



Community Engagement and Participation Plan



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Community Engagement and Participation Plan

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Community Engagement and Participation Plan

Introduction

This Community Engagement and Participation Plan has been written to provide Council staff with guidance when undertaking community engagement activities. It also serves to outline what the community can expect from Council in regards to community engagement.

The Plan has been developed with two purposes in mind. First, to outline the community engagement and public exhibition practices that Council will undertake for projects, policies, concept designs, infrastructure, budgets and more. Second, it outlines how and when Council will undertake community participation when exercising relevant planning functions.

This Community Engagement Plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of a Community Participation Plan (CPP) under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). Information about community participation in Council's planning functions can be found in Section 2.

Section 1 – Community Engagement

Part 1. Background

1.1 Council's Engagement Framework

The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy Framework, the Community Engagement and Participation Plan and the Community Engagement Toolkit provide the basis for Council to undertake community engagement on a day-to-day basis.

Stakeholder and community engagement documents and purpose



The community participates in Council decision making through planned community engagement processes and activities. QPRC engages community members in several ways, to:

- determine strategic plans, budgets assets maintenance and service levels
- identify community issues, needs and priorities
- plan, change or evaluate infrastructure programs, facilities or services under its five Strategic Pillars; community, choice, character, connections and capability
- meet legislative obligations under various Acts and Regulations
- obtain input to other matters where there may be impacts, either perceived or real, on stakeholders and communities principles and commitments.

A Community Engagement Toolkit has been developed to provide practical advice for staff and consultants in order to undertake community engagement. It explains the engagement methods that Council uses and provides advice on when these would be used. Both the plan and toolkit are regularly updated to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community.

It should be recognised that there is a difference between community engagement and community consultation, the definitions of each are as follows:

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Community engagement – the process whereby Council and the community engage in a two-way conversation. This can be via formal or informal engagement processes.

Community engagement relies on a two-way approach with both Council and the community actively seeking to engage with each other.

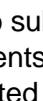
Community consultation – a more formal process that generally relates to the ‘consult’ section of the IAP2 spectrum. Consultation generally involves Council presenting an idea, policy or proposal to the community for input.

This Plan and Toolkit are based on the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum which shows the different levels of participation we intend to undertake with the community and staff. The Spectrum has been supplied by the IAP2 Federation.

IAP2’S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM



The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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1.2 How does Council keep the community informed?

Council uses a range of methods to inform the community about work we are undertaking. These include:

- social media;
- Council’s website;
- bi-monthly *QPRC News* newsletter to letterboxes;
- weekly e-newsletter to subscribers;
- fortnightly advertisements in local newspapers;
- letters directly to affected properties;
- media releases or hosting media announcements;
- public community meetings at least twice a year;
- topic-specific community meetings as required;
- live-streaming Council meetings (which are also open to the public to attend).

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1.4 How can the community engage with Council?

Community engagement is necessarily a two-way street and requires communities and stakeholders to actively engage with Council. There are several ways that communities can engage with Council and become involved in matters which are of interest to them, or have an impact on them. These include:

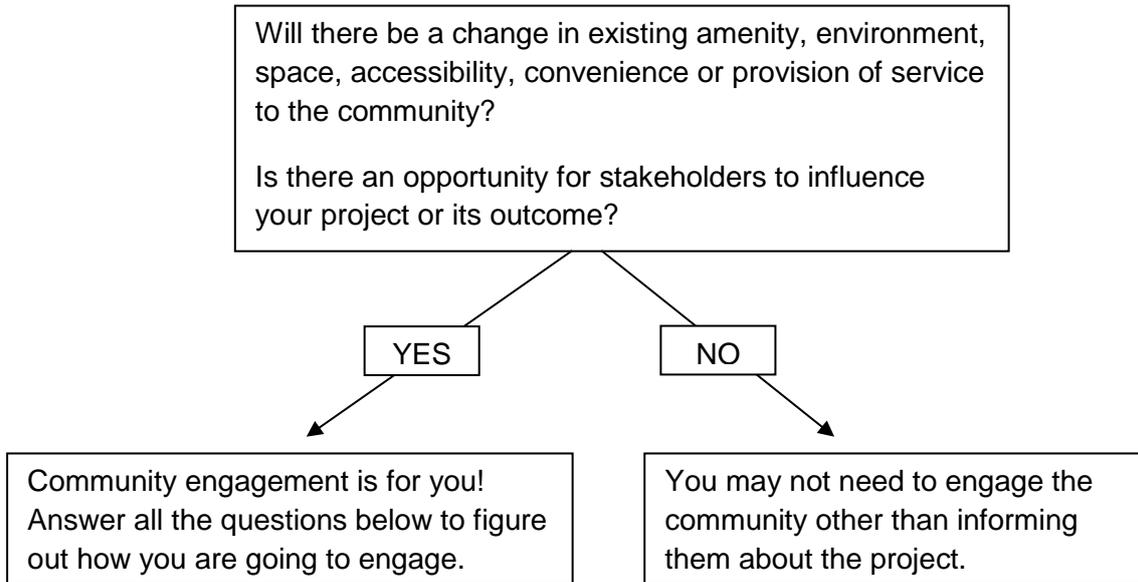
- attending Council meetings, and addressing Council in open session prior to the commencement of the formal meeting;
- joining an advisory committee;
- attending community meetings;
- attending drop-in information sessions regarding projects and strategy developments;
- providing feedback via website, email, letter, or phone;
- visiting Council's website and Council's engagement hub at yourvoice.qprc.nsw.gov.au;
- joining a local special interest or community group which has mechanisms for dialogue with Council;
- community groups or associations inviting Council staff along to meetings to address specific subjects
- connecting via social media;
- joining in local events and activities;
- joining in forums;
- direct contact with local councillors;
- direct contact with a staff member; or
- visiting local libraries and community centres.

By getting involved, community members can contribute to conversations which affect them. In doing so they can have their voice heard, considered and understood. This, in turn, helps Council to plan, understand and negotiate with communities to address issues which affect the local government area and its unique local centres.

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Part 2. Project planning for Council staff

2.1 Do I need to undertake community engagement?



Staff should also commit to community engagement where:

- there is a history that may impact on the current project,
- a project is controversial or political,
- there is an opportunity to build Council's reputation in a positive way,
- there is a potential impact of the outcome on the public, or
- legislation requires it.

For some items, the notification, advertisement, engagement and community participation requirements are established under the *Local Government Act 1993*, *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the Development Control Plans that apply in QPRC.

2.2 What decision needs to be made?

Be clear about which aspects of the decision the community can influence. If any aspects are affected by legislation, make that clear in your planning and engagement. Your level of engagement and the tools required will be dependent on what portion of the project can be influenced.

2.3 When do you need to start engagement?

Experience indicates that engaging with the community early will deliver the best results. This may extend your overall project timeframe, but it will also reduce the risk of roadblocks and rework throughout the project. This may include engaging the community prior to a concept design, rather than simply engaging when a design has already been developed by staff and/or a consultant.

It is advisable to work backwards from project deadlines and factor in community engagement. Council has a minimum **28**-day consultation timeframe on all matters, unless there are exceptional circumstances, which we need to communicate. The *Local Government Act 1993* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* also set mandatory periods for

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engagement for some items. If your project needs Council approval, factor in meeting dates as well as the length of engagement.

If you are engaging over the Christmas/New Year period, any days between 20 December and 25 January will not contribute to the total engagement period (i.e. those days will not be included when calculating an engagement period). This does not apply to notifications for development applications. Due to statutory time frames for determinations only those days between Christmas and New Year will be discounted from the required notification period.

2.4 Who do you need to engage with?

Do you need to engage with a specific community through drop in sessions or community workshops? This may include a geographic location, special interest group or particular affiliation.

2.5 How are you going to engage?

The method(s) of engagement you use will depend on who you need to engage with. This decision process should include thinking about which tools on the *Your Voice* website are most suitable for each project. Use the Community Engagement Toolkit to guide your decision making process. Answering this question should include ensuring any public meeting venues are accessible and that the sending of notifications or letters gives sufficient time to the community for them to plan to attend the meeting or provide their feedback.

2.6 How are you going to record and report public participation?

Are you using a survey, will you fill it out online via Your Voice? Are you using open response type questions? Use the Community Engagement Toolkit to guide your choice of tools and how they record and report on public participation.

2.7 Respond to engagement

What has the community told you? How is the project changing or being influenced because of the public's comments? Your response might include modifying the project, noting the comment and addressing concerns in an alternate way or acknowledging why an aspect of a project is unable to be changed.

2.8 Close the loop

Report on step 2.7. This will be via inclusion in a Council report, via a separate report that is placed on Your Voice and/or by responding to participants individually.

Plan your community engagement



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Part 3. Stakeholder analysis

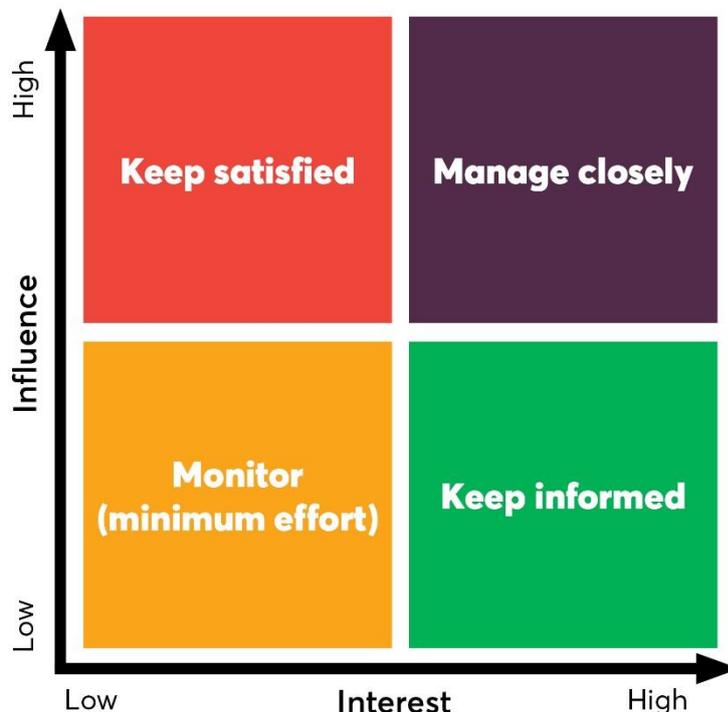
3.1 Who are our stakeholders?

Stakeholders include:

- Ratepayers
- General community – including those who live, work, play and visit our region
- Councillors
- Council committees
- Staff
- State/Federal Government representatives
- Community groups and associations
- Sporting and community clubs
- Businesses and business chambers
- Canberra Region Joint Organisation
- Surrounding local authorities, including the ACT Government
- Schools and other education providers
- Special interest groups
- Service users

Staff can contact the Communications and Engagement team for assistance in identifying relevant stakeholders and how to make contact with the stakeholder.

In preparing for an engagement activity, staff should identify the key stakeholders for the specific matter and map them against the influence and interest model below in light of the issue being engaged on. Council engages with stakeholders accordingly.



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3.2 What are the key demographics in our region?

Statistics are drawn from the Census of Population and Housing 2016.

Age demographics:

- Babies and pre-schoolers (0-4) – 6.5%
- Primary and secondary school aged residents (5-17) – 17%
- Tertiary education and independent young adults (18-24) – 8.1%
 - Tertiary students
 - Employees
 - Employers
 - Parents with young children
- Young workforce (25-34) – 13.7%
 - Employees
 - Employers
 - Parents with young children
- Parents and homebuilders (35-49) – 22.3%
 - Employees
 - Employers
 - Parents with young children
 - Parents with young adults
- Older workers and pre-retirees (50-59) – 14.6%
- Empty nesters and retirees (60-69) – 10.2%
- Seniors (70-84) – 6.3%
- Elderly aged (85 and over) – 1.2%

Other key demographics:

- Rural residents – approx. 17%
- Residents who speak a language other than English at home - 12.1%
- Residents who are in the workforce who work outside of QPRC – 65.1%
- Residents who are in the workforce who work in QPRC – 30.8%

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Part 4. Improving community engagement

Council's approach to community engagement requires continuous improvement. Below indicates some of the actions that Council will undertake to improve our approach to engaging the community.

4.1 Actions we will take to improve community engagement at QPRC

- Strengthen our relationship with community groups and associations within the QPRC area
- Educate stakeholders on the community engagement process and how stakeholders can become involved and contribute to the decision-making process.
- Communicate regularly with groups and associations
- Engage with locality committees
- Involve groups and associations in engagement matters that affect their community
- Provide community engagement guidance and support to groups and associations
- Make staff available for engagement and education activities with groups and associations
- Improve engagement with minority groups and those who don't use English as their primary language
- Work with the QPRC Access Committee to ensure engagement activities and methods are accessible

4.2 Increase staff and councillor awareness of their community engagement responsibilities

- Provide key staff members with the Community Engagement and Participation Plan and Toolkit to assist with developing engagement plans
- Ensure that Councillors have a clear understanding of their role in the community engagement process

4.3 How will we know our community engagement approach is successful?

- Increase in subscribers on Council's Your Voice engagement hub (10% increase per year)
- Increase in staff awareness of their community engagement responsibilities
- Increase in the number of projects that 'involve' or 'collaborate' with the community
- All community engagement projects apply the full engagement process

Action	How we will achieve this	Timeframe
4.1 Actions we will take to improve community engagement at QPRC		
Strengthen our relationship with community groups and associations within the QPRC area	Develop and maintain list of community group and association contacts Keep community groups and associations updated on matters that affect their community, including consultation and engagement activities Seek the views of community group and association representatives on LGA-wide projects	Ongoing
Educate key stakeholders on the community engagement process and how stakeholders can become involved and contribute to the decision-making process.	Investigate delivery of external training to key external stakeholders	December 2020 (reliant on budget allocation)
Communicate regularly with groups and associations	Make staff available for engagement and education activities with groups and associations	Ongoing
Engage with locality committees	Make staff available for engagement and education activities with groups and associations	Ongoing

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Action	How we will achieve this	Timeframe
Improve engagement with minority groups and those who don't use English as their primary language	Identify key contacts in minority groups and understand most appropriate way to engage with them	July 2020
Ensure engagement activities and methods are accessible	Work with the QPRC Access Committee to ensure engagement activities and methods are accessible	Ongoing
4.2 Increase staff and councillor awareness of their community engagement responsibilities		
Provide key staff members with the Community Engagement and Participation Plan and Toolkit to assist with developing engagement plans	Staff information and engagement sessions	March 2020
Ensure that Councillors have a clear understanding of their role in the community engagement process	Include in Councillor Induction Process Provide regular updates to councillors through communication channels	September 2020
4.3 How will we know our community engagement approach is successful?		
Increase in subscribers on Council's Your Voice engagement hub (10% increase per year)	Continue to promote the Your Voice hub through communication channels Consider offering incentives for residents to register on the hub.	Ongoing
Increase in staff awareness of their community engagement responsibilities	Staff information and engagement sessions	March 2020
Increase in the number of projects that 'involve' or 'collaborate' with the community	Educate staff on the long-term benefits of conducting earlier engagement activities.	March 2020
All community engagement projects apply the full engagement process	Implement tools to ensure all aspects of the engagement process are completed (page 10)	March 2020

Section 2 – Community participation in planning

Part 1. Background

Council's responsibilities under the EP&A Act include a need to ensure ecologically sustainable development, to promote the orderly and economic use of land, to protect the environment, to sustainably manage built and cultural heritage, to promote good design and amenity and to promote proper construction and maintenance for the health and safety of occupants. Council recognises that community participation in the planning system delivers better planning results for our community.

Community participation is a broad term that refers to how we involve the community under the EP&A Act. The level and type of community participation will vary depending on the proposal and potential impact of the development.

Council's planning functions can be divided into two streams: strategic planning and development assessment. Community participation will look different within these two streams.

1.1 EP&A Act principles that guide public participation

The EP&A Act guides Council to ensure that it will be clearer and easier for the community to understand how it can participate in planning decisions. The EP&A Act outlines the principles that underpin the planning functions of this Community Participation Plan. These principles are:

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

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Part 2. Community participation in strategic planning matters

Community participation is invited in planning matters by means of placing documents on public exhibition and advertising them in the various methods Council uses to inform the community. These matters include planning proposals, local strategic planning statements, draft development control plans and any other land use planning documents listed in the EP&A Act.

Actions involving the reclassification or re-categorisation of community land (with the latter involving a change in the Plan of Management) under the *Local Government Act 1993* are also placed on public exhibition. They also include notification requirements in the case of native title reviews under the *Crown Land Management Act 2016*.

Exhibition periods are defined in the legislation. Advertisements will include how submissions can be made and where the documents are available for viewing.

Part 3. Development Assessment

Council is the consent authority for a broad range of application types under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Some of these application types will require a process of public notification to be undertaken throughout the assessment process. This Part establishes application types for which public notification will be undertaken, minimum periods of notification and outlines the processes that will be followed in instances where such notification is required.

3.1 The Notification Process

Public notification informs a targeted audience of the receipt of an application currently under consideration by Council, and provides an opportunity to review the documents received by Council and make a submission on the perceived impacts of the development (both positive and negative). The notification process is not the same as public consultation which is generally community wide and seeks the community's views and feedback.

Public notification occurs in three (3) forms comprising of:

- **Advertising** – Details of the application are published within a local newspaper
- **Adjoining Owner Notification** – The owners of all properties sharing a common boundary with the subject property, including those separated by a roadway or similar thoroughfare, are notified in writing of the application.
- **Council website** – All applications requiring public notification are published on Council's website.

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3.2 Minimum Notification Periods

Table 1 below highlights the minimum public notification period for the below mentioned plans for the purposes of this Plan in accordance with Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. If notification is occurring over the Christmas/New Year period, those days between Christmas and New Year will be discounted from the required notification period.

Table 1 – Minimum Public Notification Periods for Plans	
Type of Plan	Minimum Notification Period
Draft community participation plan	28 days
Draft local strategic planning statement	28 days
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to gateway determination	28 days (unless specified differently in a gateway determination)
Draft plans of management	28 days (with 42 days to make a submission)
Draft development control plans	28 days
Draft contribution plans (ie Local Planning Agreements and Section 7.11 plans)	28 days

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Table 2 below highlights the minimum public notification period for the purposes of this Plan in accordance with Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Table 2 – Minimum Public Notification Periods	
Type of Application	Minimum Notification Period
<p>Development Applications – Applications for development consent for designated development Designated developments are higher impact developments that are detailed in Schedule 3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 and includes activities such as aquaculture, coalmines, chemical storage facilities, extractive industries, electricity generating stations and marinas. These developments need to be supported by an Environmental Impact Statement.</p>	28 days
<p>DA – Applications for development consent for State Significant Development Some types of development are deemed to have State significance due to the size, economic value or potential impacts that a development may have. Development that is State significant development (SSD) is identified in the State and Regional Development State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) and includes development such as new education establishments, hospitals and correction centres, mining and extraction operations, tourist and port facilities.</p>	28 days
<p>DA – Applications for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for State significant development) identified within Table 3 below. Examples include development applications for new two (2) storey dwellings, major commercial and industrial developments and development involving a local heritage item.</p>	14 days
<p>Review of Environmental Factors (REF) – Obtained under Division 5.1 for works by or on behalf of Council An REF is prepared for development under Part 5 of the EP&A Act for certain development permitted without consent undertaken by or on behalf of Council.</p>	28 days
<p>Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – for State Significant Infrastructure under Division 5.2 State Significant Infrastructure includes major transport and services development such as rail and road infrastructure, pipelines and development in National Parks.</p>	28 days

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3.3 Notified Development

Table 3 below establishes application types, other than applications for complying development certificates, designated developments or State significant developments that Council deems to require public notification. It should be noted that exclusion from this list is to be taken as an exemption from requiring public exhibition in accordance with Part 1(7) of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Table 3 – Notified Development			
Type of Development	Notice in Local Newspaper	Notice to Adjoining Owners	Council Website
Residential Development			
Two (2) storey Dwelling Houses including a new or part storey (excluding RU1 Primary Production Zone)	NO	YES	YES
Dual Occupancy and Secondary Dwelling	NO	YES	YES
Multi Dwelling Housing, Residential Flat Buildings, Boarding Houses, Group Homes, Hostels, Rural Worker's Dwellings, Seniors Housing and Shop Top Housing	YES	YES	YES
Zero lot line walls –any dwelling or garage/shed wall on the boundary or within 900mm of the boundary	NO	YES	YES
Commercial and Industrial Development			
Child Care Centres	YES	YES	YES
Licensed premises (such as a club, pub, hotel or night club)	YES	YES	YES
Major Commercial or Industrial developments (Such as supermarkets, bulky goods premises, function centres, entertainment facilities, takeaway food premises in new buildings and waste or resource management facilities)	YES	YES	YES
Offensive or Hazardous Industry	YES	YES	YES
Mining or Extractive Industry	YES	YES	YES

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Table 3 – Notified Development

Type of Development	Notice in Local Newspaper	Notice to Adjoining Owners	Council Website
Rural Industry	YES	YES	YES
Education Establishment	YES	YES	YES
Tourist and Visitor Accommodation	YES	YES	YES
Brothels	YES	YES	YES
Health Services Facilities	YES	YES	YES
Intensive Livestock or Plant Agriculture	YES	YES	YES
Place of Assembly or Worship	YES	YES	YES
Restricted Premises	YES	YES	YES
Change of use where “Existing Use Rights” (as defined in 4.65 of the EP & A Act) are involved	NO	YES	YES
Other Development			
Development involving a local Heritage Item	NO	YES	YES
Development in a Heritage Conservation Area (where the work is highly visible from the street)	NO	YES	YES
Development involving State listed Heritage Item (excluding the Braidwood and its setting State Heritage Conservation Area)	YES	YES	YES
Developments where, in the opinion of Council, the proposal is generally not in keeping with the established scale and character of surrounding development	YES	YES	YES
Development where, in the opinion of Council, it would be in the public interest to notify the application	YES	YES	YES
Earthworks - major earthworks and land forming operations	YES	YES	YES

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Table 3 – Notified Development

Type of Development	Notice in Local Newspaper	Notice to Adjoining Owners	Council Website
Advertising Structures (excluding Building or Business Identification Signage)	NO	YES	YES
Integrated Development as identified in 4.46 of the EP&A Act	YES	YES	YES
Development involving a significant variation to a development control under a Development Control Plan	NO	YES	YES
Variations under Clause 4.6 of a Local Environmental Plan	YES	YES	YES
Variation to Building Envelope	NO	YES	YES
Modifications Under 4.55(1A)	NO	NO	NO
Modifications Under 4.55(1)	NO	NO	NO
Modifications Under 4.55(2)	Same as original application	Same as original application	Same as original application
Subdivision of land Creating 4 or more allotments (excluding strata title subdivisions)	NO	YES	YES
Remediation requiring consent	NO	YES	YES
Telecommunications Facilities, High Impact (i.e. Tower)	YES	YES	YES

Please note: The assessing officer may, at any time, use their discretion to require the notification of a specific development application given their assessment of the proposal's potential environmental, social or cultural impacts.

3.4 Making a submission

Any person may make a submission in relation to a publically notified application outlining their reasons for support or opposition to the proposed development. If the submission is an objection to the development, the grounds for objection should be clearly stated.

A person wishing to lodge a submission must disclose donations or gifts made to Councillors or Council staff. This is required under s 10.4 of the EP&A Act. Significant penalties apply for

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non-disclosure. See Council's form "Declaration of Political Donations and Gifts for Submitters" on Council's website www.qprc.nsw.gov.au for completion and attachment to submissions.

Submissions are required to be made in writing and can be submitted to Council for the duration of the notification period by email, mail, or delivered in person to Council offices. Submissions received outside of the notification period will only be accepted at Council's discretion.

All submissions will become public documents, may be made available to applicants and may be included in Council reports, published on Council's website and/or discussed at meetings. Applications referred to a Council meeting will include the name and address of the person making the submission as part of the information included in Council's Business Paper.

3.5 Consideration of Submissions

Where a development application has been publicly advertised or notified and one or more written submissions, by way of objection have been received, the determination of the application will follow the process below:

- 1) The assessing officer will review the submissions to determine the validity of the concerns raised. Where the development satisfies Council's LEP and DCP's and the concerns raised are not deemed to be valid or are unsound or are of a nature that can be remedied through a condition of consent or the applicant has agreed to modify the development plans the development application will be determined under Delegated Authority of Council by an Authorised Officer.
- 2) Where in the opinion of the assessing officer significant valid concerns have been identified and where such concerns are unable to be resolved by staff or the applicant is unwilling to modify the development to overcome such concerns the application will be reported to a Council meeting for determination.

The applicant and each person who lodged a submission will be notified (by letter, email or verbally) of the date and time of the Council meeting and be advised of their right to attend and how representations may be made to Council.

Prior to the meeting an inspection of the property may be arranged by Council staff to which applicants and/or submitters may be invited to address Councillors and Council staff.

Any presentation to Council, whether by an applicant or submitter shall be carried out in accordance with Council's Code of Meeting Practice.

Please note that the consideration of submissions is not a consultation or negotiation process with submitters. The concerns raised will be assessed on planning grounds. Other than acknowledgement of receipt of the submission, Council's next interaction with submitters will be as discussed in Part 3.6 below.

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3.6 Notification of Determinations

Following the determination of an application where submissions have been received Council will notify each person who made a submission in respect of Council's determination of the application including a copy of that determination notice. Council also publically notifies all decisions in accordance with *Schedule 1 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Such notification includes the following information:

- The decision
- The date of the decision
- The reasons for the decision (having regard to any statutory requirements applying to the decision)
- How community views were taken into account in making the decision.