2024–2028

Communication and Engagement Strategy

Incorporating Community Participation Plan

maitland
CITY COUNCIL

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wonnarua People as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land within the Maitland Local Government Area. Council pays respect to all Aboriginal Elders, past, present and future with a spiritual connection to these lands.

Our vision

A connected city with thriving communities.

Our shared vision for Maitland is built upon four key focus areas: Liveable Maitland, Sustainable Maitland, Vibrant Maitland, and Achieving Together. These pillars form the foundation of our **Maitland Future** vision and represent our Strategic Framework, guiding us toward a thriving, connected city.

Each pillar reflects a distinct focus area essential to creating a community where everyone can live, work, enjoy, and succeed. They are supported by informing strategies that provide clear direction, ensuring every decision aligns with our shared goals. This framework is our roadmap for the future, connecting vision to action and delivering outcomes that matter to our community.

Liveable Maitland

Sustainable Maitland

Achieving Together

Vibrant Maitland
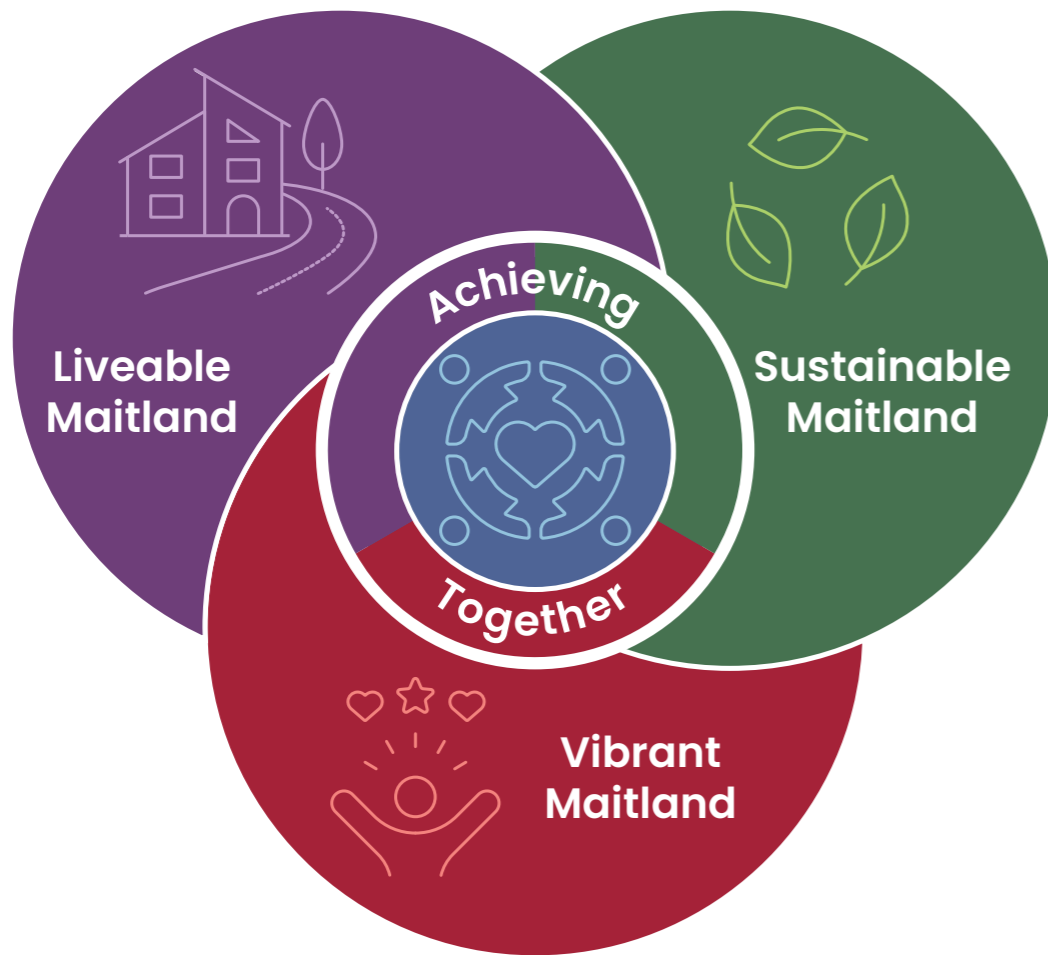
A message from our Mayor and General Manager

We are proud to present Council's new Communication and Engagement Strategy, a vital tool for shaping the future of our city together with you, our community. We are deeply committed to ensuring that everyone connected with Maitland has a voice and feels included in the decisions that impact their lives.

Your feedback has guided the development of this Strategy. Through extensive community consultation, we've heard your concerns and ideas for better informing, involving, and engaging with you. You've told us that while we've made progress, there's still more to do to build trust, enhance transparency, and ensure information is easy to access. We've listened and are committed to making communication and engagement even more meaningful and effective.

We are committed to ensuring no voice goes unheard in our rapidly growing and evolving community. Through digital platforms and face to face conversations, we're creating more inclusive opportunities for everyone to participate in the decisions that shape our city. Through quick online surveys or pop up stalls at local events and other methods, we're making it easier for you to get involved and play a part in Maitland's future.

We are also mindful of the challenges ahead, from maintaining trust to managing the demands of a fast paced digital world. This Strategy is our blueprint for addressing these challenges head on. It outlines our commitment to continuously improve and deliver quality and honest communications and engagement for you.

Together, we can build a city that listens and acts on its community's needs and aspirations. We look forward to continuing this journey with you and ensuring Maitland remains a great place to live, work, and enjoy.

Introduction

We are committed to connecting with our community.

Like you, many of our staff and councillors live in and are part of the community. We want to do the best job possible for you. After all, it is your city, so it's important you know what Council is doing and have a say in it.

We achieve the best outcomes when we connect with you early in the decision making process and keep you informed. While we've made progress, we know we can continually improve.

This Strategy is guided by how you've told us you want to stay informed and engaged. We've also taken into account feedback from our recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and other consultations with the community, staff, and councillors. You told us that you don't always feel listened to or informed about Council's activities, and we are committed to changing that.

This Strategy outlines our approach to communication and engagement, ensuring we're providing relevant information, reaching you effectively, and genuinely listening to your feedback.

Community Participation Plan

Attached to this Strategy is our Community Participation Plan (CPP) which is guided by the same core values as this Strategy but with a singular focus on the planning process. It is an easy to use guide for the community to provide input into planning decisions when Council is the consent authority and ensures we meet our statutory requirements for notification and exhibition.
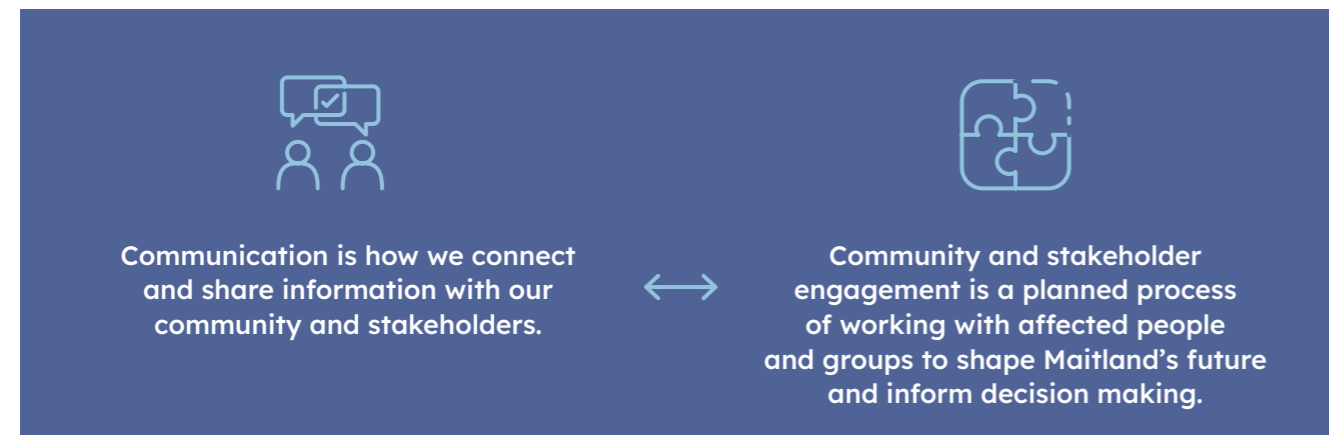
Overview

What is the purpose of this Strategy?

Effective and honest engagement is at the heart of local government and the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) process. It helps communities shape their own futures and informs the vision and direction of Council.

With over 591 staff across 27 Services, we deliver a wide range of services that touch every aspect of community life. Our people are the direct link between the community and Council, and their daily efforts in delivering, partnering and advocating drive the success of communication and engagement that is reflective of the community's needs while grounded in the practical realities of service delivery.

This Strategy has a vital role in building trust, fostering participation and adapting to the evolving needs of our residents. It supports the development of all strategies, policies and services, while keeping the community informed through quality and responsive communications.

Communication is how we connect and share information with our community and stakeholders.

Community and stakeholder engagement is a planned process of working with affected people and groups to shape Maitland's future and inform decision making.

Legislative requirements

The Communication and Engagement Strategy has been prepared in accordance with Section 402A of the *Local Government Act 1993, Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979,* our Community Engagement Policy and responds to the requirements of the NSW Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IPR).

What is IPR?

IPR allows councils to bring plans and strategies together in a way that supports a clear vision for the future and provides an agreed direction for delivering community priorities and aspirations.
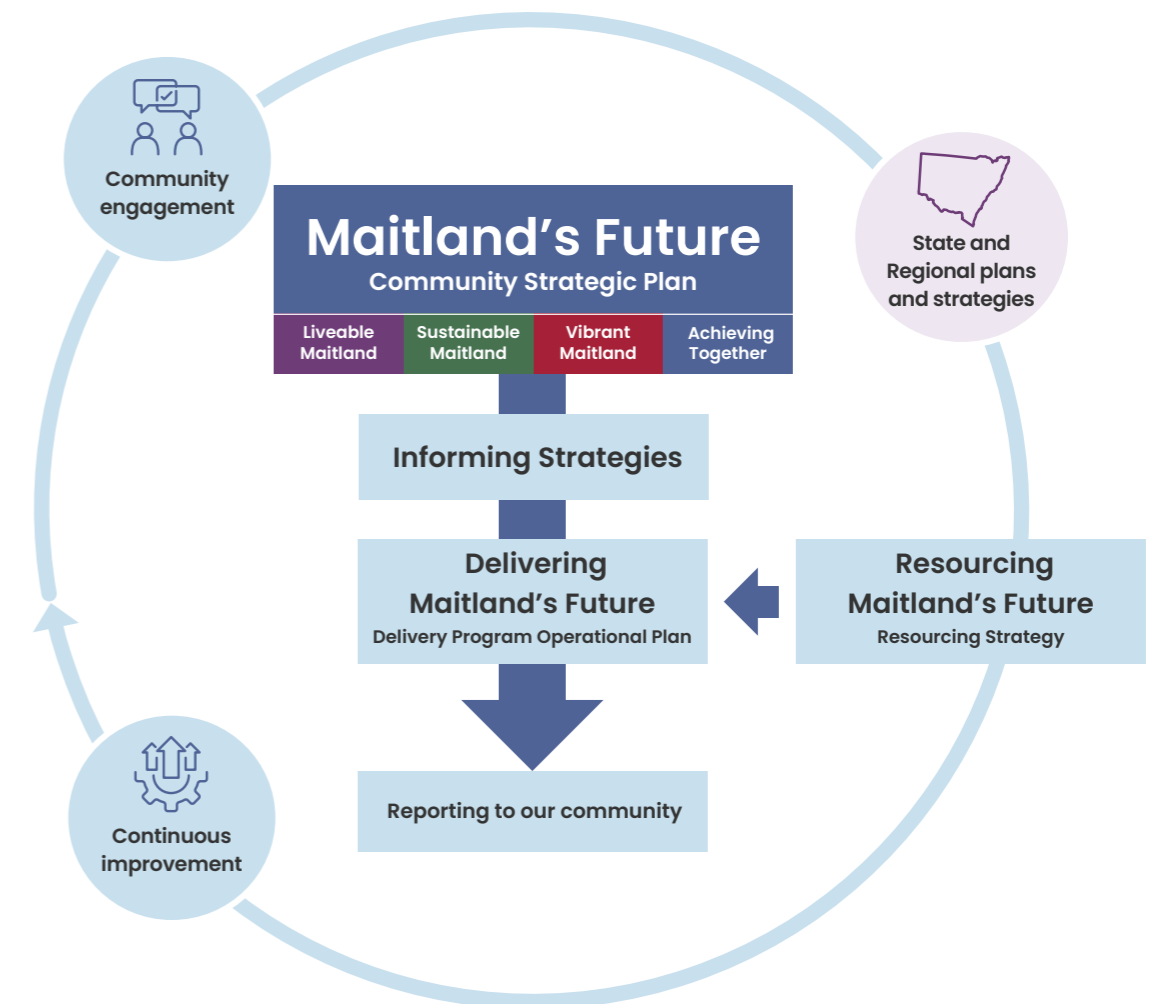
Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan is our highest level plan. This plan is developed with and on behalf of the community. Its purpose is to identify the main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals.

Community and Engagement Strategy

Effective engagement allows communities to be active participants in shaping their own future and play a part in positive change.

We are required to prepare a Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan to support the development of all plans, policies, programs and key activities. This includes those relating to IPR, as well as strategic plans and programs required under other legislation. The Communication and Engagement Strategy is reviewed in line with council elections and IPR requirements.

Maitland's Future
Community Strategic Plan

- Liveable Maitland
- Sustainable Maitland
- Vibrant Maitland
- Achieving Together

Community engagement

State and Regional plans and strategies

Informing Strategies

Delivering Maitland's Future
Delivery Program Operational Plan

Resourcing Maitland's Future
Resourcing Strategy

Reporting to our community

Continuous improvement

Our engagement

We developed this Communication and Engagement Strategy through an extensive engagement process undertaken throughout 2024. This process focused on listening to our community, whose input helped us determine our future communication and engagement priorities based on how you told us you wanted to connect.

Understanding how you want to receive information and provide input helps us set a clear direction for communication and engagement.

To achieve this, we held engagement activities across the city, beginning at local community programming and city events and followed by workshops, phone and online surveys, stakeholder meetings, online discussions and face to face conversations to hear from local people. You have helped us identify:

- How you want to be kept informed
- Topics and themes you want to hear about and consult on
- How you currently participate, and how you prefer to engage
- The barriers that prevent our community from engaging more fully.

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Community involvement

We **listened** to over **1,100** people

Over **2,200** contributions

152 responses to our surveys and polls to prioritise what we heard

26+ events and activities

9 posts online, including Facebook and LinkedIn

500 responses to our Community Satisfaction Survey

9 focus groups

Promotion and opportunities to participate

1 media release

print and online media reach: **14,000+**

9 social media posts

reach: **16,000+**

formal submissions **3** polls / surveys

face to face activities: **19**

3 E-newsletters

subscriber reach: **10,600+**

1 public exhibition

formal submissions: **(open now)**

Key insights

Insights we heard from **you**

84% of residents are at least somewhat satisfied with Council's level of communication

Up to **30%** of community satisfaction in any project or service can be attributed to how well we communicated and engaged
(2024 Customer Satisfaction Survey)

Local projects and services

15% feel well informed

18% don't feel informed

67% feel somewhat informed

How you connect with us:

70% of respondents have participated or engaged with a Council project in the last two years. Preferred ways to provide input into Council planning are via:

- Surveys
- Engagement portal
- Social media and quick polls
- Pop up stalls at events

Top **FIVE** preferred topics to participate in engagement are:

- Initiatives local to me
- Environment and sustainability
- Community and recreation
- Strategic plans
- Transport and movement

Social media, email and Council's website are the **TOP THREE** methods residents seek information about Council

We need to:

- Make it easier to access information by using a variety of channels
- Be more open and transparent
- Consider the community interest and share more information about the right topics
- Provide more targeted consultation opportunities for affected groups to participate in decision making
- Close the loop, provide results and connect feedback to decisions
- Find ways to involve youth and other underrepresented groups in decision making as they don't feel heard or represented

Opportunities and challenges

Maitland faces unique opportunities and challenges as we work to become a connected city with thriving communities. Global trends like technological advancements and climate change are reshaping how we communicate, engage, and foster community participation. While digital platforms offer new ways to reach and involve diverse audiences, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility remains challenging. Adapting to these shifts will help keep our engagement strategies relevant, effective, and participatory.

Locally, rapid population growth and changing demographics require innovative engagement approaches. As Maitland grows, involving all residents—especially underrepresented groups—in decision making is key to building stronger community connections. Through clear, inclusive communication and active participation, we can better involve residents in shaping Maitland's future while addressing their needs and concerns.

Based on the community's feedback. Council needs to overcome the following challenges when undertaking communication and engagement activities:

- **Trust:** We must build trust with our community. Be transparent, provide timely and accurate information, and close the loop on engagement outcomes to show how feedback impacts decisions.

- **Barriers to accessing information:** Information needs to be easier to understand, easier to find, and easier to use. Engagement opportunities need to be well promoted and take place in accessible locations using diverse and targeted methods.

- **Inclusivity:** We need to connect meaningfully with our underrepresented groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and young people, focusing on respect and inclusion and use new methods to inspire participation.

- **Lack of time and engagement fatigue:** The community prefers quick, easy to complete feedback options like online surveys and polls. It's important to stagger engagement and offer a variety of feedback methods to ensure all community members have their values and needs reflected in Council decision making.

Our role

We all play a vital role in shaping the places we live, work, and enjoy, and effective communication and engagement are central to this. Both Council and the community share responsibility for initiating, leading, and participating in meaningful engagement activities. As Maitland grows, collaboration between Council, our stakeholders, and the community is essential for delivering a Communication and Engagement Strategy that supports our collective wellbeing. Council acts as a facilitator of these conversations, ensuring that our community is informed, heard, and actively involved.

Our role in delivering the Communication and Engagement Strategy includes not only driving initiatives but also working closely with key stakeholders. From informing residents about important decisions to partnering with other levels of government and advocating for the community's needs, Council ensures that communication is clear, accessible, and responsive to local priorities. By integrating engagement into all areas of our operations, we can better understand and address the complex challenges that impact our community.

By adopting a strategic approach to communication and engagement, Council can deliver services and initiatives that reflect the needs and aspirations of the community, ensuring our residents are well informed, involved, and empowered to contribute to decision making.
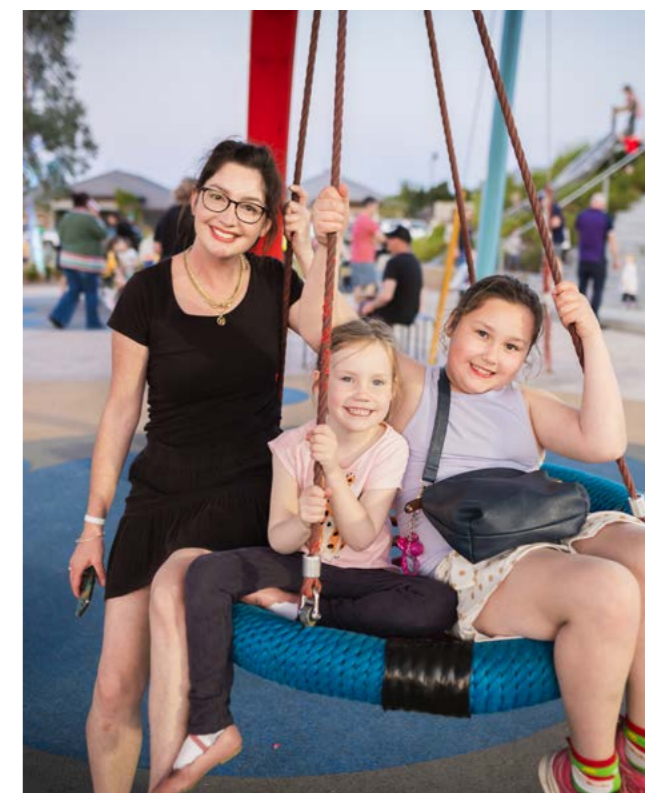
Our approach to communication and engagement

Our Guiding Principles

Our approach reflects the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights, as well as Council's Guiding Principles which underpin everything we do.

MAKE THINGS EASY

Do the hard work to make things intuitive for everyone.

BE WELCOMING

Care for everyone as people, not tasks or numbers.

BE OPEN MINDED

Listen to each other and work together to find solutions.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Follow through on your commitments to everyone.

LOOK OUT FOR ME

Thoughtfully anticipate what will make our days go smoother.

Communication

Keeping our community informed is a key task in every objective and action included in our Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

We share information with our community to promote our services, programs and city experiences, so you know, and understand, what we do here at Council.

While most of our customers feel somewhat informed about local projects and services and are accessing information through our website and social media, we understand others don't feel informed and want to receive information in other ways.

We're committed to providing the information you want, timely, honestly and transparently. We want to be forward thinking and creative to ensure the content cuts through and reaches its audience.

Engagement

Community is at the heart of local government. Listening and having community voices shape Council plans supports strong communities.

We are committed to facilitating ongoing and honest conversations with our community and engagement activities that are shaped by our Guiding Principles, social justice principles and best practice engagement.

WHEN WILL WE ENGAGE	WHEN WON'T WE ENGAGE?
Times we may engage with the community include: • There is a change in service or strategic direction proposed • There is a new project, plan or initiative being developed • We are developing or changing a significant strategy, plan or policy • Major infrastructure projects are being considered or planned • Issue raised that requires a decision • Decisions are being made that will impact our community • Generally, the bigger the project's impact, the more engagement we will do to guide our decisions.	There are times when we will only inform the community of our decisions and actions. These will occur in cases when: • There is no scope for the community to influence the outcome • Recent, similar engagements have provided feedback to support a decision without fatiguing the community with the same questions • Public health and safety are at risk • An immediate resolution is required • An initiative involves confidential or commercially sensitive information • We are developing or reviewing internal procedures and protocols • Council is responding to an emergency • There are legal constraints.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

We follow the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, a best practice engagement framework that succinctly describes the different levels of engagement. The Spectrum guides our approach to selecting tools and channels for different stakeholders for all communication and engagement.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Our role	• We will keep you informed	• We will listen, and consider your concerns	• We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are reflected in the decisions made	• We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible	• We will implement what you decide
Community's role	• Keep in touch (follow Council on social media) • Subscribe to newsletters • Check Council's website	• Contribute ideas and feedback • Respond to surveys and polls • Make public submissions	• Actively participate in workshops and engagement sessions • Share ideas, concerns and aspirations	• Work together to develop solutions • Join community panels, committees or advisory groups	• Commit and participate in a range of activities over a period of time
What this might look like	• Factsheets • Websites • Newsletters • Social media posts	• Surveys • Social media quick polls	• Workshops • Pop up stands	• Advisory committees • Ambassador programs	• Citizens jury or panels • Participatory budgeting or editing

In most cases, decisions that will impact the community are made by the elected council unless otherwise specified as part of the engagement project or by delegation to the General Manager or other nominated Council officer. There are a range of other factors that need to be considered and balanced during the decision making process such as budget, social, economic, and environmental impacts, legislation, governance, policies, and technical advice.

Who we connect with
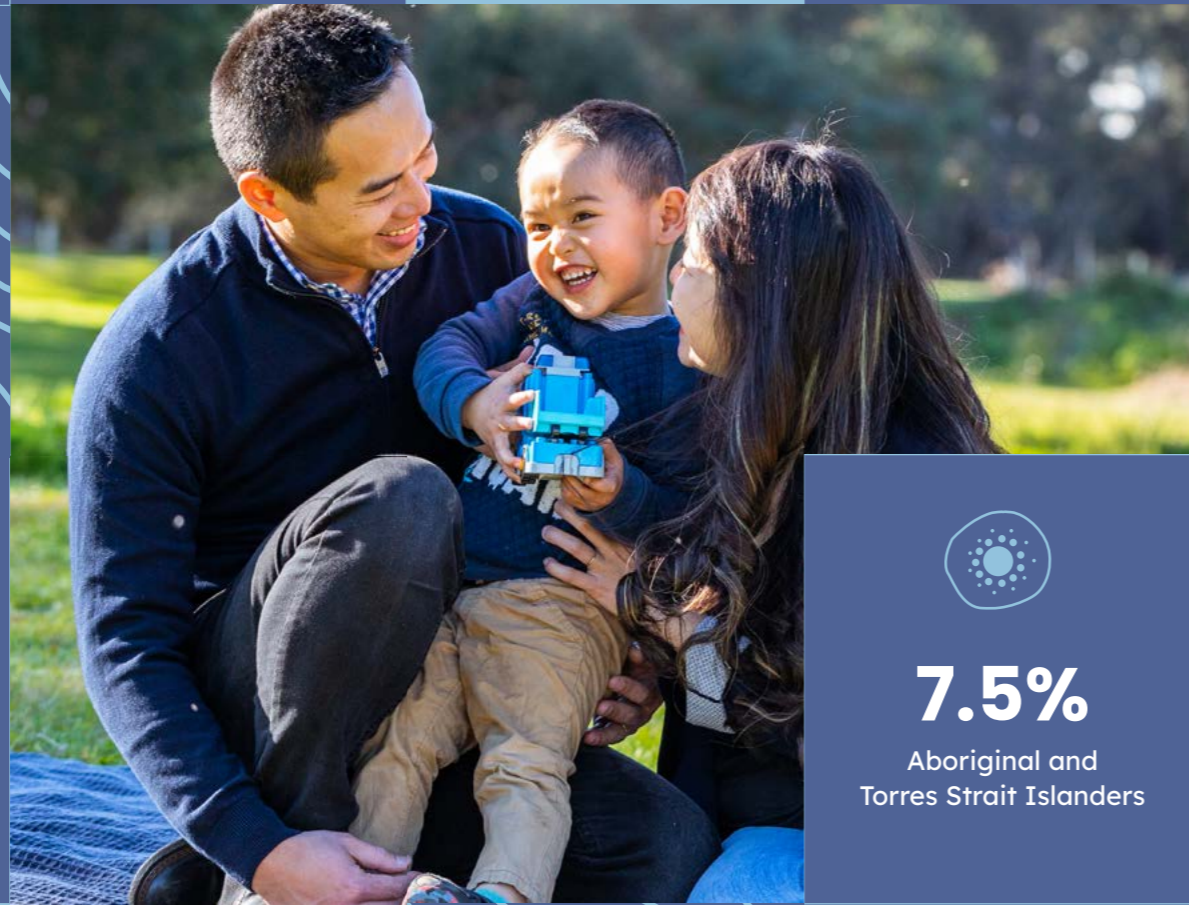
Understanding our community

95,957 people

36 median age

38 NSW median age

13% born overseas

11% need assistance

7.5% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

51.3% female

48.7% male

81% of households have an internet connection (2016 Census)

9% speak a language other than English at home

94% of Australians own a smart phone

76% of Australians have a Facebook account

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Our stakeholders

A stakeholder is any individual, group, organisation or entity with an interest in, or stake in the outcome of decisions made by Council.

We know that people are most interested in decisions and projects that are local to them, and personally affect them, so we will identify and plan communication and engagement activities with this in mind. Below is a list of the stakeholder groups who may have an interest or be impacted by decisions and projects.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	EXAMPLES
Business community	• Individuals, associations or networks active in the business community
Councillors	• Mayor and elected community representatives
Communities of interest	• Those communities who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, such as a specific suburb or area
Committees and community organisations	• Committees or organisations with a specific interest in, or knowledge of, a particular matter such as the Local Aboriginal Land Council, environment groups, the Access and Inclusion Reference Group, or sporting clubs
Council staff	• People who work at Maitland City Council
Government agencies	• Departments of local, state and federal government whom Council advises and seeks advice from about projects
Population groups	• Specific demographic groups such as age, background, ability, gender, cultural heritage
Residents and ratepayers	• Those who live and/or pay rates in the Maitland Local Government Area
Schools	• Local education centres including schools and TAFE
Underrepresented populations	• Specific groups within our community who are harder to reach, have specific needs or are generally less engaged such as young people, seniors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ and multicultural communities
Visitors	• Individuals or groups who visit Maitland

Inclusive and accessible engagement

We want to make sure that the decisions we make are representative of all people in our community and everyone feels included, informed and heard.

We recognise that some groups are less likely to participate and may face additional barriers or challenges in engaging with us and where possible, Council is committed to ensuring open access through:

- Using clear language free from jargon and acronyms
- Identifying our underrepresented groups during engagement planning
- Choose venues and locations that are safe, accessible and visible
- Promotion of accessibility options
- Use of a range of engagement methods
- Providing easy read materials or direct support to interpret documents
- Using inclusive language identified in Council's Language and Writing Style guide when referring to our underrepresented groups.

Additionally, we have identified some specific groups that may require additional considerations when communicating or undertaking engagement.

GROUP	CONSIDERATIONS
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	• Invite and encourage involvement of respected Elders • Use existing relationships and continue to engage with Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council to provide advice on strategic matters of importance to local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
LGBTIQ+ community	• Use inclusive and preferred language • Consider making spaces within Maitland visibly welcoming with LGBTQ+ friendly symbols • Collaborate with allied organisations
People from multicultural communities	• Consider use of interpretors and translated materials • Respect cultural differences • Reaching out to local multicultural leaders and groups
People with disabilities and their carers	• Consider information format • Host engagement events in accessible venues and locations • Encourage participants to bring a support person • Consider adequate lighting • Avoid or reduce background noise whenever possible • Avoid activations requiring long periods of concentration
Seniors	• Consider information format • Hosting engagement events in accessible venues and locations
Young people	• Reaching out to schools and education institutions, and youth oriented community groups • Provide opportunities to understand what Council does • Develop avenues for youth voices to be heard • Choose venues accessible to public transport or convenient to youth programs or activity locations

How we will connect

To ensure the greatest reach, we will use a combination of methods and channels to share information and engage with our community. Our approach can vary depending on the need and impact of the topic and includes a range of online and offline tools and methods. We are also committed to continuing to adapt and use new and emerging technologies to meet our community's needs. Some of the ways we may choose to share information and engage include:

METHOD	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Advertisements/public notices	✔				
Advisory committees	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Community and stakeholder reference groups	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Corporate reports	✔				
Council events	✔				
Council meetings	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Council website	✔				
Drop in sessions	✔	✔	✔		
E-newsletters	✔				
Emails	✔				
Information sessions	✔	✔			
Interactions with Council staff (face to face, phone, live chat)	✔	✔			
Letters and letterbox drops	✔				
Maitland Your Say platform – surveys, polls, interactive tools, ideas walls	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Media releases	✔				
Meetings with Council staff	✔	✔			
My Council updates	✔				
News articles	✔				
Newsletters	✔				
On hold messages	✔				
Pop up stalls	✔	✔	✔		
Print materials – brochures, factsheets, flyers, posters, signs	✔				
Public exhibition/submissions	✔	✔			
Rates notices	✔				
Radio announcements	✔				
Social media	✔	✔			
Surveys, questionnaires, polls	✔	✔			
Workshops and focus groups	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

How we use community feedback

When we complete community engagement activities, we review all the feedback provided by the community and analyse the data. We may:

- Collate and review all responses
- Identify statistical outcomes, identify themes, sentiment, issues and priorities
- Assess gaps in participation and information
- Identify feedback that is out of scope
- Respond to community members where a response is required
- Use data to inform decision making
- Where appropriate, incorporate ideas and suggestions from the community.

Closing the loop

We'll summarise and report on the engagement activities undertaken. We may include information such as:

- How we communicated and promoted the engagement
- Who we reached and heard from
- Summary of key themes, issues and outcomes
- What happens next.

How will we measure success?

We will monitor our communication and engagement activities for effectiveness against the priorities and actions set out in this Strategy. We'll use the insights from this process to continuously review and improve our communication and engagement practices.

We use a range of sources to help us understand how well we're tracking and we will know we're doing well when our results are meeting our trend targets for each indicator.

Communication and engagement priorities

Priorities

1 We improve access to information and engagement opportunities

2 We build trust and reputation through consistent, honest, and transparent conversations

3 We continuously improve and deliver quality communication and engagement practices.

Priority 1. We improve access to information and engagement opportunities

We will ensure the community can easily access clear, user friendly information and engagement opportunities. By offering multiple communication channels and methods, we aim to foster stronger connections with Council and increase participation, helping residents stay informed and involved.

1	ACTION	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28
1.1	**Use our communication and engagement tools and channels strategically** Expand and diversify use of communication channels to increase accessibility and interaction with residents.	I	I	I	I
1.2	**Improve accessibility of information** Update collateral, ensuring it is clear, accessible and meets varying accessibility and inclusion needs.	P	D	D	I
1.3	**Develop an ongoing conversation approach to engagement** Use and share feedback to support meaningful engagement design and inform decisions.	P	P	D	I
1.4	**Explore new options to connect with underrepresented groups** Collaborate with community organisations and explore new methods to develop participation opportunities and feedback mechanisms for underrepresented groups.	P	P	D	I
1.5	**Explore options to support establishment of a youth voice** Collaborate with local organisations and schools to support youth participation.	P	P	D	I
1.6	**Increase opportunities for Council leaders to receive and share information and engage with the community** Improve mechanisms for delivering information to councillors and provide visible opportunities for councillors and leaders to share information and connect	P	D	D	I

P – plan, D – deliver, I – improve

Priority 1: Indicators for measuring success

INDICATOR	BASELINE*	TREND
Increase the accessibility of communication and engagement materials by increasing improvement in readability scores	New	Increasing
Number of people engaged (contributions)	5,000 engagement platform contributions	Increasing
Participation from underrepresented groups	New	Increasing to meet demographic representation
Membership on our engagement platform	700	Increasing
Visitation to corporate website and our engagement platform	Corporate: 498,575 Engagement platform 18,829	Increasing
Social media engagement and followers (all platforms)	• Engagements: 655,094 • Followers (audience): 153,435 • Follower net growth: 13,454 • Impressions: 29,025,710	Increasing
Financial year subscription growth and open rates for the Maitland Your Say, Momentum online, Business Matters, Green Communities, The Levee, My Maitland and Events e-newsletters	Combined: • Total subscriptions: 39,541 • Average subscription growth rate: 18% • Average open rate: 42%	Increasing
Number of opportunities for councillors and leaders to share information and engage	New	Increasing
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY INDICATORS**		
Increasing results for Council's online (digital) services are easily accessible scores	52%	Increasing

*Indicative of 2023/24 results **Customer Satisfaction Survey is measured every two years

Priority 2. We build trust and reputation through consistent, honest, and transparent conversations

Strengthen trust in Council by improving transparency around decision making processes, ensuring information is shared, voices are heard, feedback loops are closed, and Council decisions are more visible.

2	ACTION	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27B	2027–28
2.1	**Close the loop on engagements and provide project updates** Ensure engagement results and project outcomes are shared with councillors and the community.	D	D	I	I
2.2	**Focus on topics identified as priorities by the community** Share information and engage on topics the community identified as priorities through the Community Strategic Plan, Customer Satisfaction Survey, and trends.	D	I	I	I
2.3	**Build Council's identity and brand through consistent visual communication** Deliver Brand Maitland through all channels and assets, focusing on inclusive and accessible design.	D	D	D	I
2.4	**Identify newsworthy stories, and promote Maitland by maintaining strong relationships with media** Build and maintain strong relationships with media to improve outreach and promote Maitland, keeping the community informed.	P	D	I	I
2.5	**Identify efficiencies and enhancement opportunities for communication and engagement tools** Investigate options to improve communication and engagement tools and process efficiencies.	I	I	I	I
2.6	**Deliver the biennial Customer Satisfaction Survey** Deliver the Customer Satisfaction Survey and use the outcomes to inform decision making.	P	D	P	D

P – plan, D – deliver, I – improve

Priority 2: Indicators for measuring success

INDICATOR	BASELINE	TREND
Percentage of completed engagement projects with engagement outcome summary provided on Maitland Your Say	New	Increasing
Brand implementation action plan targets are met	New	Met
Uptake on pitches to media, media coverage, potential audience reach and advertising value equivalency	• Pitch uptake: New • Media coverage: New • Potential audience reach: New • Advertising value equivalency: New	Increasing
Corporate brand sentiment captures from social media listening and earned media mentions	• Earned media mentions: New • Social listening: New	Maintain balanced and positive coverage results

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY INDICATORS*		
Satisfaction with Council's level of communication	84%	Increasing
Trust in Council result	40%	Increasing
Council provides opportunities to participate in planning and decision making processes	35%	Increasing
Council understands and responds to community needs	36%	Increasing

*Customer Satisfcation Survey is measured every two years

Priority 3. We continuously improve and deliver quality communication and engagement practices.

Regularly assess and enhance Council's communication and engagement methods to remain aligned with community expectations and improve service delivery. Build internal knowledge and capacity, delivering on legislative requirements and best practice principles.

3	ACTION	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28
3.1	**Embed inclusivity and cultural awareness principles of IAP2 into organisational practice** Increase staff awareness and capacity to enable effective communication, engagement and promotion of Council business	P	D	D	I
3.2	**Develop improved internal processes to share knowledge, and improve collaboration**	P	P	D	D
3.2.1	Collaborate internally to improve stakeholder information management and reporting processes.	P	P	D	D
3.2.2	Improve access to engagement data to support planning, decision making and programming.	P	P	D	D
3.2.3	Deliver internal communication strategy to improve employee engagement and inter departmental connections.	P	D	D	D

3	ACTION	2024–25	2025–26	2026–27	2027–28
3.3	**Review Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy** Review this Strategy including Community Participation Plan, Community Engagement Policy and Public Exhibition Protocol under IPR requirements for each Council term.	P	P	P	D
3.4	**Support delivery of Council's strategies and plans** Work with relevant teams to provide business advice and deliver on communication and engagement objectives, including the Disability and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).	I	I	I	I

P – plan, D – deliver, I – improve

Priority 3: Indicators for measuring success

INDICATOR	BASELINE*	TREND
Marketing, Communication and Engagement toolkit is available on employee intranet and visitation and downloads recorded	New	Developed to increasing visits
Visitation to employee intranet	New	Increasing
Staff attendance at bi-monthly General Manager updates	Average 85 attendees	Maintain to increase
Internal collaboration and data sharing processes developed and implemented	New	Developed and maintained
Results of staff poll measuring effectiveness of internal communication and engagement processes	New	Increasing

*Indicative of 2023/24 results

Community Participation Plan

All councils in NSW are required to prepare a Community Participation Plan (CPP) under Division 2.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)*.

In addition to our engagement processes and targets outlined in this Strategy, we have an ongoing commitment to our community specifically in relation to planning matters.

This CPP is based on the following Community Participation Principles:

• Our community has a right to be informed of planning matters that affect it

• Planning information should be easily accessible and in plain language

• We engage in early, representative, ongoing, and meaningful engagement with the community using methods appropriate to the significance and impact of proposed planning

• We engage in open and transparent decision making, including reasons for planning decisions.

The CPP sets out how and when we will engage communities across all the planning functions Council performs (strategic planning and development assessment).
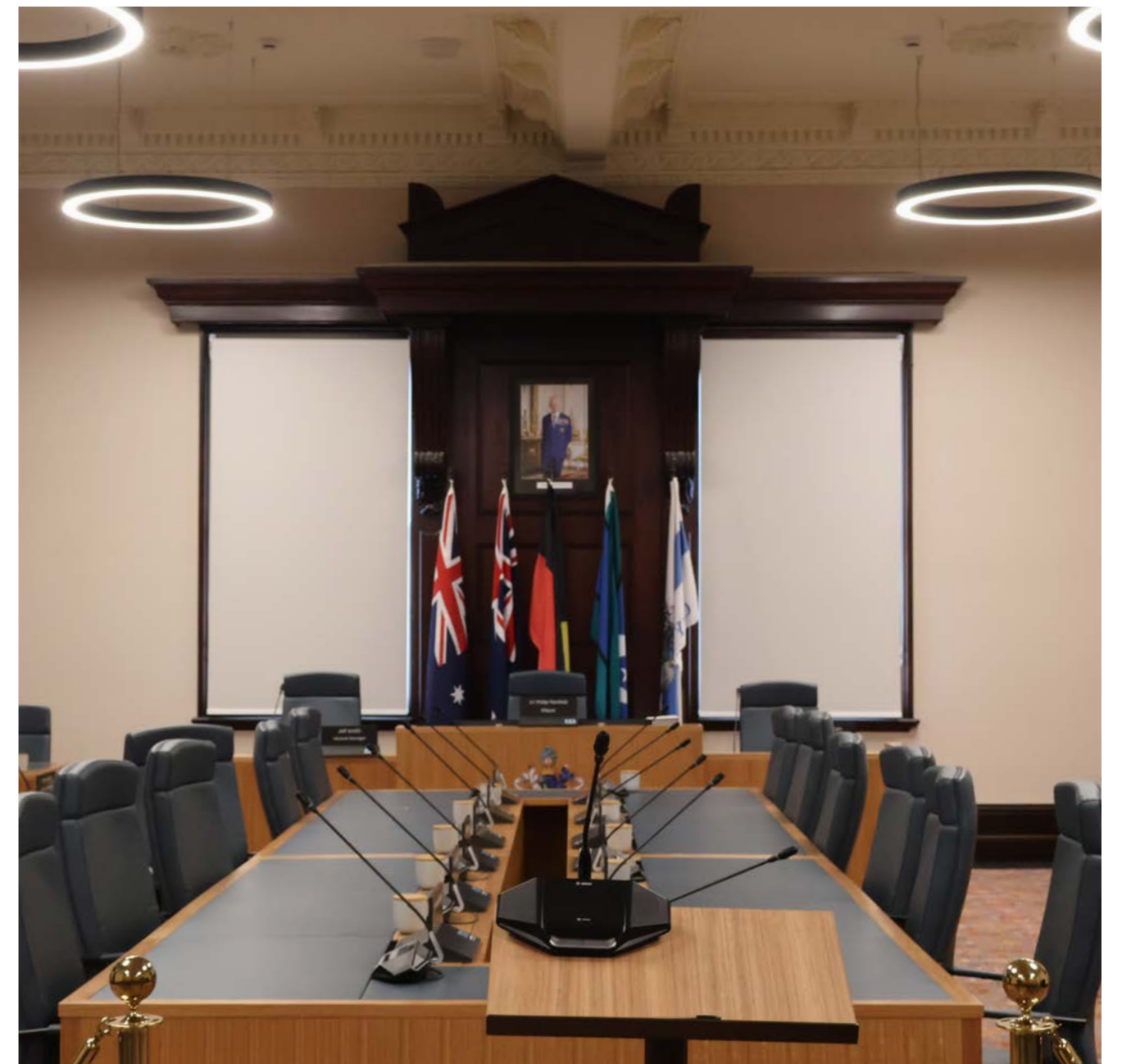
Making a submission

Anyone can make a submission on a proposal or development application during an exhibition. Submissions are to be lodged with Council by the submissions close date. Council may choose to consider submissions received outside the exhibition period at its discretion.

A submission in the form of an objection should specify the planning grounds on which you are objecting and the impact the proposal may have on your property, the street or community.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered by Council.

Where a petition is received the person who submits the petition to Council will be acknowledged as the point of contact for all future correspondence on the progress of the application. Petitions will not be counted as a submission.

Submissions may be made publicly available to other consent bodies as well as published in a Council meeting agenda, where applicable. Should you wish to keep your personal details confidential, you must request this in writing with your submission.

Information about how to complete a submission can be found on maitland.nsw.gov.au. Submissions can be made in writing, dropped into the Maitland Administration Centre, sent by email to info@maitland.nsw.gov.au or by mailing a written submission to:

The General Manager

Maitland City Council

PO Box 220, Maitland NSW 2320

Privacy

The personal information provided as part of submissions will be used for the purpose of considering the specific project or proposal on exhibition and will become a record of Council. All information will be stored securely and retained in accordance with the *State Records Act 1998*.

Political donations and gifts

Any person making a submission on a planning related matter (for example a development application, development control plans, local environmental plans, contribution plans etc.) must complete a *Disclosure Statement of Political Donations and Gifts* and submit it to Council with their submission. This is to minimise any perception of undue influence on decision making. For information on reportable donations refer to Section 10.4 of the *EP&A Act*.

Public access

Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 5.30pm.

Public access allows community members to address a Council meeting regarding an item on the agenda. All community members are welcome to attend Council meetings. Should a person wish to speak at a Council meeting, regarding an item on the agenda, they must lodge a Public Access Speaker Request Form by noon on the day of the Council meeting.

Access guidelines are outlined on the request form which can be found by searching 'speaker request form' on Council's website. For more information contact the Office of the General Manager on 02 4934 9700.

Decision making

Council is required to notify the community about the decisions it makes on applications for development consent and applications for the modification of a development consent (where the application was exhibited) and include:

• The decision that was made

• The date of the decision

• The reasons for the decision.

Decisions on applications can be viewed via Council's online application tracker.

Exhibition timeframes

There are mandatory statutory timeframes for the public exhibition of planning related documents, planning proposals, planning agreements and development applications. These are set in Schedule 1 of the *EP&A Act* and in the table opposite.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK	EXHIBITION TIMEFRAME
PLANNING DOCUMENTS	
Draft community participation plans (CPP)	28 days
Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)	28 days
Planning proposals for local environmental plans (LEPs) subject to a gateway determination	10-30 working days as specified in the gateway determination issued by the Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure for the proposal
Reclassification of land	28 days and a public hearing scheduled for at least 21 days after the public exhibition occurs
Draft development control plans	28 days
Draft contribution plans	28 days
Draft planning agreements	28 days
Draft works in kind agreements	28 days
Planning strategies, structure plans or master plans	28 days
PLANNING ASSESSMENTS	
Application for development consent (other than for complying development certificate, for designated development or for state significant development)	14 days* or: (a) if a different period of public exhibition is specified for the application in the relevant community participation plan—the period so specified, or (b) if the relevant community participation plan specifies that no public exhibition is required for the application—no public exhibition
Application for development consent for designated development	28 days
Application for development consent for nominated integrated or threatened species development	28 days
Application for development consent for State Significant Development	28 days
Application for development consent for category 1 remediation works	28 days
Application for modification of development consent that is required to be publicly exhibited by the regulations	Section 4.55(1) – Not required Section 4.55(1A) – Not required Section 4.55(2) – as per the 2021 EP&A Regulations Section 8.3 – as per the 2021 EP&A Regulations
Environmental impact statement (EIS) obtained under Division 5.1	28 days
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for State Significant Infrastructure under Division 5.2	28 days
Council related development applications	28 days
Regionally significant developments	28 days

*Where Council is of the opinion that the proposed development is minor in nature and will not adversely affect the amenity of the adjoining land, exhibition of the development may not be required. For more information on discretionary and non mandatory notification, see Chapter A.4 of the Maitland Development Control Plan 2011.

Key points to note about public exhibition:

- Exhibition timeframes are measured in calendar days and include weekends unless otherwise specified. If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, we may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day.

- As outlined in Schedule 1 to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979,* the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from the calculation of a period of public exhibition.
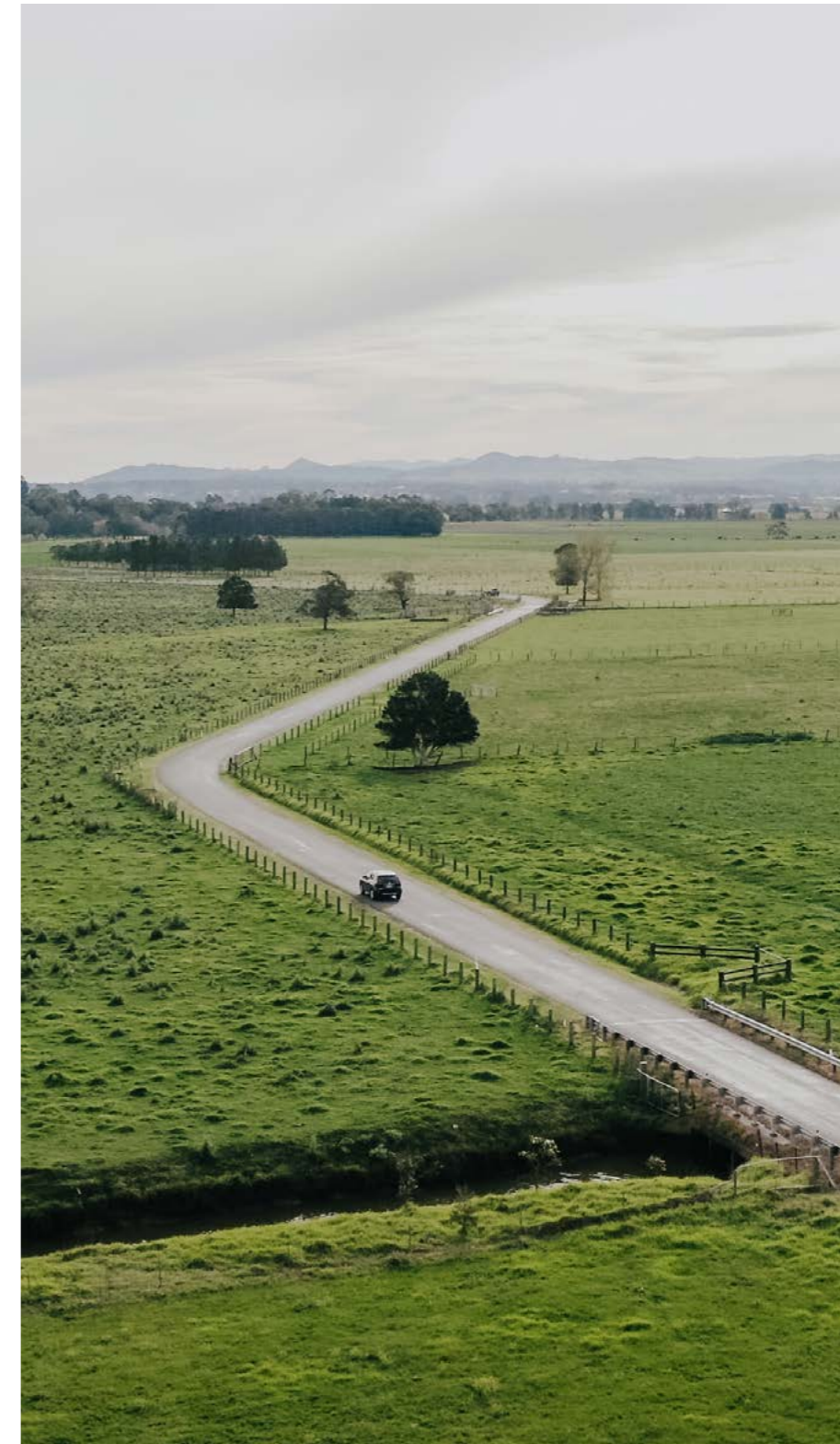
Exhibition requirements

EXHIBITION TYPE	LETTER TO AFFECTED LAND OWNERS	NSW PLANNING PORTAL	COUNCIL WEBSITE
Draft community participation plans (CPP)	No	Yes	Yes
Draft local strategic planning statements (LSPS)	No	Yes	Yes
Planning proposals for local environmental plans subject to a gateway determination	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reclassification of land	Yes	Yes	Yes
Draft development control plans	Yes	Yes	Yes
Draft contribution plans	No	Yes	Yes
Draft planning agreements	Yes	No	Yes
Draft works in kind agreements	No	No	Yes
Planning strategies, structure plans or master plans	No	No	Yes
Exempt and Complying Development	No	No	No
Development Assessments	Yes[1]	No	Yes
Integrated Development or Threatened Species Development	Yes	No	Yes
Designated Development	Yes	No	Yes
Application for modification of consent	Yes	No	Yes

[1]*Complying development certificates go on exhibition as per the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Information Sheet 1.4: Complying development – notification to neighbours, affected land owners and adjoining land owners are typically notified where practicable and where the amendment will directly affect their property. Minor amendments, or amendments that apply across a large area (such as an entire centre, or across the whole city) may not be notified through a letter to landowners.*

Exempt and complying development

Some development, such as exempt and complying development under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008*, does not allow opportunities for community engagement.