## **10.4.** Draft Community Engagement Plan: North Sydney - Towards a Sustainable Future

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ENDORSED BY	Therese Cole, Chief Executive Officer		
ATTACHMENTS	North Sydney Towards a sustainable future Community		
	Engagement Plan [10.4.1 - 17 pages]		
CSP LINK	2. Our Built Infrastructure		
	2.1 Infrastructure and assets meet diverse community needs		
	5. Our Civic Leadership		
	5.2 Strong civic leadership and customer focussed services		
	5.3 Community is engaged in what Council does		

#### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Community Engagement Plan to inform service levels, infrastructure condition, and rating levels.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

- On 30 June 2025, Council approved the 2025-2029 Delivery Program, and the 2025-2026 Operational Plan and Budget.
- Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting documents raise concerns regarding Council's financial strength and financial sustainability, including its ability to maintain current service levels and the maintenance and renewal of community infrastructure.
- To inform a review of Council's Long-Term Financial Plan and options for financial repair, the adopted 2025-2026 Operational Plan committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement in relation to services and infrastructure.
- The proposed 'North Sydney Towards a Sustainable Future' Engagement Plan has been developed to meet this commitment.
- The engagement will have two stages. The first stage will seek to explore community expectations around service levels, infrastructure conditions, and financial repair options, as included within the Operational Plan.
- The findings of the first stage will be used to inform new modelling for Council's Long Term Financial Plan and future rating options, which will then be the subject of the second stage of community engagement.
- The engagement approach has been designed to meet both the inform and consult levels under IAP2 engagement standards as well as the criteria for community engagement

- contained in the Office of Local Government 2020 Guidelines for the preparation of an application for a special variation to general income.
- Stage one will run for four weeks commencing on 1 August 2025 and concluding on 29 August 2025. Stage two will run for five weeks commencing on 20 October 2025 and concluding on 24 November 2025.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- **1. THAT** the proposed North Sydney Towards a Sustainable Future Community Engagement plan be endorsed for implementation.
- **2. THAT** the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to make minor corrections and adjustments to the implementation of the Community Engagement plan if required.

#### **Background**

On 30 June 2025 Council approved its Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan 2025-2026 and budget.

These documents outline concerns regarding Council's financial strength and financial sustainability, including its ability to maintain and renew community infrastructure.

To inform a review of Councils Long Term Financial Plan and options for financial repair, the adopted 2025-2026 Operational Plan committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement in relation to services and infrastructure.

#### Report

The purpose of the community engagement plan is to actively consult residents and stakeholders in discussions around the current levels of service and the condition of local infrastructure, with the aim of informing Council decision-making.

This engagement follows the extensive community engagement campaign in 2024 titled "Next Ten Years". Through community discussion, research, workshops, and engagement, actions were developed to meet current and merging challenges and opportunities within North Sydney, to ensure a responsive and proactive approach to the future.

A comprehensive review and redevelopment of Asset Management Plans was also undertaken in 2024. These plans are supported by asset inspections and technical levels of service. This engagement plan will support progress towards best practice asset management standards (ISO 55000:2024) by also developing community expectations in future planning.

By seeking community input through this engagement plan, Council seeks to balance the financial realities with public expectations, priorities, and willingness to support service levels, especially where ageing infrastructure may require increased investment.

The community engagement plan is designed to ensure transparency and help build trust as Council considers resourcing needs, develops financial strategies, including rating increases, and plans for a sustainable future.

The engagement will focus on understanding and aligning financial sustainability with community expectations across four key areas:

- 1) service levels including whether Council should do less, the same or more;
- 2) infrastructure conditions including desired standards of infrastructure;
- 3) community willingness to pay for these outcomes; and
- 4) other financial strategies.

The engagement will be conducted in two stages:

Stage 1: Service levels and infrastructure; and

Stage 2: Consideration of a revised Long Term Financial Plan and rating options.

The plan has been developed in compliance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2029 (CES) as well as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia Quality Assurance Standard.

The plan is attached for Council's consideration.

#### **Consultation requirements**

Community engagement will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

The community engagement will be delivered in two stages. Stage 1 will commence on 1 August and conclude on 29 August 2025. Stage 2 will commence on 20 October and conclude on 24 November 2025. This provides nine weeks for community input and avoids the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

#### **Financial/Resource Implications**

There are no financial / resource implications for the implementation of this plan. It is part of the operational budget for 2025/2026.

#### Legislation

This community engagement plan has been developed in line with the Office of Local Government 2020 Guidelines for the preparation of an application for a special variation to general income and the Guidelines for preparation of an application to increase minimum rates above the statutory limit.

### **NORTH SYDNEY – Towards a Sustainable Future**

### Community Engagement Plan July 2025



Page 1

#### 1. Background

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To inform a review of Councils Long Term Financial Plan and options for financial repair, the adopted 2025-2026 Operational Plan committed to undertaking comprehensive engagement in relation to services and infrastructure.

### 2. Purpose of plan

The purpose of this community engagement plan is to actively consult residents and stakeholders in discussions around the current levels of service and the condition of local infrastructure, with the aim of informing council decision-making.

This engagement follows the extensive community engagement campaign in 2024 titled "Next Ten Years". Through community discussion, research, workshops and engagement, actions were developed to meet current and merging challenges and opportunities within North Sydney to ensure a responsive and proactive approach to the future.

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This community engagement plan is designed to ensure transparency and help build trust as the council considers resourcing needs, develops financial strategies, including rating increases, and plans for a sustainable future.

The engagement will focus on understanding and aligning financial sustainability with community expectations across four key areas:

- 1) service levels including whether Council should do less, the same or more
- 2) infrastructure conditions including desired standards of infrastructure
- 3) community willingness to pay for these outcomes
- 4) other financial strategies

Page 2

The engagement will be conducted in two stages:

Stage 1: Service levels and infrastructure

Stage 2: Consideration of a revised Long Term Financial Plan together with rating options

#### 3. Principles

This engagement is guided by the following principles:



#### **PURPOSE**

Engagement activities will be guided by a clearly defined purpose outlining objectives, timelines, and resource needs.



#### RESOURCING

Adequate resourcing, including staff and financial support, will be allocated according to the project's complexity and impact.



#### TIMING

Engagement will occur at appropriate stages in the project lifecycle to allow sufficient time for meaningful stakeholder input.



#### INCLUSION

Engagement efforts will be inclusive, aiming to reach a diverse audience and provide information in accessible formats.



#### CLARITY

Information provided will be accurate, unbiased, and presented in plain language, with technical details clearly explained.



#### RESPONSIVENESS

We will offer regular updates and clear feedback on how community input has influenced decisions.



#### IMPROVEMENT

Engagement practices will be evaluated regularly to identify strengths and areas for enhancement, using feedback to refine future efforts.

#### 4. Community Engagement Approach

This plan has been developed in compliance with North Sydney Council's ('Council') Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2029 (CES) as well as the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia Quality Assurance Standard.

This engagement is defined as 'high impact', which means that the issues will have a real or perceived impact across the whole LGA. The issue has the potential to create controversy and has a high level of potential community interest.

It is also considered to have 'high complexity', as the information presented to the community will be based on relatively complex financial analysis and a wide range of service and infrastructure considerations.

2

Page 3

### 4.1. Who are our community stakeholders?

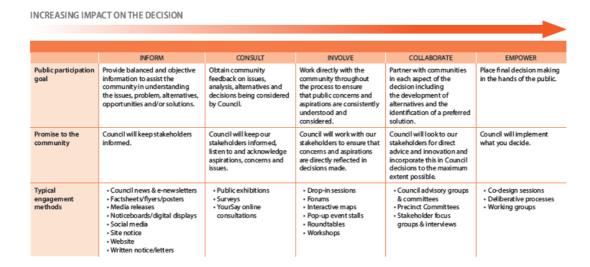
The key impacted stakeholders are those that pay rates in the Council's Local Government Area (LGA) or are renting property in the LGA, where there may be rent increases passed to cover the proposed rate increases fully or partly.

Stakeholder groups have been identified below to ensure that the specific considerations of these groups can be integrated into the community engagement plan. These groupings are not mutually exclusive, that is, individuals may fall into a number of different stakeholder groups. For example, individuals who own multiple properties in the LGA may be both resident ratepayers and landlord ratepayers.

Stakeholder Group	Who is in the group	Specific considerations
Resident ratepayers	Homeowners who are residents of the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented
Non-resident ratepayers	Homeowners who are not residents of the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented
Residential renters	Renters who are residents of the LGA	It will be a decision of the landlord on whether and when any rate increases are passed on to renters
Business ratepayers	Business property owners within the LGA	Proposed rate increases will be directly incurred by these stakeholders, although these costs may be passed on if the property is rented. Rates are generally a business expense to this category of ratepayer
Business renters	Business who rent property in the LGA	Similar to residential renters, it will be the decision for the landlords to pass the increase cost of the rate increase on to these businesses. Rent can be a business expense.
CALD members	Residents and business operators with CALD backgrounds	Culturally and linguistically diverse community members will require the option to have information presented in their preferred language
Community groups	Members of community groups that engage with Council	These community-led groups have a direct interest in their members/residents and therefore, they need to understand why Council is proposing changes to rates.

#### 4.2. Levels of engagement

The level of engagement is defined from the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation in the figure below. This spectrum outlines the level of engagement required depending on the purpose and desired outcome of the project.



In considering the level of engagement required by the plan, regard has been given to the assessment criteria for a special rate variation (SRV) application. This criterion is as follows:

- 1. Demonstrate that the need and purpose of a different rate path for Council's General Fund is clearly articulated and The Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents.
- 2. Show evidence that the community is aware of the need for and the extent of a rate rise.
- 3. Show that the impact on affected ratepayers is reasonable.
- 4. Exhibit, approve and adopt the relevant IP&R documents.
- 5. Explain and quantify the productivity improvements and cost containment strategies in its IP&R documents and/or application.
- 6. Address any other matter that IPART considers relevant.

To meet criterion two, Council would only need to undertake engagement at the "inform" level, but a "consult" level would ensure it also more fully meets criteria one and four.

Additionally, where the proposed SRV funds additional projects, infrastructure renewals, services or service level increases, Council must consider the

Page 5

## North Sydney – Towards A Sustainable Future Community Engagement Plan

community's willingness to pay for these increases with increased rates, as required for criteria 3.

As a result, this community engagement plan is drafted to meet both the inform and consult levels of engagement. This means that Council will provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and preferred solution and to obtain the public's feedback on analysis and alternatives.

Council will keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision made by Council.

### 4.3. Engagement objectives

The objectives of this community engagement process are:

- To ensure public awareness of Council's two stage community engagement campaign and encourage participation.
- To enhance public understanding of the range of services and infrastructure assets provided by Council.
- To help the community understand the intergenerational role of local government
- To help the community understand local government financial considerations and reporting.
- To enhance community understanding of how Council is funded, and the role rates play in financing Council services and assets.
- To facilitate genuine two-way communication between Council and its diverse stakeholders
- To provide clear, accessible information about service levels, asset conditions, financial sustainability, and proposed special rate options
- To close the feedback loop by demonstrating how community input informs Council decisions
- Manage and mitigate misinformation.

#### 5. Engagement Process:

#### 5.1. Stage 1:

#### 5.1.1. Survey engagement

Page 6

This engagement will be undertaken in two parts by an independent market research consultant. The first part will include a survey focused on community input in relation to service levels for discretionary services.

This includes what services the community would like to:

- o Reduce
- o Maintain
- o Increase

This survey will also explore alternative revenue sources, as outlined in Council's Operational Plan.

The second part will include a separate survey focused on infrastructure condition.

Both surveys will be conducted by way of demographic grouping and broader community grouping. This will ensure consideration is given to widespread views across the community.

Both surveys will explore the community's willingness to pay additional rates to maintain or improve services and infrastructure.

The results of these surveys will inform a review of Councils Long Term Financial Plan and the development of new rating options.

#### 5.1.2. Awareness and information provision

This will include the development and distribution of information to meet the community engagement objectives outlined in this plan.

#### 5.1.3. Key communication messages

To inform Council's review of the Long-Term Financial Plan and development of rating options, stage one messaging will seek to assess community expectations in relation to service levels and infrastructure as well as willingness to pay more to maintain or improve standards.

Messaging will include details on the:

- the release of the survey and timeframe for completion
- how the community can provide their feedback
- the range and scope of Council's services
- the condition of Council's infrastructure assets

### North Sydney - Towards A Sustainable Future Page 7

#### 5.2. Stage 2

#### **5.2.1.** Information provision

**Community Engagement Plan** 

This will include the development and exhibition of a new Long Term Financial Plan and rating options. Information will be provided in various communication channels to clearly explain:

- The need for and purpose of a different rate path
- · The extent of proposed change to residential and business rates
- · To communicate the timeline and process for decisions

### 5.2.2. Key communication messages

Messaging will clearly address:

- the proposed cumulative SRV rate increases including the rate peg for each major rating category (in both percentage and dollar terms)
- the annual increase in average rates (in both percentage and dollar terms) that will result if the proposed SV is approved in full (and not just the increase in daily or weekly terms)
- · whether the increases are temporary or permanent
- increases in other annual charges, where they are likely to be higher than CPI increases
- the rate levels that would apply without the proposed SRV or minimum rate increase
- productivity enhancements or cost containment strategies undertaken by the council
- potential alternatives to the SRV.

Any community communications and collateral will also include:

- how community members can seek further information or have their questions answered.
- how community members can provide their feedback during each stage of engagement.
- what to expect after each community engagement stage is completed as well as IPART's public submission and assessment process.

A detailed set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) and their responses will be developed for each stage of engagement. While every effort is made to ensure that there is a complete list of FAQs at the start of each engagement period, these questions will be regularly reviewed and updated throughout the engagement process. The starting list of questions can be found in Appendix A.

Page 8

### 5.2.3. Survey engagement

This engagement will be undertaken by an independent market research consultant. The survey will be conducted by way of demographic grouping and broader community grouping. This will ensure consideration is given to widespread views across the community.

The survey will seek the community's feedback in relation to Councils Long-Term Financial Plan and rating options.

### 6. Engagement methods

The proposed mechanisms to be used for this two-stage engagement campaign are outlined in the table below.

Mechanism	Level of	Recommended	Reach (stakeholder	Stage
	consultation	under CES	groups)	
Web page (Your Say North Sydney)	Inform	Essential	Engagement platform that can provide a wide range of information and house the online engagement survey	1 & 2
Newspaper advertisements	Inform	Essential	Key local publications: Mosman Daily, Northshore Times	2
Fact sheet	Inform	Essential	Provide information to support each stage of the engagement	2
Media release/s	Inform	Essential	Provide information on engagement and outcomes & mitigate misinformation	1 & 2
Information displays	Inform	Essential	Unmanned displays in key locations (e.g. libraries) to provide information including details of where to go if they have questions	1 & 2
e-Newsletter	Inform	Essential	Inform subscribers of Council's multiple enewsletters	1 & 2
North Sydney News (print publication)	Inform	Desirable	Delivered to Council residents	2

Page 9

Mechanism	Level of consultation	Recommended under CES	Reach (stakeholder groups)	Stage
Mayoral letter to residents with information	Inform	Desirable	Delivered to Council residents providing information / link to online survey/public exhibition	2
Targeted letters/emails and fact sheets to community groups	Inform	Desirable	Provide information on proposal/consultation specific to their interest and how to participate (e.g. proposed impact to Community Centres) with ability to forward on to their members/networks	2
Social media	Inform	Essential	Followers of Council's Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Council's YouTube can be used for live streaming as required.	1 & 2
Combined Precinct Committee	Inform and consult	Essential	A session with the combined Precinct Committee	1 & 2
Public forums (face to face)	Inform and consult	Essential	Face to face forums for those unable to attend online.	2
Public forums (online)	Inform and consult	Essential	An online forum to optimise reach.	2
Precinct meeting presentations	Inform and consult	Desirable	Council staff present and answer questions from residents as required	1 & 2
Demographically selected phone survey	Consult	Essential	Demographically targeted group of residents to provide deeper feedback on the proposal	1 & 2
Demographically selected follow up online survey	Consult	Essential	Demographically targeted group of residents to provide deeper feedback on the proposal	1
Public online survey (using same questions as demographically selected follow up online survey	Consult	Essential	Enable broader feedback from community and to meet SRV assessment criteria for community engagement	1 & 2

Page 10

Mechanism	Level of	Recommended	Reach (stakeholder	Stage
Email to engagement survey respondents	Inform	under CES Desirable	Inform people who provided feedback on how it is being considered	1 & 2
Signage – (bus shelters, billboards, community noticeboards)	Inform	Desirable	60 community noticeboards 2 bus shelters 1 billboard	2
Customer Service IVR message	Inform	Desirable	Inform callers that consultation is open and YourSay page address while waiting 'on hold'	1 & 2
Customer Service Web Chat message (TBC if possible)	Inform	Desirable	Inform callers that consultation is open and YourSay page address at end of chat	1 & 2
Business roundtable/forum	Inform and consult	Desirable	Demographically targeted audience invited to forum to gain deeper insights and provide feedback on the proposal	2
Pop up stalls	Inform	Desirable	Manned displays providing information on, promoting survey participation and addressing questions from the public	1 & 2
Videos	Inform	Desirable	Provide information on the consultation and proposal to ensure more informed decision- making	1 & 2

These external community engagement mechanisms will be coupled with internal communications to inform all staff about the two-stage engagement process and provide them with information to direct questions from members of the public that may arise in their day-to-day interactions. This will include:

- A managers' briefing
- Staff briefings by executive / managers
- Information and scripting for customer service and frontline teams
- Updates in staff e-news and VivaEngage

Page 11

#### 7. Timetable

The proposed community engagement is expected to run in two stages. Stage one will run for 28 days commencing on 1 August 2025 and concluding on 29 August 2025. Stage two will run for 5 weeks commencing on 20 October 2025 and concluding on 24 November 2025.

This provides 9 weeks for community input and avoids the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

The key project development phases are outlined in the following table:

Stage one:	Timing (indicative)	
Survey and communication collateral production	July	
2. Public exhibition / consultation	August	
3. Submission analysis	September	
4. Report to Council	October	
Stage two:	Timing	
5. Survey and communication collateral production	September – October	
6. Public exhibition / consultation	October – November	
7. Submission analysis	November – December	
7. Submission analysis	November – December	

#### 8. Measures of success

During the consultation process, the level of engagement will be monitored by Council's Communications and Engagement team. Any proposed adjustments to the plan will be approved by the CEO before implementation.

Proposed evaluation methods include:

- Participation Rates: Track the number of participants across various engagement activities and demographic groups.
- Diversity and Inclusion: Monitor representation from non-English speakers, youth, seniors, and marginalised groups to ensure equity.
- Communication Metrics: Monitor and evaluate awareness and engagement rates across all channels and adjust tactics accordingly.

Implementation of the community engagement plan will also be monitored to ensure it meets IPARTS community awareness and engagement criterion.

### 9. Roles and responsibilities

The roles of Councillors, Council officers and consultants in the engagement process are defined in the table below.

Role	Responsibility
Mayor/Councillors	<ul> <li>Approve community engagement plan</li> <li>Attend face-to-face community sessions (optional, but recommended)</li> <li>To remain objective until the results of community consultation have been presented for informed decision.</li> <li>Mayor (or delegate) to participate in media interviews as appropriate</li> </ul>
CEO	<ul> <li>Approve / any adjustments to the community engagement process as required during engagement</li> <li>Participate in media interviews as appropriate</li> </ul>
Council ELT including CEO and delegated staff	<ul> <li>Brief staff on SRV, process and community engagement activities</li> <li>Attend community face-to-face sessions</li> <li>Answer questions raised by the community in the engagement process</li> </ul>
Council's communications & engagement team	<ul> <li>Develop and distribute assets including digital, graphic, video, print etc</li> <li>Publish and release materials in line with this community engagement plan, including internal communications</li> <li>Gather community feedback and provide to consultant for analysis</li> <li>Respond to community enquiries in person at stalls/forums and via correspondence</li> </ul>
Council CFO and finance and asset management teams	<ul> <li>Support the development of background papers and other collateral with financial analysis and modelling</li> <li>Update the LTFP model and document for exhibition</li> </ul>
Consultant	<ul> <li>Develop and conduct demographically representative community engagement surveys for stages one and two</li> <li>Provide same surveys online for Council to exhibit for community feedback</li> <li>Analyse findings from demographic surveys and community feedback</li> <li>Prepare report on community engagement outcomes</li> </ul>

Page 13

### 10. Monitoring and risk assessment

The table below documents the key risks associated with this community engagement. The risk ratings are assessments of the residual risk after the documented risk responses are implemented.

Risk	Risk response	Residual likelihood	Residual consequence	Residual risk rating
Engagement doesn't meet IPART assessment criteria.	Engagement plan and activities to analyse and integrate requirement to meet criteria.	Low	Medium	Low
Impact on ratepayers of raising rates at a time of increasing inflation and cost of living pressures.	Capacity to pay analysis to understand the impacts of rate increase on community. Key messages to explain impact on Council of not seeking the SRV.	Medium	Medium	Medium

### **Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions**

The below is a starting list of the questions we expect to develop for the FAQs.

#### **Stage One:**

- What are Council's assets?
- What is an infrastructure renewal?
- How many people use them?
- What are Council's services?
- How many people use them?
- Why do Council's infrastructure need to be renewed?
- How did Council's assets get to such a poor condition?
- Why does Council provide so many services? Are they all necessary?
- I don't use these services/assets. Why should I have to pay for them?
- How does Council fund its assets and how much do they cost each year?
- How does Council fund its services and how much do they cost each year?
- What level of funding does Council receive from the NSW State Government for services and infrastructure?
- Why do residents have to fund this? Can't you get more funding from other levels of government to help pay for things?
- Who is Micromex Research?
- Why is Council surveying residents again?
- Why is Council using Micromex Research to survey residents?
- How can I provide more feedback other than the survey?

#### **Stage Two:**

- What is a rate peg?
- How do rates work? How are they calculated?
- What is a minimum rate?
- What is an SRV?
- How will the proposed special rate variation impact my rates?
- Why do we need an increase to our rates?
- What is different about this application to the last one?
- Is this application helping to pay for the North Sydney Olympic Pool?
- What is the alternative to the proposed rates increase?
- How much do residents in neighbouring Councils pay for their rates?
- How much do businesses in neighbouring Councils pay for their rates?
- What action has Council taken to address its financial situation?
- How does Council work out what rates to charge each resident?
- What is Council doing to improve efficiency and productivity?
- Can't you get more funding from other levels of government to help pay for things?

Page 15

- What if I can't afford to pay my increased rates? (Hardship Policy)
- When would a rate increase be applied from?
- Who is IPART and what do they do?
- How is Council funded?
- Do other levels of government provide funding towards services and infrastructure provided by Council?
- What is the difference between Levies and Rates?

#### Page 16

### Appendix B: Detailed action plan for stage one

Action	By when
Develop Survey	25 July
Commence demographic survey recruitment – CATI & Online	25 July
Develop FAQs	1 August
Draft and design engagement collateral outlined in actions below. For	1 August
example, Website copy, Factsheets/flyers, Newsletter articles	-
Build & publish 'Have Your Say' page including survey	1 August
Develop & implement video plan	Runs throughout
Develop & implement media plan	August
Develop & implement social media plan	
Develop & distribute talking point for customer service & frontline staff	1 August
Develop & implement IVR, webchat and customer service screen	1 August
content plus email banner signature	
Staff communications (Viva Engage, NewSCene, Managers Talking	w/c 28 July & 4
Points articles)	August
Development application e-news article/s	w/c 4 August
Set up unmanned information displays (posters/flyers)	4 August
Draft presentation for Precinct meetings to deliver as required	5 August
NB Multiple meeting dates throughout August.	
Precinct e-news article/s	1, 15, 22 & 29
	August
Business e-news – special edition	w/c 4 August
Have Your Say e-news article/s	w/c 4 August
Bushcare e-news – special edition	w/c 4 August
Sustainability e-news – special edition	w/c 4 August
Coal Loader e-news – special edition	w/c 4 August
Events e-news – special edition	w/c 4 August
Council e-news article/s	13 August
Library e-news article/s	15 August
Schedule community pop up stalls	4-22 August x 4
	sessions
Combined Precinct Committee update	19 August
Collate feedback & develop themed responses	September
Prepare paper for Council	September
Council meeting	October
Summary feedback & engagement stats published on Have Your Say	Wednesday after
page with update on Council decision (closing the loop)	Council meeting
Email survey respondents with outcome linking to information on the	Thursday after
Have Your Say page (closing the loop)	Council meeting

The Stage Two detailed action list will follow a similar format and be informed by the measures of success outcomes for stage one engagement.