why Council provides them
- ✓ Local residents have taken an interest in the project and have developed some 'ownership' of the centre.
- ✓ Development Application was approved without one objection from the local community.

Written by Judy Cobb – Community Programs Coordinator, ext 7936

Formation of the Childrens' Services Parents' Cooperative

The Issues

Penrith City Council is one of the largest providers of children's services in NSW. Seventeen long day care centres, eight pre-schools, nine out of school hours services and one occasional care centre, one mobile playvan and support services. Providing an efficient management model that minimised resources and maximized opportunities for financial settings was the goal of a community review process.

The existing management model was 377 committees of Council where each centre had its own volunteer parent committee responsible for the financial management of its centre. This model required a high level of resourcing as each year 24 new committees were elected and required support.

The Process

It was recognised that any changes to the current management model would impact on staff and parents therefore key stakeholders identified and invited to be part of the review process were parents, volunteer committees, staff, councillors, union representatives, State and Federal government representatives and other service providers in the area.

Separate surveys were developed to determine what parents and staff liked about the existing model and what they would like to change.

The results of the surveys were analysed and used to inform a financial and management modelling.

Continued communication was maintained with the stakeholders through meetings held at key stages of the review, through a similar newsheet that provided information and through Council reports. The meetings provided information from the surveys and financial modelling and participants worked in small groups to contribute their expertise to the process. Question time was part of each meeting. Meetings were scheduled for evenings when staff and working parents were available to attend. Refreshment was provided as it was anticipated some people would be coming directly from work. Childminding was also provided to ensure everyone who wanted to attend could do so and could be free to focus on the process.

Stakeholder Concerns

The majority of parents expressed gratitude that the proposed model reduced the onus on them for accountability and freed them to be involved. A minority of parents wanted the existing model to exist. A chief concern for parents was that the quality of the service remained at the high level they come to expect from Penrith City Council Children's Services. Parents also expressed that they wanted to continue to fundraise to buy items that their children could enjoy while at the centre and that they felt supported staff in their work. Parents were adamant that fundraising money was spent on the centre where it was raised.

Staff concerns were around job security and conditions of employment. They valued Council as an employer and didn't want to change.

The final step in the review was a presentation of five different management models, one being the existing model with no change. Key stakeholders were invited to vote on their preferred model.

The model now in place is a Co-operative with elected members drawn from Centre Advisory groups, the community, Councillors, staff and the General Manager's representative. Staff remain employees of Council and an elected Board meets regularly to manage the strategic operations of its 24 centres.

The new model has created economic savings and has streamlined operations while still allowing parents to have involvement at the level they choose.

Written by Winifred Sadlier – Children's Services Development Officer (Position is currently vacant) , ext 7828

Expansion of Jamison Park

The Penrith Waratahs Jr. Rugby League Club occupied two fields at Jamison Park for over 30 yrs. The fields were surrounded by a number of soccer fields which contributed to their inability to attract new players. As the soccer club numbers increased in size the Waratahs numbers were on a downward spiral. The Waratahs were also constrained by not having a canteen attached to their fields making it difficult for them to raise revenue.

Soccer on the other hand, were experiencing growth throughout the city and they could see the advantages of acquiring the two Waratah fields at Jamison Park. If the soccer association could obtain the use of these fields they would have all 10 fields at Jamison Park and could use it to host major soccer events such as the Nepean Cup and Champion of Champions events. This would be a major benefit for soccer in the Nepean District.

The objective was: how could soccer acquire the two Waratah Fields at Jamison Park? I might add that this concept was being considered over a number of years by numerous people including myself. So, the idea was--how to relocate the Waratahs to another venue where they would be happy to call their new home. Their new home would have to be close to their original facility at Jamison Park so they could keep their same player base.

For soccer to gain the use of the Waratah fields they would have to relinquish one of their facilities and this happened to be at the Doug Rennie sporting grounds about 4km. down the road. Hence, a long series of negotiations commenced with the soccer and the Waratahs. I met with the clubs individually trying to convince them of the advantages of switching grounds. There were diehard elements within each club that didn't want change so they needed to be convinced. The key to this is to get the supporters of the proposal to help convince the doubters. This can best be done at club meetings where a number of people can sell the concept.

Over a period of 6 months the 'negatives' to the concept seemed to dissipate and the positives gained momentum. The Waratahs could see the benefits to moving to Doug Rennie. They would gain a canteen and a field they could call their own. Council contributed by undertaking some essential improvement works which showed commitment on their part.

The outcome was a win/win for both clubs. The Waratahs player numbers actually doubled from the previous year. The Soccer association were now able to utilize the two fields at Jamison Park for all their make-up games and training for womens' soccer.

Written by Raphael Collins – Parks Construction and Maintenance Manager, ext 7558

Proposed Skate Park in Glenmore Park

At the Ordinary Meeting on 27th September 2004, Council resolved that Ched Towns Reserve be endorsed, in principle, as the preferred location for the skate park in Glenmore Park on the basis of the site selection research undertaken by Council Officers of the Skate Park Development Team. Following the in principle endorsement of this site, Council resolved that consultations take place with all key stakeholders, interested parties and potential users.

A specialist skate park design development company, Convic, recognised by Skate Australia as technical experts, were engaged to assist with the design and consultation phase for the Skate Parks in Glenmore Park and St Clair.

A broad range of consultations were conducted with The Glenmore Park Shopping Centre Management; Ched Towns Reserve user groups (soccer and cricket clubs); The Glenmore Park Reference Group (local service provider network); Glenmore Park School Principals; local residents and representatives of the local high schools; Crime Prevention Officer, St Marys Police; Glenmore Park Youth Worker and young people at the Glenmore Park Youth Centre.

In addition 134 surveys were completed and returned and a public meeting held on the 9th December at the Glenmore Park Youth and Community Centre. The findings from this broad range of consultations was reported to Council at its meeting of the 18th April 2005. This report recommended, in part, that “Ched Towns Reserve be adopted as the preferred site for the Glenmore Park Skate Park”.

To ensure that the skate facility met the needs of young people, design consultations were held to provide a forum for discussion and feedback between young people, Council Officers and Convic. This feedback was included in the concept designs proposed by Convic.

Due to the level of interest expressed by some residents of Glenmore Park regarding the proposed site in Ched Towns Reserve, Council resolved at the meeting of the 18th April that “this matter be deferred for further consultation with the effected stakeholders and a further report be brought back to Council at the earliest opportunity”.

Consultation

The second round of consultations extended the opportunity for key stakeholders, interested parties and potential users to comment on the Skate Park project. Additional consultations involved:

- Glenmore Park Rugby League;
- A meeting with representatives from Bethany Catholic Primary School;
- Telephone discussions with local residents in the immediate vicinity as well as the wider Glenmore Park area;
- A further meeting with Police Officers from St Marys Local Area Command;
- Receipt of feedback forms that had been hand delivered to 500 households in the streets immediately surrounding Ched Towns Reserve and its local neighbourhood;
- A public meeting held on 24th May 2005 at Glenmore Park Youth and Community Centre. This was advertised extensively via:
 - A letter drop to 500 surrounding households

- Advertisements in the local newspapers (Penrith Press, Penrith Star, and the Western Weekender)
- The distribution of 300 “notice of meeting” posters distributed to community facilities, schools, Police Station, the local Service Station and the local Fast Food outlets, Council’s Customer Service Desk (Civic Centre), and Penrith Library

The public meeting was facilitated and recorded by independent facilitators and was attended by 120 people, including The Mayor, Councillor Jackie Greenow, and Councillors Pat Sheehy, Mark Davies, Karen McKeown, Garry Rumble, John Thain and Senior Council Officers.

Council’s Recreation & Cultural Facilities Coordinator and Youth Development Officer provided a presentation on the Skate Park Project for Glenmore Park including the rationale for the site selection. The specialist Skate Park Designer (Convic) outlined the Skate Park design developed for this site. Following the presentations there was an opportunity for attendees to provide comment and ask questions on aspects of the project.

The outcomes of the consultation process demonstrated that there are three positions that consultees generally hold. These positions are:

1. Seeking clarification about the siting, management and operation of the proposed development;
2. Objection to the development of a skate park in this location; or
3. Support for the development of a skate park in this location.

Written by Andrew Robinson – Recreational and Cultural Facilities Coordinator, ext 7688

Penrith Rural Lands Study

Background

In 1997 Penrith City Council adopted a Residential Strategy, which promoted a compact City and defined Penrith’s urban growth limits. With residential growth targets confirmed, it was timely for Council to review its planning policies and regulations as they related to Rural Lands. Council therefore decided in 1999 to carry out a Rural Lands Study with the assistance of a consultant.

In its consultants’ brief, Council emphasised the need for consultation with the stakeholders of Penrith’s rural lands. These included Council Officers, Government Agencies and the Community.

An issues paper was prepared in December 1999 as the basis for discussion at the *first round* of community consultation which was held in February and March 2000. Workshops were held with Government Agencies and Councils staff as well as 5 workshops with the community. The workshops were attended by more than 800 people and were held in the following locations: Londonderry, Penrith Civic Centre, Mulgoa, Luddenham and Orchard Hills.

The outcomes of the first round of workshops in conjunction with the issues outlined in the issues paper contributed to a series of rural strategies for the future. These were reported back to the community in the second round of community consultations. The *second round* of consultations were conducted in June 2000 and were attended by more than 660 people. Given the large

attendances at the first round of meetings, additional venues were found in the rural areas, and an additional meeting was held in Castlereagh as well as the other venues. The feedback gained from both rounds of consultations was reported back to Council contributed to the formulation of the final draft Study.

A final Rural Strategy was adopted by Council in September 2003.

Consultation Details

The consultative processes were quite exhaustive and involved the following:

- Two Information Gathering Workshops with government agencies at the beginning of the process.
- Issues Paper prepared for discussion with Council. This paper identified known issues relating to Penrith's rural lands.
- Information Flyer mailed to all residents and landowners.
- Two rounds of Community Workshops conducted at rural venues around the City. These were well attended, with over 1,400 people attending. The issues raised by residents were included for consideration in the final draft Study and Strategy.
- Three Councillor Information Workshops. These workshops informed Councillors of the feedback received from the Community Workshops as well as progress reporting on the formulation of the Study and Draft Strategy.
- Public Exhibition and Community Information Forums. This part of the consultative process is reported separately below.
- Three additional Councillor Outcomes Workshops. These workshops provided Councillors with the opportunity to discuss submissions received and consider the proposed land use designations and other recommended actions proposed in the draft Strategy, prior to the formal reporting of the draft Strategy to Council for its decision on those recommended actions.
- Additional meetings with particular resident groups and government agencies. The matters arising from these follow-up meetings have been included in the assessment of issues in this report.

The Study process to date has involved 5 mailouts to every rural resident and landowner, 11 community workshops, 9 community information forums and 6 Councillor Workshops.

Successes

The expectations of rural residents for subdivision potential for their rural properties was anticipated to be high and every effort was made to engage with residents to the full extent. Notwithstanding this, there was much heated debate and vitriol at many of the meetings. The high attendance and interest in community meetings exceeded our expectations and, while this has in itself been measured as a success, it really highlighted the efforts of many residents to use the planning exercise as a lobby tool for more subdivision and subsequent personal gain.

The wider issues we attempted to canvas (such as environmental protection, catchment management, maintenance of a viable rural economy and the more subjective themes of protection of rural landscapes as an aesthetic setting for the City) were often lost in the debate.

Some of the rural communities formed their own lobby groups and engaged their own experts to make submissions to Council. In other areas, the idea of planning was unfamiliar and there was a need to explain basic land use planning principles (one resident tried to explain to me that there was no zoning in her area which meant that they could do whatever they liked!).

Overall, the wider principles of the Strategy prevailed over the “noisy minority” calling for subdivision, and the strategy was adopted by Council in 2003. Follow up feedback revealed that there was some certainty about the future planning for the rural areas (where in the past there was ambiguity about the zonings, heightened by subdivision expectations).

Lessons Learned

- ✓ Go out to the community (don't expect them to come to you)
- ✓ Ensure that the venues are appropriate and provide the proper facilities
- ✓ Ensure that you budget for venue hire, consultant's time, catering, and factor in the possibility of extra meetings. Provide tea and coffee and food for all attendees (it's the little things like this that can make a difference and tea breaks can offer opportunities for informal, “off the record” discussion.
- ✓ Keep meetings focused on the locality (better control of groups with shared interests)
- ✓ Report back frequently and as soon as possible after meetings – don't let things slide.
- ✓ Never lose sight of the main objectives.
- ✓ Be prepared to go back to basic principles when presenting strategic planning concepts.
- ✓ Be prepared to record all issues, even if they are not related to the matters at hand, and offer to act on them. Councils are not very good at engaging communities at a localised level, so be prepared therefore to field questions that may be completely unrelated to the topic. In our project, this appeared to be the first time Council had shown its face in some areas, and planners were fielding questions on topics as varied as blocked drains, agricultural rebates and federal taxes.
- ✓ Thoroughly explore options for communicating with the community and be prepared to commit time and resources to communications. In Penrith's rural areas, there are no deliveries of the local papers, and it was decided to write to 5,000 properties. With follow up letters and flyers, over 25,000 letters were sent out in total.
- ✓ Keep good records of attendances.
- ✓ Report on results and adopted documents and make them available in libraries and on websites.

Written by Mark Broderick – Release Area Unit Coordinator, ext. 7700

FURTHER RESOURCES

Community Resources

Community Justice Centre

Assistance in resolving minor disputes, such as neighbourhood disputes, through mediation

9218 5955 (Sydney)/4732 1933 (Penrith)

Environmental Defender's Office

Legal advice on environmental or planning issues

9262 6989 or 1800 626 239

Independent Commission Against Corruption

Advice and guidelines on corruption and probity issues

8281 5999 or 1800 463 909

Law Access Hotline

Referrals to legal services and legal information

1300 888 529

NSW Ombudsman's Office

Deal with complaints regarding councils and state government agencies

9286 1000 or 1800 451 524

Relevant Council Documents

The following documents can be found on Council's website:

- Community Directory
 - Home ⇨ Community Directory
- Local Area Profile
 - Home ⇨ All About Your Communities ⇨ Community Profile
- Community Atlas
 - Home ⇨ All About Your Communities ⇨ Community Atlas
- Social Planning Framework
 - Home ⇨ Your Council ⇨ Community Development ⇨ Social Planning Framework

The following documents are also important Corporate documents with regards to Community Participation:

- Community Participation Policy
- Code of Meeting Practice – Public Access to Council
- Notification and Advertising – Development Control Plan
- Information Guide to Public Exhibition – Draft Management Plan
- Social Planning Framework

Web Resources

www.austlii.edu.au

The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) provides free internet access to Australasian legal materials. It publishes public legal information (that is, primary legal materials (legislation, treaties and decisions of courts and tribunals); and secondary legal materials created by public bodies for purposes of public access (law reform and royal commission reports for example) and a growing collection of law journals.

www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au

"This site is an interactive electronic clearing house for everyone involved in community level social, economic and environmental renewal including community leaders, community & government workers, volunteers, program managers, academics, policy makers, youth and seniors."

www.engagingcommunities2005.org

International conference on engaging communities website, including audio recordings, conference papers and peer reviewed papers

www.iap2.civicore.com/index.cfm

"Developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and Portland State University's Center for Public Participation, this interactive network is a resource for both academics and practitioners who are interested in sharing knowledge and research on public participation."

www.vlgaconsultation.org.au

Consultation and Engagement Resource Website for Victorian Local Government

Community Participation Manuals and Tools

ACT Community Engagement Manual

www.dhcs.act.gov.au/engagement/resources

Alice Springs Council - Consultation Manual

www.alicesprings.nt.gov.au

Derbyshire Rural Community Council – Guide to Community Consultation

www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/

Manchester City Council – Community Engagement Toolkit

www.manchester.gov.uk/bestvalue/engage/

Maroochy Shire Council – Public Participation Program: Policy, Strategy, Tools and work sheets

www.maroochy.qld.gov.au

Moreland Council – Consultation Framework

www.moreland.vic.gov.au/publications/consultationstrategy.htm

Onkaparinga City Community Consultation Guide and Handbook

www.onkaparingacity.com

Victorian Local Governance Association – Community Consultation Resource Guide

www.vlga.org.au/library/contents/issues/

Warringah Council – Community Consultation Framework

www.warringah.nsw.gov.au/community_consultation.htm

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria – Handbook for Organisations consulting Young People

www.yacvic.org.au/pages/policy/participation.htm

