camden council

DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Council acknowledges the Dharawal people as the traditional custodians of this land and pays our respect to their Elders both past and present.

COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Published 2022

Acknowledgements

Council acknowledges and extends appreciation to all contributors.

Availability

The Camden Communication and Community Engagement Strategy is available on Council's website: www.camden.nsw.gov.au

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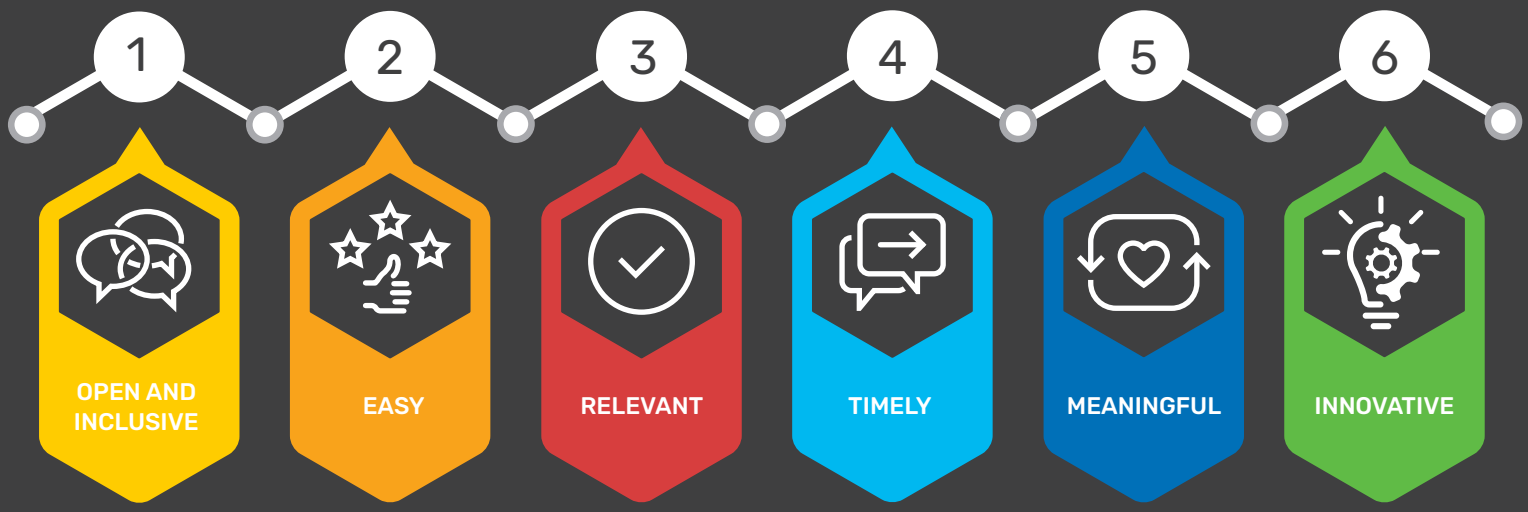
1. INTRODUCTION

Community engagement – shaping Council's decisions

A strong and positive relationship with the community is integral for Camden Council to make considered and effective decisions. Camden Council is committed to placing the community at the centre of Council's functions.

Council is strongly committed to inclusive, open and transparent communication and engagement. As part of this commitment, this Strategy outlines the pillars of communication and engagement that guide the way we share information and respond to community feedback.

Our six pillars of communication and engagement are:



These pillars are interwoven throughout this Strategy and are outlined in further detail in Section 5.

As significant ongoing growth continues in the Camden Local Government Area (LGA), it is a priority for Camden Council to maintain best practice in communication and community engagement to build relationships with our diverse community and to ensure consistent and positive messaging about the services and infrastructure Council delivers.

This Communications and Community Engagement Strategy, and its related policies and tools, provide an integrated framework for our communication and engagement activities. The Strategy will assist Council to ensure that communication is accurate, consistent and reflects the values expressed in Council's Community Strategic Plan, Connecting Camden 2036. The Strategy also serves to foster trust and respect from internal and external audiences and encourage innovative and creative communication.

Council strives to seek ways to continuously improve communications and to find the best ways to reach our community. We aim to keep our community informed on upcoming projects, issues and initiatives, while building on and developing relationships with residents to further improve two-way communication.

2. PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

Scope and objectives

This Strategy covers all external communication and engagement activities between Camden Council, its community and stakeholders. This includes instances where Council is sharing information, seeking feedback on a proposal and working with others.

Council recognises the importance of excellent communication, not only to keep the community informed and up to date, but to stay aware of community needs and aspirations to shape decision making. This Strategy provides a framework to ensure Council communicates effectively with the community and stays ahead of the trend when listening to and actioning feedback from the community and stakeholders in delivering quality services and infrastructure.

More detail on how we will measure the success of our communication and engagement activities can be found in Section 6 of this Strategy.

What shaped this Strategy

Council has a long history of engaging with the community on local and regional issues. This Strategy has been specifically designed to meet today's needs while being aware that the way people seek information is constantly changing and evolving.

To inform this Strategy, we have:

- Reached out through online and in-person distributed surveys;
- Conducted pop up information sessions at major hubs across Camden;
- Reviewed feedback received through the many engagement activities that Council runs during usual business activities;
- Conducted a workshop with staff; and
- Benchmarked against national models of best practice engagement.

What we've heard from you

You told us that communication and engagement should:

Be accessible: work to make communications and engagement channels more accessible.

Be inclusive: diversify practices to ensure everyone in our diverse community can access information and participate.

Be consistent: establish regular and constant communication and consultation channels that the community is aware of and has access to.

Be clear and easy to understand: provide information in plain English and clarity on when and how the community can voice their thoughts about projects and plans that may impact them.

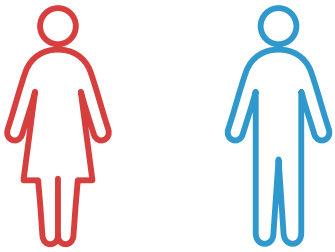
Our community told us that they prefer a good mix of both online and in-person options when it comes to communication and engagement.

3. OUR COMMUNITY

Audience and stakeholders

Our community is growing and changing. By 2036 our population will have more than doubled in size. Diversity will create a community with a greater range of views and aspirations, in different age groups and household types from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The statistics shown below are from the 2021 Census of Population and Housing undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They provide a snapshot of our community right now and remind us to utilise multiple and innovative methods of communication and engagement in order to make sure everyone has the opportunity to shape and feel a valued part of Camden's future.



51% Female

49% Male

Traditional custodians:

Dharawal people

3% of our population is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

31% Are 19 years or younger

22% Are 20-34 years old

28% Are 35-54 years old

9% Are 55-64 years old

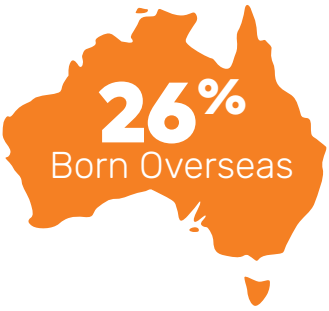
10% Are 65+ years old

5% Require assistance

ABS estimated resident population 2021

119,951

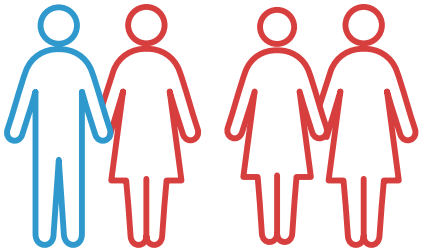
Median age **33 years**



Top 5 countries of birth

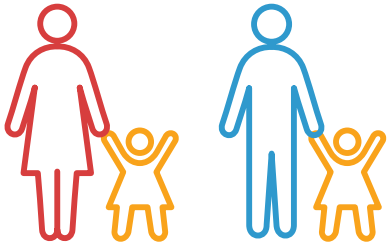
1. Australia
2. India
3. England
4. New Zealand
5. Philippines

Families



29%
Couples

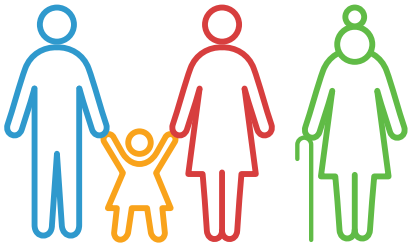
56%
Couples with children



14%
Single parent

Households

84%
Family



2%
Group homes and other

14%
One person

Languages

28%

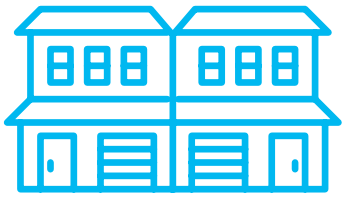
Speak a language other than English at home

Top 5 languages used at home other than English:

1. Arabic
2. Spanish
3. Hindi
4. Punjabi
5. Italian

Dwelling types

89%
Separate house



6%
Semi-detached, townhouse, etc

1%
Apartments and other dwellings

53%
owned with mortgage

25%
owned outright

20%
renting

Key stakeholders

Council communicates and interacts with many individuals, groups and organisations. This table provides a high-level overview of stakeholders that Council regularly engages with

- Residents
- Property owners
- Visitors
- Workers
- Students
- Community, sporting, cultural and environmental groups
- Business chambers and industry groups
- Incorporated bodies representing locals
- Energy and water services
- Community support agencies
- Contractors and suppliers
- Lessees of Council property
- NBN and communication services
- Businesses and Investors (existing/new/potential)
- CALD communities
- Future residents
- Young people
- Children and families
- Retirees/mature aged people
- LGBTQI+ community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- Not-for-profits and non-government organisations
- Voluntary groups
- Refugee community
- Schools, colleges, and universities
- Childcare services and centres
- Health and support services
- People requiring disability and wellbeing support
- Vulnerable people
- State and federal government agencies or services for planning, environment, health, emergency, transport, roads, recreation, infrastructure and social services
- Western Parkland City Authority
- Advisory Committees
- Reference Groups
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Local transport providers
- Neighbouring and other metropolitan councils
- Councillors
- Local Members of Parliament

Our towns and centres

Located in Sydney's south west, the Camden Local Government Area (LGA) covers approximately 200 square kilometres and is a place of regional significance.

Camden is one of the fastest growing LGAs in Australia, with a population of approximately 119,951 – over double the population size since the start of the century. By 2036 Camden is projected to have close to 250,000 residents.

Camden is transitioning from rural areas with clusters of towns and villages to thriving suburbs established alongside historic places.

With this projected growth, and Western Sydney International Airport on our door step, our LGA will be a cornerstone of the thriving south west region.

As our population increases and our towns and centres thrive and grow, it is more important than ever that Council understands the most effective way to communicate and hear from people across the whole local government area.

WHAT'S ON
COUNCIL INFORMATION
Biosecurity Act 2015
NSW
WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Macarthur
CAFÉ
YOUTH WEEK
CLINICS
Drawing Life
visitcam

4. OUR APPROACH

Camden Council will regularly communicate, seek input and involve the community and key stakeholders in decisions that directly impact them, establishing a reputation for connection, inclusion and participation.

We are committed to:

- Giving all members of our community a voice,
- Truly understanding community needs and priorities,
- Generating a greater sense of community through inclusive communication and opportunities to participate, and
- Providing regular, easy to understand communications.

We will do this by:

- Tailoring service on a case-by-case basis;
- Promoting accessibility and equal participation;
- Simplifying channels of contact;
- Using consistent messaging;
- Being creative in reaching difficult-to-reach community members; and
- Using simple, creative and innovative methods to communicate and engage with our community.

How we engage and communicate

The pillars of communication and engagement outlined in this Strategy will guide the way Council shares information with the community and receives feedback. Council will also be guided by practices advocated by the NSW Government and International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

We are keen to use creativity and innovation wherever possible to better communicate and engage with communities. Key tools for improvement will include a standardised process for engagement, better internal communication and ideation channels, and the relevant tools and equipment to support innovative engagement techniques. These include materials such as pop-up banners, technologies such as 3D modelling, and practical resources such as translation services to improve visibility, relevance and accessibility.

Community engagement is mainly utilised on major projects and when Council is planning on making a decision that may have a significant impact on stakeholders. Where appropriate, we will also engage on projects of a lesser impact using tools and techniques suited to the information being shared and feedback sought.

When we will engage

Council will seek feedback at various stages of project lifecycles in alignment with relevant legislation and best practice for providing sufficient time for the community to have their say on changes to service, activities or infrastructure in the Camden LGA.

In the engagement planning process, consideration is given to the complexity of the decision and the optimal time needed for people to respond. In many cases legislation sets out minimum requirements for receiving public feedback, however Council is committed to providing the community with sufficient time to for provide input.

Pillars of communication and engagement

Our six pillars guide all communication and engagement activities delivered by Council. The pillars are based on best practice principles and have been developed utilising feedback received from the community over time.

1 Open and Inclusive

Objective:

Carefully design, plan and execute our communications and engagement activities to remove barriers and minimise obtacles to increase participation.

We will:

- Simplify the methods/mediums in which the community can participate;
- Provide alternative means for people with additional needs to obtain information and provide feedback; and
- Reflect our diverse community by ensuring that communication material is accessible to the different languages and cultures represented in the Camden community.

2 Easy

Objective:

Our communications material will be easy to understand and we will provide varied opportunities for the community to have their say.

We will:

- Provide opportunities for the community to 'have a voice';
- Be active, accessible and present in our community;
- Minimise obstacles to enhance understanding and participation;
- Utilise a range of media sources to inform the community;
- Ensure our systems are current, concise and relevant to the needs of the community; and
- Ensure our information is provided in plain English with access to translation services.

3 Relevant

Objective:

Our communication will be candid, factual and relevant to our community. Consultations undertaken will be genuine and clearly identify the expected level of input or collaboration.

We will:

- Consult on relevant plans and proposals;
- Inform the community of how and when they can participate and ensure the community is engaged at the earliest possible opportunity;
- Notify submitters when decisions are made; and
- Respond to enquiries and provide reasons when decisions are made.

4 Timely

Objective:

Adapting to the needs of our growing community, we will deliver communication in a timely and consistent manner, and undertake consultation in a way that offers residents a reasonable amount of time to respond and engage.

We will:

- Deliver communications consistently on time and over an accessible time period;
- Establish regular and consistent communication channels; and
- Coordinate engagement sessions to ensure the community is not over consulted or unable to participate in multiple activities because of schedule conflicts.

5 Meaningful

Objective:

Our community feels we are appreciative of their time, and their contribution is valued and worthwhile.

We will:

- Ensure that each encounter with the community is sincere and worthwhile;
- Deliver on our legislative requirements for public participation;
- Provide communication material that has substance and is not riddled with buzz words and jargon;
- Ensure community feedback is gathered, appreciated, reviewed and when appropriate, actioned; and
- Increase visibility for major events, news and Council announcements.

6 Innovative

Objective:

Our communication and engagement practitioners will explore innovative practices to maximise promotion and inspire community interaction.

We will:

- Utilise best practise in the local government and private industry to ensure all residents are reached;
- Draw upon the latest developments in methodology and technology to design, plan and deliver community engagement practises; and
- Drive Council's use of innovation with the intention that everything is done with the community as the priority.

Decision making

Council receives feedback from its community in many ways. This includes formal submissions, anecdotal feedback to staff and Council representatives and through direct contact by the community with elected Councillors.

In most cases, people provide feedback to help inform Council's future decision making. However, there are often many perspectives for Council to consider as part of the decision-making process, and it can be complex. Council is committed to ensuring all feedback is considered in the decision-making process, but the nature of our democracy means that the decision reached may not be one that will suit all. It is important that we are respectful of other views and ideas as we have different experiences and insights to share. In any consultation we will encourage people to participate in a respectful manner towards each other and staff.

There may be times when the community will have limited opportunity to have a say, perhaps due to external factors or decisions made by other levels of government, but when this happens, Council will clearly explain why. Where appropriate, Council will advocate for the community on decisions that are made outside of its control and share your input and feedback with the relevant government bodies and agencies.

Planning for Engagement

Council will follow these steps when planning engagement activities:

1. **Define the project** – clearly define the project purpose, scope and objectives. This may be based on a Council resolution or an internal or external brief. We will consider the context, any risks and identify the project negotiables and non-negotiables. We will clearly identify the level of participation being sought from the community and stakeholders.

2. **Identify key stakeholders** – consider individuals, groups and organisations who may be affected by the proposal or decision on the issue. We will prepare a stakeholder analysis including contact details and confirm how interactions will be recorded.

3. **Plan engagement approach** – develop a plan of engagement that covers how information will be shared and feedback sought. The plan will outline engagement methods, timing and be tailored for the stakeholders we are targeting.

4. **Seek feedback on engagement approach** – depending on the project and statutory requirements, the approach may require review by subject matter experts and approval to proceed by Council executive.

5. **Implement the plan** – deploy engagement activities as detailed in the engagement approach. Listen to feedback received during the engagement activities. Adapt and be flexible with engagement approach where appropriate. Develop relationships and record interactions or outcomes.

6. **Consider response** – collate, analyse and identify how engagement outcomes will be utilised in decision making. Results may be presented to Council for consideration.

7. **Close the loop** – provide feedback, and clearly articulate to participants how their input has been or will be considered in decision making.

8. **Review and report** – evaluate the success of the engagement activities, feedback received and value created for the decision making process. Consider the degree of stakeholder interaction and achievement of objectives.

Social Justice

The interrelated principles of **social justice** – equity, access, participation and rights – guide our consultation and communication practices to ensure participation in planning and decision making.

Social justice ensures that we broaden and tailor our approaches to ensure we offer a myriad of ways for people to participate, especially seeking input from marginalised and disadvantaged groups, youth, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, all abilities and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Emergency and Crisis Communications

The Camden area has been touched by bushfires, floods, extreme weather and pandemic restrictions over the past few years. Most recently, the community has seen significant challenges relating to rain and flooding events, where homes, businesses and Council facilities sustained damaged and evacuation orders were issued.

Our emergency communications are focused on keeping our community safe and informed during any crisis. In crisis situations, Council will act as a bridge between the emergency services and the public. The responding emergency service is always the lead authority to ensure the correct messages are reaching our community and our residents can take the appropriate courses of action.

The first phase of our emergency and crisis communications is reaction – informing the public what's happened and keeping them informed as the situation unfolds. Using our recent flooding event as an example, this would include letting our community know when roads are closed and when evacuation orders are issued. In this phase, Council is committed to passing on reliable information from the responding service in a timely manner.

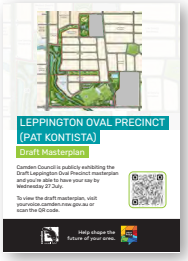
The second phase is recovery. As the emergency passes or subsides, our communications will let residents know how Council will repair the damage done; where residents can go for help; and what they can expect in the coming days.

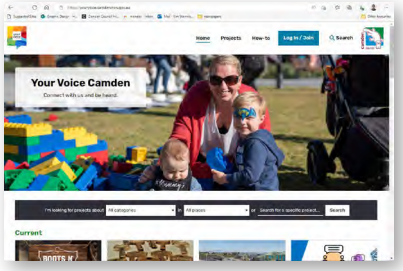
The third phase focuses on rebuilding. Our communications here will tell residents Council's long-term plans to fix any serious damage done during the crisis and when residents can look forward to the area being as normal again.

Communication and engagement methods

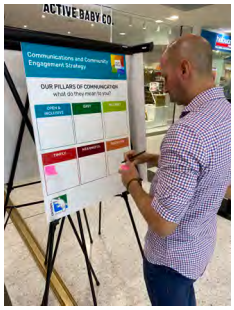
Council tailors the way it shares information and invites participation depending on the topic or issue. The following tables identify current methods.

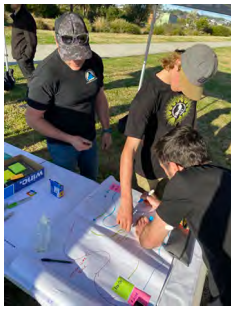
SHARING INFORMATION - METHODS				
Let's Connect (quarterly newsletter)	Corporate website	Other websites – libraries	Media releases and alerts	Letters
Mayoral communications (radio, print, social media, other media)	Email newsletters	Text messaging to phones	Social media – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn	Phone calls
Letterbox drops	Email	Flyers	Brochures	Signage
Advertising	Rates notices	Posters	Noticeboard displays	Welcome packs for new community members
Briefings and presentations	Information sessions	Special events	Displays and exhibitions	Videos and concept designs

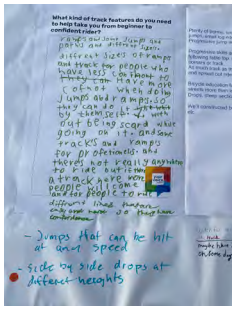




SEEKING INPUT - METHODS				
Digital engagement – Your Voice Camden	Creative and interesting engagement	Pop-up engagement	Interactive digital displays	Place-based engagement and interactive engagement stations
Focus groups	Graphic facilitation	Interviews and one-to-one meetings	Surveys and polls - online, intercept and phone	Storytelling and submissions
Mapping and drawing	Listening posts and drop-in events	Field trips and site tours	Brainstorming idea generation	Moderated online forums
Committees and working groups	Workshops and forums	Appreciative Inquiry	Dotmocracy and World Cafe	Community group meeting attendance







5. MEASURING SUCCESS

Council will monitor, review and report on how our work is complying with the Pillars of this Strategy. Our existing Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, as required by the Local Government Act 1993, will be used for this purpose.

The next review of the Communication and Community Engagement Strategy will commence in 2024 and every four years thereafter to align with local government elections and IP&R requirements.

Regular reviews will ensure that the Strategy aligns to the latest trends and information available about the community's communication needs and engagement preferences.

Meeting statutory requirements

The way Council communicates and engages with the community is guided by legislation and other statutory requirements.

This Strategy is a demonstration of Council's compliance with legislation and statutory requirements, with an aspiration of going beyond minimum requirements by seeking to always deliver best practice communication and engagement to our community.

Council's community and engagement activities span across the majority of services it delivers. As such, the effective integration of these activities across Council's service areas is essential for consistent and effective communication, and to meet all statutory requirements.

Key legislation that informs this Strategy includes:

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *NSW Information Commissioner's Charter for Public Participation 2018*
- *Crown Land Management Act 2016*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*

Relevant Council plans and policies related to this Strategy:

- Community Strategic Plan
- Community Engagement Policy
- Local Strategic Planning Statement
- Community Participation Plan
- Economic Development Strategy
- Cultural Activation Strategy
- Youth Strategy
- Children and Families Strategy
- Disability Inclusion and Accessibility Plan

Community Strategic Plan

All Councils in NSW are required to review their Community Strategic Plan (CSP) following a local government election.

Our CSP details the community's priorities and how Council will achieve these over a ten year period, often in partnership with other government agencies and key stakeholders.

Our approach to reviewing and updating the CSP will include the collection of information about the community's priorities to check whether the approach is still relevant. This is likely to involve surveys, workshops and online forums which invite collaboration with a broad sample of the community and stakeholders we work with.

Community Participation Plan

Camden Council's Community Participation Plan was endorsed on 14 September 2021.

Community Participation Plans (CPP) are a requirement and complement Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The CPP is designed to make community participation in planning matters easier and clearer for the community within the Camden Local Government Area (LGA). The Plan aims to identify how and when Council will inform, engage and consult with the community on a variety of planning functions.

The CPP only applies to the Strategic Planning and Development Assessment functions of Council and excludes State Significant Development which is managed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The notification and advertising requirements stipulated in Section 1.2 of the Camden Development Control Plan 2019 (Camden DCP 2019) have been replaced by Part 3 of the CPP – Community Participation in Development Assessment. And in accordance with clause 21 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000*, Section 1.2 of the Camden DCP 2019 no longer applied from 25 October 2021.

GOALS AND ACTIONS

To ensure the aspirations of this Strategy are implemented Council will focus on three goals and associated actions within the current term of Council which concludes in September 2024.

Goals

1 The community and key stakeholders are engaged in two-way conversations with Council and are involved in key decision making.

2 Practices innovate and flex to communicate and engage with our growing, emerging and changing community.

3 Staff have a framework which supports them to deliver communications and community engagement services.

Actions 2023 - 2024

1. Implement a marketing campaign to build awareness and exposure of Council's key communication channels.
2. Build membership of Council's online consultation hub.
3. Develop and update Toolkit for staff to assist with understanding of Council's framework, processes, templates, advice, links.
4. Develop a staff training program to enable effective, contemporary and innovative communication and engagement practices.
5. Expand our promotional and marketing programs to include emerging media and trends to stay current.
6. Undertake research to assist Council with monitoring demographic change, reviewing performance, improving practice, forward planning and major decisions.
7. Review corporate branding, publications, website and signage to increase accessibility and brand exposure.
8. Investigate options and methods for our various communications and engagement activities to connect and involve our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
9. Investigate the option of mobile and community pop-up engagement opportunities.
10. Develop strategies to further strengthen relationships with local organisations, stakeholder groups and community members to increase interaction.

LET'S CHAT

We welcome your feedback on our approach to communication and consultation. You can contact us via engagement@camden.nsw.gov.au or call (02) 4654 7777.

Your thoughts are also welcome on projects and proposals hosted on our online consultation platform located at www.yourvoice.camden.nsw.gov.au

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