



Communication & Engagement Strategy

2025



DRAFT for Consultation

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Acknowledgement of Country

Sorell Council would like to pay our respects to the traditional and original owners of this land the Mumirimina people, to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are custodians of this land.

Sorell Council is committed to forging stronger relationships and a deeper respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Australians, by acknowledging and respecting the diversity and history of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait community.

Introduction To The Strategy

This Communication and Engagement Strategy 2025 (C&E Strategy) has been prepared to support Sorell Council's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2029 (Strategic Plan) and its commitment to open, transparent and proactive relationships between Council and the Community.

The C&E Strategy supports Council's vision of 'a proud, thriving and inclusive South East Community', and aligns to the Strategic Plan's objective four - to build 'Community Confidence in Council'.

The overarching strategic aim is to undertake engagement and communication initiatives and activities that are valued by community and promote trust in Council to deliver better community outcomes.

Making Community Engagement Count

Our review of the 2020 Communication and Engagement Strategy included an invitation to our community to share their ideas on how we can reach them at the right time and in the right way.

During this process we undertook a online survey and pop-up chats in Dodges Ferry, Midway Point, and Dunalley.



What we heard:

- The majority of respondents were over 50 years of age and from the urban areas of the municipality
- Their main areas of interest are:
 - Council's advocacy efforts to improve services and support (ie doctors, transport)
 - Ways Council is protecting and caring for the environment
 - Waste Management
 - Council's capital projects and progress
- Facebook is the main way respondents hear about Council updates, events and news
- Newspapers and newsletters also remain an important way of communication
- Respondents supported Council pops ups at local events
- High interest in Council installing community noticeboards and suggestion boxes
- It was noted there is a need for specific community engagement with our youth

Our *Considerations*

Sorell Municipality has the strongest forecasted population growth rate in Tasmania. It is expected to increase by 32% to over 24,000 by 2053.

This strong growth puts smaller-medium sized Councils like ours, with a limited rate base, under a great deal of pressure.

A key focus for Council is ensuring there is a balance between sustainable fiscal accountability and responsibility to deliver core services (e.g. the financial and human resources required for asset management and maintenance and delivery of major infrastructure projects), with meeting the increased community expectations of Council delivered services.

There is a low level of affordable housing for sale or for rent and a low level of public housing available.

Development and redevelopment in Dodges Ferry has resulted in a significant shift in the demographics of this area increasing the median weekly income, the use of existing resources and infrastructure with many travelling into Hobart for work. This has widened the gap between the lower and higher socio economic levels and increased the need for public transport.

Most of the population lives in urban or semi-urban areas near the centre of the municipality.

There is little provision for youth in the Municipality.



Our Community *Snapshot*

Sorell is the heart of the south east and home to a population of nearly 17,000. It is anticipated our Municipality will continue to exceed state growth averages as it is attracting people with its affordable housing and the convenience of major shops and services all within close proximity to Hobart.

The Municipality covers some 583 square kilometres of rolling countryside, low forested hills and the long coastline of the spectacular Southern Beaches.

Our settlement pattern is primarily characterised by:

- Fully-serviced urban centres of Midway Point and Sorell.
- Semi-serviced (no reticulated water or sewer) transitional urban centres (e.g. Lewisham, Dodges Ferry, Primrose Sands, Forcett and Dunalley) which comprise a mix of residential, rural residential townships and also a proportion of properties that are used as shacks/weekenders.
- Rural and high-value agricultural land, supported by the South East Irrigation Scheme with strong growth opportunities in primary production industries.

Our Community

Estimated
population

17,919*



42** Median
resident
age

4.8%**

identify as Aboriginal
or Torres Strait Islander

10,110

total properties



2,138**

Residents are
registered volunteers



2,544**

Families



3,157

Registered
dogs



\$1,369**

Median weekly
household income

Language other
than English
spoken at home

3.8%**



10.2%

Residents born overseas

* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0)

** 2021 Census

Our Infrastructure



345 km
of road network
111km is urban, and 234km is rural

87
Bridges



Stormwater pits
2,523
95km of Stormwater pipes

Community
Buildings & Facilities

35



107 km
of Pathways



14 Community Parks
and recreation
reserves



Our Local Economy



1,075*
Local Businesses
supporting 4,221
local jobs

Retail#
Largest industry
(by employment)
generating 5449 local jobs.

14.8%
of our community
are employed in
retail trade

Gross Regional Product (GRP)[#]
Estimate of each region's unique
contribution to the national economy.

\$0.65 billion



4,691
52.6%



of the workforce leave
the community for
work

11.8%
of our community
are employed in
health care and
social assistance

10.6%
of our community
are employed in
construction

Our Environment



1 Ramsar
Wetland

3,334 ha

Site of International Importance
Pitt Water-Orielfton Lagoon

Council formal and
other reserves

1698 ha

Includes 7 formal
Council reserves



Fauna Species

1242⁺



More than 1242 Fauna - 39 Species
under EPBC 1999, 38 species under
TSPA 1995

Flora Species

1363⁺



More than 1363 Flora - 8 Species under
EPBC Act 1999, 51 species under TSPA
Act 1995

179 km (total)
Shoreline



Threatened Vegetation
Communities **6,222**
10 under NCA 2002 (ha total)

* Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Regional Population Growth, Australia (3218.0)

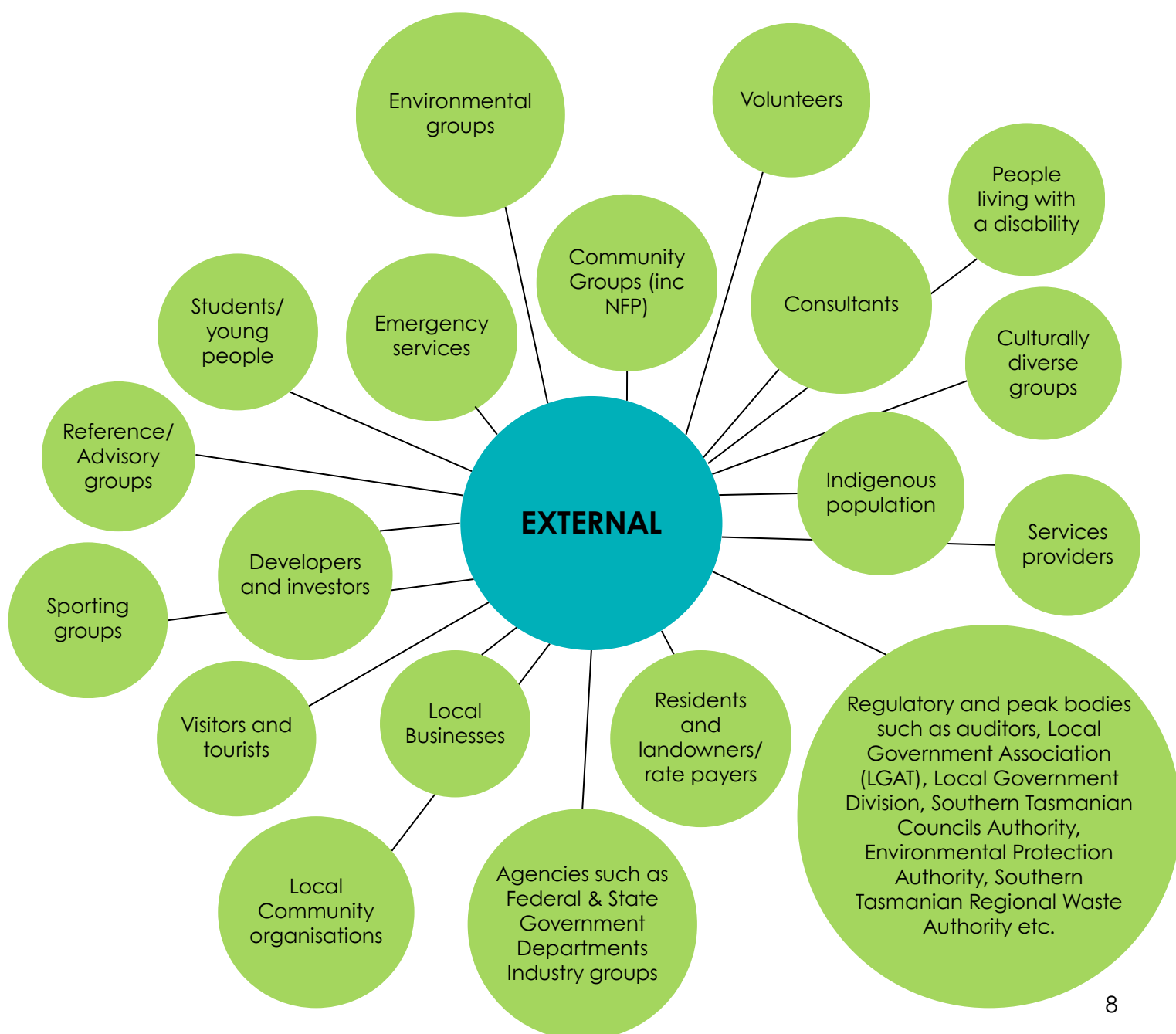
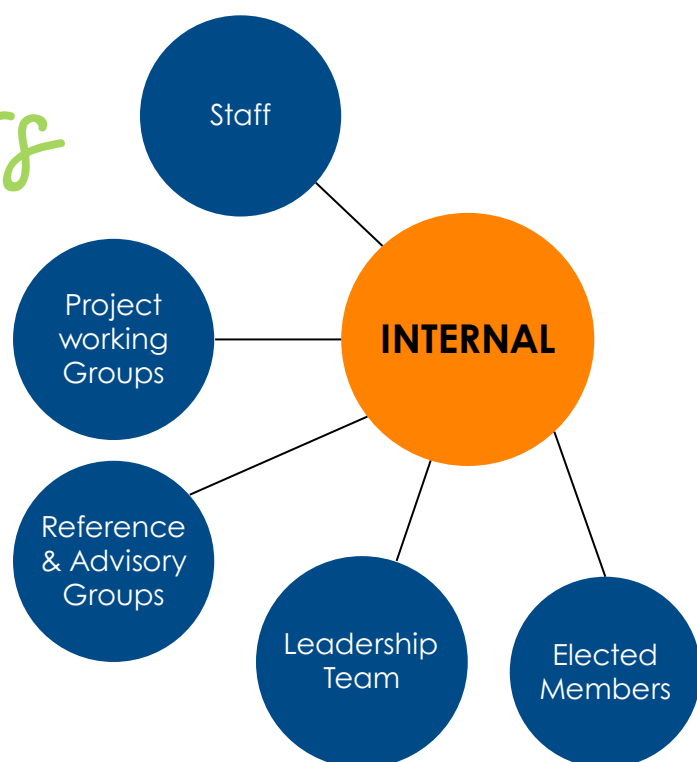
* * 2021 Census

National Institute of Economic and Industry Research 2023

Our Stakeholders

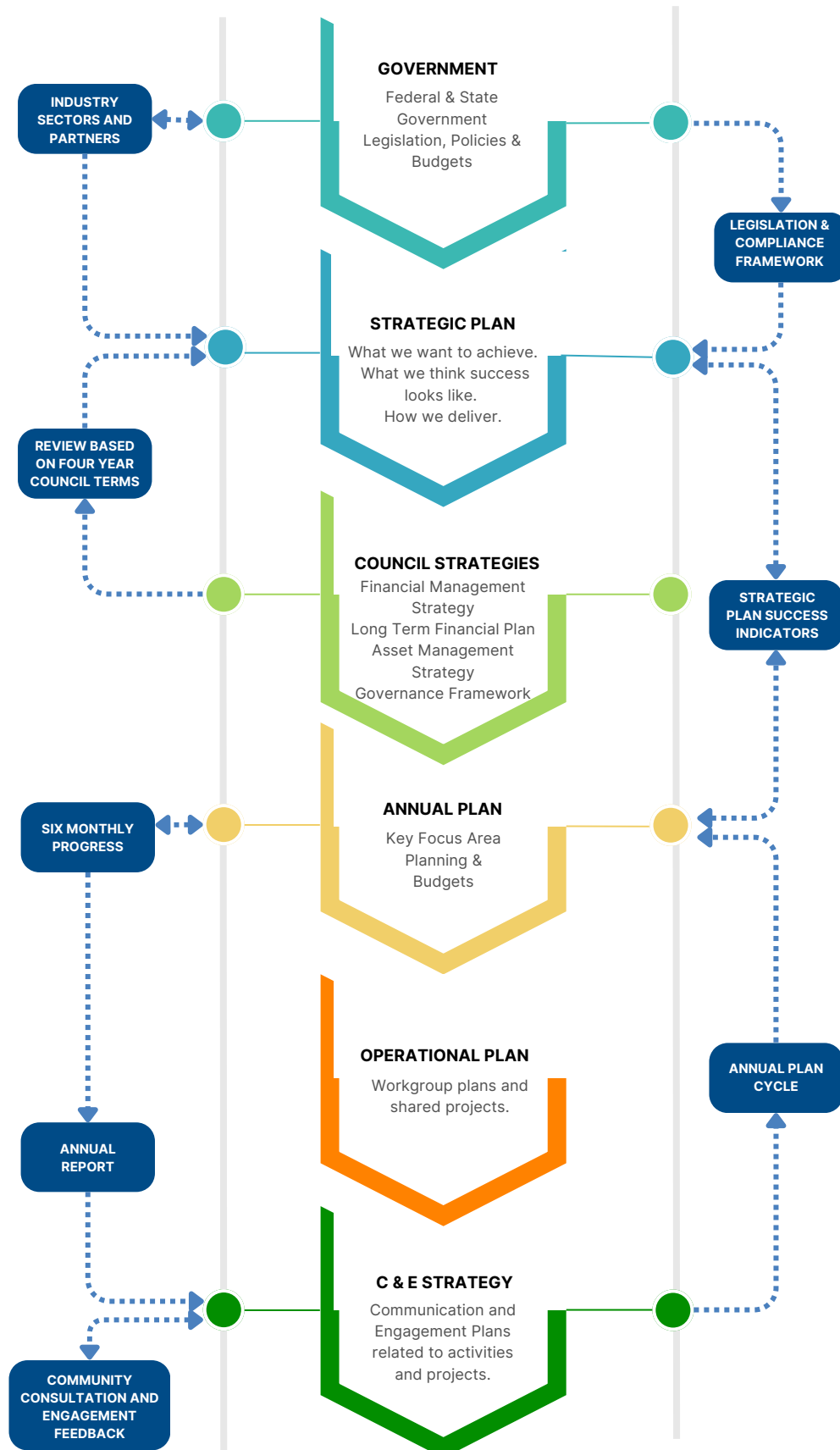
Stakeholders represent the many types of community that exist in our Municipality. Identifying and characterising Sorell's diverse community will ensure engagement activities are undertaken to maximise collaboration and increase opportunities to hear from a wide range of different people in our community.

Key internal and external stakeholders include, but are not limited to:



Strategic Alignment

As well as Council's obligation to Legislative requirements, we continue to develop, review and implement an extensive number of plans, strategies and policies that interrelate with, and may influence the C&E Strategy.



What Is *Good* Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a process of working with groups of people to involve them in issues and decisions that affect them to achieve better long-term outcomes. It is based on the recognition of the right for people to be informed and involved in things that affect them and respecting the value of this participation to creating good outcomes that are of mutual benefit to all parties. We all have a role to play in this process.

Our C&E Strategy supports the placemaking philosophy of observing,

listening to, and asking questions of the people who live, work, and play in our community so we can understand their needs and aspirations.

Our engagement activities are guided by the IAP2 Federation's Public Participation Spectrum which helps define the public's role in any public participation process.

The IAP2 Spectrum is an internationally recognised standard for engagement. Engagement takes place on a number of different levels:



INCREASING LEVEL OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Community engagement objective	<p>Provide balanced & objective information.</p> <p>Assist awareness & education and give meaning to the 'Why' (e.g. address an issue, close a policy gap).</p>	<p>Obtain feedback from the community on policy, projects and strategies.</p>	<p>Work directly with community throughout the process.</p> <p>Ensure community concerns & aspirations are consistently understood & considered.</p>	<p>Partner with community – seek innovation and be open to inclusion in planning & decision making.</p>	<p>For the community to see their contribution come to life.</p> <p>Placing decision-making in the hands of the community.</p>
Promise to Community	<p>To keep the community informed on what Council sets as strategic objectives to achieve its vision.</p>	<p>To keep the community informed.</p> <p>Listen & acknowledge suggestions & concerns.</p> <p>Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.</p>	<p>To keep the community informed.</p> <p>Listen & acknowledge suggestions & concerns.</p> <p>Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.</p>		
Examples	<p>Fact Sheets</p> <p>Website</p>	<p>Community Forums,</p> <p>Focus Groups</p> <p>Surveys</p>	<p>Workshops</p>	<p>Advisory Committees</p>	<p>Elector Polls (eg. LGA Election)</p>

Principles That Guide Our Communication and Engagement

The C&E Strategy utilises the following guiding principles as its approach to effective communication and engagement, which is consistent with the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights as prescribed by the *Local Government Act 1993*.

GENUINE

We seek input and feedback, listen actively, report back what we've heard, respond respectfully and thoughtfully and make clear how community feedback has influenced decision making (or not) and why.

FLEXIBLE

Allow opportunities for community input to influence actions and decisions through different methods of consultation. Adapt approach to match the local context, based on local input.

INCLUSIVE

Reach different people or segments of the community (identifying different needs exist), use a mix of methods (and re-evaluate continuously) and support people to participate where required.

TRUSTWORTHY

Build, maintain and value local relationships. Deliver what we say we will to build trust and credibility.

TIMELY

Sharing information in a timely way, ensuring information is simple and easy to understand to encourage proactive and transparent engagement.

EMPOWERING

Enable residents and stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.

COLLABORATIVE

Broaden collaboration and create increased opportunities to actively engage and partner with community groups/associations. Be open to engage with people's ideas, feedback and suggestions to innovative solutions together.



When We *Can* Engage



- Regarding projects or issues of significant community interest.
- When a Council decision could have significant impact on the community or a stakeholder group.
- When there is an opportunity to involve the community in decisions relation the nature, scope, design or delivery of a project or initiative.
- When an outcome involves a change in services or infrastructure provided by Council.
- When Council has a statutory, legislative or regulatory requirement that needs community input.

We acknowledge that Council plays a significant role in persuading decision-makers and leaders in State and Federal Government to act in the best interests of our community. Responding to community needs and emerging issues to meet our community's priorities will remain an evolving responsibility, requiring ongoing dialogue, advocacy, and adaptability to ensure meaningful outcomes.

When We *Can't* Engage



- When an immediate response is required, such as in an emergency situation. For example evacuating certain areas and facilities. This will be handled under Council's Emergency Management Plan protocols.
- When a decision must be made because of legal or safety requirements and Council to act immediately. For example, advise that a beach is not suitable for swimming because of contamination. Should this occur, Council will make best endeavours to communicate in a timely manner.
- When the activity is considered "business as usual" and there is no new information to consider. For example road maintenance.
- When community input would not influence a decision. For example, when there is already legislation in place that will determine the outcome.
- When timeframes and direction from other levels of government do not allow for meaningful engagement.

Our Communication And Engagement *Channels*

Our community expects open, transparent communication that informs them of Council services and activities. They also expect to be notified of issues that may impact their way of life, standard of living and on services provided.

We communicate and engage with the community using a variety of different mediums including print, social media, digital, face to face and mail. Our communication and engagement activities and methods (excluding phone calls, emails, meetings and face-to-face communication that occurs on a day-to-day basis) are tailored to give the best reach to community.

Our community can expect to hear from us via the following channels:

Community News Newsletter



Social Media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram)



Surveys/Polls



Sorell Times



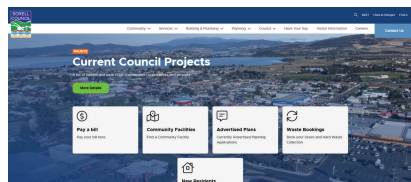
The Mercury



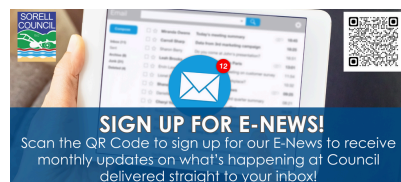
Direct mail



Website



E-news



Outdoor banners/Street banners



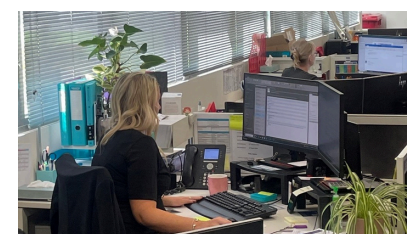
Consultation/event pop ups



Workshops and Community Q&A's



Customer Service email/phone/face-to-face



Council and Sorell Planning Authority Meetings



Special Committees/Reference Advisory Groups



Community Noticeboards



Our Engagement *Matrix*

It is important for our community to know what to expect from us, including the processes and steps taken for how and when we engage with our community about plans and strategies, as well as other work we do.

We will be guided by an Engagement Matrix which is based on making an assessment on the level of impact (e.g. an action or change that affects community) and determining the methods of engagement to apply and the associated timelines. Depending on the project or activity, we also recognise the need to be flexible and responsive to community needs that may require varying the engagement approach accordingly.

This Engagement Matrix is a tool for Council's project managers to complete (in collaboration with the Communication and Engagement Officers), to guide what engagement methods will be the most effective based on the level of impact assessed. As any project or activity may be subject to change due to circumstances outside our control, we are committed to being flexible and adaptive in response which may result in the engagement approach varying.

<p>Level 1: High impact LGA High level of real or perceived impact across our LGA</p>	<p>Suggested timeframe: Recommended lead time, including planning, is between 3-6 months. Essential for engagement to commence before decision is made or plans finalised and facilitation of community led if achievable</p>
<p>Criteria (one or more of the following examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any significant impact on attributes that are considered to be of high value to the whole of our LGA such as the natural environment or heritage Any impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of our LGA community Potential high degree of controversy or conflict Strategy or Plans e.g. Social, Transport, Blue Lagoon Management Plan Removal or change to facilities or services in our LGA e.g. skate park, sports centre Key changes to LGA-wide service e.g. waste services 	<p>Engagement method examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correspondence (email/letter/SMS) Notice in newspaper Media release (incl. advertising) Community forum / focus groups Meeting with key users or stakeholder groups (may include one-on-ones) Website update (include FAQs, project details and timeline, progress updates/photographs) Social media Briefing to Councillors Signage and/or posters Potential Advisory Committee requirement Notice in other available communication channels e.g. e-newsletter
<p>CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE EMPOWER</p>	

<p>Level 2: High Local</p> <p>High level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group of a specific facility or service</p>	<p>Suggested timeframe:</p> <p>6 weeks to 3 months. Notification must be given to affected persons prior to any action, with an opportunity to provide comment or ask questions, and to receive a response.</p>
<p>Criteria (one or more of the following examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loss of or significant change to any facility or service to a local community • Potential high degree of controversy or conflict at the local level • Change to or loss of valued activity or program e.g. local youth activity • Re-development of a playground/sportsground • Removal of a tree from a public space or neighbourhood • Road closure (could be a Level 4 impact depending upon circumstance and history) 	<p>Engagement method examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence (email/letter/SMS) • Notice in newspaper • Letterbox drop to affected residents • Advice to local user groups • Media Release • Councillor involvement • Signage and/or posters (if applicable) • Individual meetings offered to affected persons • Community Forum • Social media
<p>CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE</p>	
<p>Level 3: Low LGA</p> <p>Lower, although still some real or perceived impact or risk across our LGA</p>	<p>Suggested timeframe:</p> <p>2-6 weeks. It is preferable that affected communities are informed of the decision to engage with an appropriate lead time, to enable any input and assessment of concerns to be addressed prior to implementation.</p>
<p>Criteria (one or more of the following examples)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for some controversy or conflict • Changes to our LGA wide service e.g. temporary or permanent variation to opening hours of a customer service centre • Changes to customer service processes e.g. payment of rates, waste collection timetable 	<p>Engagement method examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper advert • Potential media release • Notification to Councillors • Signage / Posters • Update website • Social media
<p>INFORM CONSULT</p>	

Level 4: Low Local

Lower level of real or perceived impact or risk on a local area, small community or user group of a specific facility or service

Suggested timeframe:

1-4 weeks

Criteria (one or more of the following examples)

- A small change or improvement to a facility or service at the local level
- Low or no risk of controversy or conflict at the local level
- Upgrade of a local playground e.g. installation of new equipment
- Local streetscape upgrade e.g. additional tree planting
- Changes to an activity such as school holiday activities
- Local streetroad closure

Engagement method examples

- Website update
- Social media
- Signage / Poster
- Advice to customers during interactions with Council staff

INFORM

What We Will *Do*

We are committed to driving meaningful outcomes by taking the following actions:

- ✓ Increasing engagement with our young people.
- ✓ Providing ongoing opportunities for seniors to share their valuable insights through the Seniors Advisory Group.
- ✓ Exploring and adopting innovative engagement platforms and activities.
- ✓ Ensuring inclusivity by engaging a diverse range of residents and stakeholders to hear all voices.
- ✓ Building connections with key municipal industries and local businesses.
- ✓ Reporting engagement outcomes, highlighting how community feedback shaped projects, plans, and activities.
- ✓ Continuously review and enhance our communication and engagement practices to meet evolving community needs.
- ✓ Developing advisory/reference groups as required to ensure inclusive representation.
- ✓ Actively connecting with our outlying communities to ensure their voices are heard.
- ✓ Promoting and advocating for Government Agencies and Non-Government Organisations to provide essential and required services to our community.
- ✓ Establishing and upholding clear expectations for engagement between Council and community.

Measuring Our *Performance*

To ensure our communication and engagement efforts are effective, we will monitor and evaluate our performance using both quantitative and qualitative methods wherever possible. This approach will help us build a strong evidence base to understand what's working, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate accountability to our stakeholders.



Visibility and Reach

We will track the visibility of our engagement efforts by documenting all opportunities provided for the community to see or hear about our initiatives. This includes posters, social media campaigns, advertisements, banners, and other promotional materials. To enhance accuracy in tracking, we will continue using specific QR codes and unique URLs as appropriate, allowing us to measure where engagement is being generated and which channels are most effective.



Project Reflection

At the conclusion of each project, we will conduct a structured reflection session in collaboration with the project team. This will allow us to assess what worked well, identify challenges, and develop recommendations for enhancing future engagement activities.



Registrations

We will monitor the number of community members registering for workshops, events, and other activities as a direct indicator of engagement levels and interest.



Activity Metrics

We will record participation levels in various activities, such as the number of surveys completed, the volume of pins and comments placed on interactive maps, and other relevant engagement actions.



Feedback and Surveys

Regular feedback will be sought from participants through surveys, polls, and open-ended questions. This will help us gather valuable insights into community preferences, satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement.

Reporting Our Progress

To maintain transparency and ensure accountability, we will implement a structured approach to reporting on our communication and engagement efforts:

Annual Plan

Each year, actions will be developed as part of the Annual Plan to deliver outcomes aligned with our priority objectives. These actions will provide a clear roadmap for how we aim to achieve our engagement goals over the year.



Monthly Workgroup Agenda Report

Communication and engagement activities are included as a standing item in the Monthly Community Relations Workgroup Agenda Report. This allows regular monitoring of activities, provide opportunities to address emerging issues, and ensure that engagement efforts remain on track throughout the year.



Operational Plan

Individual activities will be detailed in the annual Operational Plan, with specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) assigned to relevant staff. This ensures that responsibilities are clear and that engagement efforts are embedded across our operations.



Sorell Council OPERATIONAL PLAN 2025-2026

What are we doing...	Who do we need to involve	How will we do it...	Timing/Budget/Resources	Monthly Updates
<i>What is the Activity / Project Why are doing it... Ref Strategy/plan it relates to.</i>	<i>Who are your internal & external stakeholders, when and how will you involve them</i>	<i>Detail here the key stages and performance measures.</i>	<i>When will you do it Have you budgeted for it, what resources you require?</i>	<i>Monthly Updates to be detailed here.</i>

Annual Communication & Engagement Report

We will produce an annual Communication and Engagement Report to provide a comprehensive overview of our progress. Whilst the format is will be flexible to allow for changing requirements, this report could highlight things such as achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and areas for future focus. The aim of this report is to ensure that both internal and external stakeholders are informed of our ongoing efforts and outcomes.

Through these mechanisms, we will ensure regular reflection, accountability, and continuous improvement in delivering meaningful engagement with our community.

Opportunity For *Review*

The C&E Strategy will be reviewed annually and formally assessed five years after it is adopted by Council, or within twelve months of a new Council being elected.

This will ensure that current issues, community feedback and any new and emerging communication and engagement trends and methods can be appropriately captured and reflected in the C&E Strategy.

It is recommended that the major initiatives and outcomes linked to the C&E Strategy are built into the performance reviews and KPI's of key Council staff as appropriate.

Feedback From You

We encourage you to contact us directly to provide your feedback on the Strategy. Contact us via the following methods:

Email	sorell.council@sorell.tas.gov.au
Website	www.sorell.tas.gov.au
Phone	6269 0000 (weekdays from 8.00am to 4.30pm, excluding public holidays)
Mail	Sorell Council PO Box 126 SORELL TAS 7172

