

From: Sue and Roger [sue_rog@dodo.com.au]

Sent: Friday, 25 June 2010 11:58:05 AM

To: Corporate Email

Subject: Submission to the Draft Community Engagement Strategy - Roger Graf

The General Manager

Tweed Shire Council

PO Box 816

MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484

Submission to the Draft Community Engagement Strategy

Let me express my support for the idea of a "Community Engagement Strategy" for our Tweed community. This will bring the community together to enhance future policy making by our TSC and the democratic process to ensure the success of future policy proposals.

The only concern that I have is; how are you going to achieve a broad view of people to represent the community by the use of a database and will the database be created by an independent agency?

To be more affront, who is going to create the database to achieve a distribution of people for the number of communities within the shire and how does the various socio/economic values become part of the process within the database.

For example; Fingal Head has a population of approximately 600 people, of those some 300 are rate payers, yet 100 of those are living outside of the shire, the other group of people are non rate payers making up of 500 and a 100 of those are people that are holidaying in the area. How do you select the people from this grouping, but before we consider this, there is the socio/economic group. Will you be able to include a broad spectrum of people from different ends of the socio/economic group? Also, will certain people be given weight as to their age, race and intelligence?

Your response to these questions would be grateful.

Respectfully,

Roger Graf

3 / 48 Main Road,

FINGAL HEAD

N.S.W. AUSTRALIA 2487

[t] +617 55130588

[e] sue_rog@dodo.com.au

dated: 25 Jun. 10

The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
P.O. Box 816
Murwillumbah 2484

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DOC. No:
RECD:	15 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO:	GREEN, S
PDF COPY <input type="checkbox"/>	IMAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

29 Navigators Way
Tweed Heads, 2485
14.7.10

Dear Sir,

Re Community Involvement in Planning + 800 member
Citizens Panel.

I would like to offer the following comments:

1. The proposal to establish an 800 member Citizens Panel is absurd
2. Citizens offer their services and are elected as councillors on the basis of their claims to be able to govern the shire economically and efficiently,
3. Councillors must therefore establish the necessary means and procedures for finding out what is best for the shire,
4. Councillors appoint a general manager and other senior staff on the basis of their competence to perform the duties assigned to them.
5. The general manager and senior staff recruit other staff to assist in ensuring all duties are performed efficiently and economically.
6. Procedures should be established to ensure all staff undertake their duties and responsibility in a proper manner,
7. Where necessary councillors must be able to rely upon its staff to provide accurate and impartial information and advice on matters of interest and concern to them.

8. If necessary, senior staff can seek the services of expert consultants on a particular subject to ensure councillors are provided with the required accurate and impartial information.
9. An 800-member citizens panel would be no more than a collection of various pressure or self-interest groups. It would not represent the best interests of all citizens.

As set out in 2 above, people should not be elected if they are going to rely upon a panel of 800 self-interest people to tell them what to do.

10. Ratepayers shouldn't be hit with the cost of creating and supporting a panel of 800 non-elected persons.
11. Finally it is well known that a committee of one is the most effective whereas a panel of 800 could be a real disaster.

The above are just a few of my views. I might summarise by saying councillors should do their own work on how to run the shire and rely upon the information and advice from its staff if necessary.

Yours faithfully,
G. L. Corkill

G. L. CORKILL

GEORGE CORKILL

From: Stephanie Deane [gsdeane@bigpond.net.au]

Sent: Friday, 16 July 2010 6:47:09 PM

To: Corporate Email

Subject: Submission regarding the Draft Community Engagement Strategy - Save Jack Evans Boat Harbour Committee

16th July, 2010

Mr. M. Rayner
General Manager
P.O Box 816
MURWILLUMBAH. NSW. 2487

Dear Mr. Rayner

Re: Draft Community Engagement Strategy.

This is a good concept, providing residents input is genuinely taken onboard and followed through with.

Reagrds
Stephanie Deane
Secretary
Save JEBH Committee

5/3 Hill Street
TWEED HEADS
NSW 2485

The General Manager

20th July 2010

Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484

COMMENTS ON THE “DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY”
Version 1 by the Tweed Shire Council- June 2010
By
Tweed District Residents and Ratepayers Association
PO Box 801, Tweed Heads, NSW 2485

Dear Mike,

It is difficult to comprehend how the first seven pages of the “Community Engagement Strategy” document led immediately to the establishment of the “action plan” that established a Citizens Panel of 800 randomly selected members of the Tweed Community. There is no investigation of other options or research quoted that supports this option over any other.

It would appear that the paper was written to attempt to justify the Citizens Panel.

A HIGHLY NAÏVE CONCEPT

The concept of a Citizen Panel appears to be both poorly researched and highly naïve as it is offered without drawing on research or referring to other areas where a Local Authority has randomly selected a Citizen Panel that needs to be highly document literate, especially in management planning in a medium sized bureaucracy; completely unbiased and be a highly interested and highly motivated group of 800 citizens that will volunteer their free time to satisfy one of the strategy aims as quoted: namely;

“One of the aims of the Community Engagement Strategy is to ensure all stakeholders can access and participate in the development, implementation and review of Tweed Shire Council’s Community Strategic Plan.

The plan is required, under NSW State Government legislation, to underpin Council’s integrated planning and reporting processes, which consist of:

- **Community Strategic Plan – a 10-year plan reviewed every four years.**
- **A Delivery Plan – a four-year plan reviewed annually.**
- **Operation Plan – one-year plan prepared annually.**
- **Resourcing Strategy – including a rolling 10-year long-term financial plan, rolling 10-year asset management plan and a four-year workforce management strategy.”**

THE CONCEPT APPEARS HIGHLY ARROGANT IN ITS STRUCTURE

The “Structure” and selection process of the Citizens Panel, reproduced below, is treating the Tweed Community as a willing and obedient servant of the Council. The writer does not live in the Tweed that our Association inhabits. The real Tweed is not a community that can be, *randomly selected to represent a pure number of “Citizen Tweeds” who are a statistical sample exceeding industry accepted standards of accuracy etc.*

“STRUCTURE - See Appendix for Citizen Panel composition for 2010/2011.

- The Citizens Panel will be statistically representative of the broad Tweed community including residents and ratepayers (including non-residential ratepayers), grouped into four geographical areas based on localities: Tweed Heads and surrounds, Tweed Coast, Murwillumbah and surrounds and Rural.”

- The total panel size of 800 is a representative sample of the Tweed population exceeding industry accepted standards of accuracy, providing Council with feedback which is statistically accurate of the Tweed community.
- The panel will primarily be facilitated online using an internet portal for members to log into. Members will be allocated an 'identification number' to maintain privacy and encourage a free exchange of opinions. A paper version of all information on the internet portal will be available for members who do not have internet access. Alternatively, all libraries in the Tweed offer internet access and Tweed Shire Council offices at Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads will soon provide internet access for customers to conduct Tweed Shire Council business.
- Panel members will be randomly selected from Council's ratepayer database and a resident non-ratepayer database. Residents who are not ratepayers can register their interest and go into the database pool for random selection.
- A Youth Panel will be created to cater for youth from the age of 18-25 who permanently reside in the Tweed."

OUR ASSOCIATION'S EXPERIENCE

Our Association's experience with Tweed Shire's Community Engagement confirms the research results outlined by Bob Baudino in his advice to the Six Councillors who caused our Council to be sacked in 2005. The quotes below are from his files. He was one of the Campaign Managers to Tweed Directions Inc. These files were reproduced in the "Tweed Shire Council Public Inquiry First Report, Page 307. This advice is thus from a highly qualified conservative election strategist;

"2. The majority of voters (probably something in the vicinity of 80%, if not more), simply have a limited or no interest in local authority elections or politics. They will usually have very little recognition of any Councillor's names and usually little or no understanding of policies. Quite a large percentage of people actually resent even having to vote." and;

"5. The percentage of voters who are strongly into policy, personalities and who have a clear understanding of Councillors and what they stand for, their past records and what a new Councillor may bring are very small in number in a local authority election and are probably less than 20%. It is probably more like about 10%. This group has probably made up their mind well before a campaign begins."

Lack of Interest in Local Government Issues

What research has the Shire completed on Tweed Voters to allow it to conclude that the Citizens Panel will not provide between 640 (80%) and 720 (90%) of the randomly selected voters **who are simply not interested in Local Government issues and would not be interested in becoming a member of the Citizen Panel if selected?**

The Concept of BIAS

Further we note that the "aim" of this Citizen's Panel is to establish an "**unbiased representative community resource for ongoing feed back and comment.**" One of the motivating forces that drives citizens to engage with Council is that they have an opinion that they want to offer to Council. Many Councillors who have different opinions believe these citizens are biased for one reason or another. It may be their political party or their view of Tweed future etc.

In the last 2008 Shire election we note that some large areas of the Tweed Community are **NOT** “Unbiased”. For example:

- a. 9,000 or 20.9% of the formal votes were either first preference or preference votes counted for “The Greens”. (8040 first preferences and 960 preferences)
- b. 5378 or 12.5% were votes for the Liberal Party candidate. (5,276 first preference and 102 preferences)

Just these two examples alone challenge the view that over 33% of any random sample would not be “unbiased” as they would belong to and push the policies of these two party political candidates.

Our Association is asking how the Shire is to remove this 33% from the unbiased sample of 800?

- a. What is the Communication Strategy’s definition of “**unbiased?**”
- b. What research has been completed to both define and select “unbiased” members of the community and confirm their “unbiased status”?

Literacy and Life Skills of a Randomly selected Community

The Council’s attention is drawn to ABS Report 4228.0 – Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey Summary of Results, Australia 2006 (Reissue) (Media Release enclosed) See Summary of updated results at

- <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/home/Topics+@+a+Glance?open+document#from-banner=GT>

Note that recent literacy results indicated that only just over 53% of a randomly selected community group would be expected to have acceptable “document reading literacy”.

Further complicating a 53% document literacy are the subject areas on which the proposed **Citizens Panel** is being asked to provide feedback and comment. The Association believes these areas are uniquely specialist areas in which few in the community would ever have had any experience and in which fewer would have any background.

Qualifications and Training

To fulfil one of the aims of the community engagement strategy our Association wants to know:

- What tests will be given to those in the community who are randomly selected to confirm they have an acceptable document literacy comprehension?
- What training, if any, will be given to ensure the community members selected have the necessary skills to develop/implement and review Local Authority planning concepts?

Communication by the Internet

At no time does the "Strategy" address or advise the percentage of the community that has a broadband internet connection. The strategy naively assumes those who lack the internet connection know how to access and use the internet at Shire libraries or are interested enough to read and comprehend council long term Local Authority management concepts at the library.

Costing of Paper Communications

Has the alternate solution of sending documents to members of the Citizen Panel who are not on the net been fully costed? Our guess is copying, postage and phone costs would be significant for both parties. We anticipate many hundreds of the 800 will not be on the net.

CONCLUSION

Our Association has provided researched advice that needs to be tested for accuracy in Tweed Shire because there is further evidence available that suggests both the older and younger generations in the Tweed show little interest in Local Authority Issues. It is reasonable to conclude the following from our experience:

- There are at least 4,000 to 8,000 highly biased members of the community who have a high document literacy ability and most of whom are on the net; who would because of their bias be **disqualified** from being a member of the Community Panel. If not disqualified they would only, by calculation, make up about 16% (130 to 140) of any randomly selected 800 member Citizens Panel. We also believe the rest, about 84% would quickly lose interest in any consultation with Council.
- The Citizens Panel proposal appears on track to meet the Politicians criteria for a "Silent Majority". That is a majority by having 84% of the Panel members who are "not interested" do not want to try to become informed because they are document illiterate and believe it is the duty of the Councillors who they elected to represent them. **(We also note our Mayor has written he wants to represent this "Silent Majority" or the citizens without opinions who keep silent.)**

Recommendation

If the Council wanted further informed community representation it should ask for interested volunteers who can show they represent a community group and meet other criteria that would allow them to effectively provide timely and inexpensive communications with Council. However this group would be less than 800, be highly biased because it represented the views of their parent groups, have high document literacy skills and maybe some would have some planning skills and also have a high probability of being on the net.

The first step would be to consult with Community Associations on how to improve the Council's community consultation process.

Laurie Ganter
President
07 5599 1660

Ronni Hoskisson
Secretary
07 5536 4378

Enclosed: 1. Baundino File Extract
2. ABS Media Release on Literacy

MEDIA RELEASE

November 28, 2007

Embargoed 11.30 am (AEDT)

121/2007

Australia's literacy and life skills: ABS

There are fewer Australians with literacy assessed as being in the lowest category than there were a decade ago, according to figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today.

The 2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey of Australians aged 15 to 74 years assessed prose literacy (e.g. ability to read newspapers), document literacy (e.g. ability to use bus schedules) as well as numeracy and problem solving skills, and the ability to understand health related information (e.g. first aid advice).

Approximately 17% (2.5 million) of people were assessed at the lowest prose literacy level (down from 20% in 1996), while 18% (2.7 million) were assessed at the lowest document literacy level (down from 20% in 2006).

Other findings from the survey include:

- Just over half (54%) of Australians aged 15 to 74 years were assessed as having the prose literacy skills needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work. Results were similar for document literacy with 53% and numeracy with 47% achieving this level.
- Women had higher scores for prose and health literacy, while men had higher scores for document literacy and numeracy.
- Across all the different types of literacy, people with jobs were more likely to be assessed as having the skill levels needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work than were the unemployed or those not in the labour force.
- The median weekly income for people assessed with the highest level of prose literacy was \$890 compared to \$298 for those assessed at the lowest level.
- People who had completed a qualification generally had higher scores.
- Half (50%) of recent migrants whose first language was not English had the document literacy skills to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work compared to 32% a decade ago.
- Internationally, Australia was ranked in the middle across the different types of literacy with results closely aligned with those from Canada.

More information can be found in *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results, Australia 2006* (cat. no. 4228.0).

This page last updated 9 January 2008

Murwillumbah Ratepayers and Residents Association
PO Box 851
MURWILLUMBAH 2484

20th July, 2010

RESIDENTS / RATEPAYERS
TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL
No: COMM ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DOC. No:
REC'D: 21 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO: GREEN S
HARD COPY IMAGE

The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
P O Box 816
Murwillumbah
NSW 2484

Dear Mr Rayner,

RE: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

Thank you for the correspondence. It is very beneficial to receive the printed material, as it is easier to pass the information around. It is the range of issues that has us interested, we would like to know what and when you wish to consult. We are grateful to be recognised as a relevant party to the cause.

The idea of selection seems evident as the Association is on the "list", yet it is also stated that the 800 will be a random selection. This has raised questions as to what is really happening. Will this 800 then take the place of public submissions from other interested members of the public? A citizen Panel is also mentioned, will this be separate of the 800?

The maximum membership of two years does not allow our educated professionals to stay in the loop for very long, will there be some kind of educated balance within this range of 800 members? This turn over also may reduce the number of people whom may be available for such consultation in the future.

We have assumed that this will involve things along the line of Locality Plans for every town, transport, health, and public infrastructure. You have mentioned long term major Planning Strategies, how will we be involved?

Your objectives are very Council centric. How have you incorporated social justice in to the scheme? We think that community outcomes of justice should also be incorporated into your objectives, and outcomes, for our communities.

The actual terms of engagement are vague. How will you be informing individuals, and will there be a chaired meeting where consultation really occurs. We are also concerned as to how it will work, and the costs that will be associated with it.

Sincerely,



Robyn Lemaire
Chairperson for
Murwillumbah Ratepayers and Residents Association

Murwillumbah Ratepayers and Resident Association

KINGSCLIFF RATEPAYERS and PROGRESS ASSOC. inc
PO Box 1164, Kingscliff NSW 2487

General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
Box 816
Murwillumbah
NSW 2484

Date: 16th July 2010
Attention: General Manager
Re: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

Dear Mr Rayner,

At their July 2010 meeting this Association moved the following motion:

“that KRPA write to TSC to indicate our Association’s general support for the concept of a Community Engagement Strategy.”

Yours sincerely,

Julie Murray

Julie Murray, ph 02 6674 2087
Hon. Sec.

RESIDENTS/RATEPAYERS.
COUNCIL MANAGEMENT.

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DOC. No:	
REC'D:	19 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO:	Rayner, M
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IMAGE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

C/O Anne Duke
PO Box 120, Tyalgum
NSW 2484

The General Manager,
Tweed Shire Council,
PO Box 816, Murwillumbah
NSW 2484

Submission re: Tweed Shire Council Draft Community Engagement Strategy

The Caldera Institute for Sustainable Community Development would like to offer the following comments regarding the Tweed Shire Council Draft Community Engagement Strategy. We understand that the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum has provided the framework for development of Council's Strategy model.

Our comments are designed to be constructive in supporting Council's aim to develop a best practice model. They also take into account our experience of issues that have been raised by community members in the past regarding community engagement with Council.

developing the draft strategy

We note that an IAP2 Core Value is that 'Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate'.

- It would be useful if information were provided to the community regarding the methodology used in developing the Draft Strategy. Was there a community reference group for example? How were Councillors involved? This would assist with establishing transparency in dialogue between the community and Council.
- Information regarding how the final strategy will be developed would also be helpful. If not already existing, consideration might be given to the review of the draft and community comments being undertaken by a panel consisting of individual, independent community members and Councillor representatives, with key Council staff as advisors. This may mean extending the anticipated timeframe for delivery of the Strategy, however again would assist in establishing the groundwork for minimising any potential community mistrust and misunderstanding from the outset. The initiative would also provide the groundwork for a strong and transparent partnership between the community and Council in progressing the development and implementation of Council's 10-year Community Strategic Plan.

citizens panel

The Citizens Panel is now an accepted and worthwhile part of the consultation and engagement tool kit. Our comments/suggestions regarding this relate to options for drawing the sample and the establishment of clear triggers for consultation with, and input from, the Panel.

- We recognise that the sample size is appropriate but would like to make a suggestion regarding the selected geographic boundaries. We think that, particularly if Council

is going to effectively draw on the sample for issues of district and localised impact, consideration should be given to using smaller geographic boundaries that are more relevant to the community. For example, within the proposed 'Rural' boundary, people identify in distinct communities of interest, Uki & District, Burringbah/Mooball, Chillingham & District, etc.

This modification would provide greater opportunity for precise targeting when engaging on locality and specific interest based issues. It would also show that in policy making and implementation, Council understands, acknowledges and takes into account, community connection to localities and the differences that exist between Shire suburbs and districts.

- As the Citizens Panel is to be a cornerstone of the proposed engagement model, if not already present, clear guidelines will need to be in place for triggers to consult the Panel on both Shire-wide and locality based issues. Similarly it would be useful for both Council, the community and the Panel to have guidelines for triggers to involve members of the Panel in workshops, focus groups etc. From a community perspective, it will also be important to clearly explain how Council will ensure that data provided to the Panel is presented in an unbiased manner and where called for to ensure that both sides of an issue are factually presented.
- Council is to be congratulated on recognising that a considerable portion of the community are not internet literate and are therefore providing a paper option for Panel input. Our query is whether Council are going to provide the option of translation (where possible) should people specifically request this. We realise that this can be a difficult and potentially expensive issue. But again, providing an option if realistically feasible and if asked, would add to Strategy transparency and support the principles of social inclusion.

engagement matrix

We have some concerns and suggestions regarding the use of the Community Engagement Matrix:

- We believe that if not already developed, clear guidelines will need to be established for implementing the matrix. While we appreciate that some flexibility needs to be maintained in using the model, unclearly defined terms such as 'in most circumstance', 'on specific occasions' can give the appearance of ad hoc decision making. This has the potential to create problems with a perceived lack of transparency. Of particular relevance are the Citizens Panel, Community Conversations, Meetings by Invitation, Large Group/Stakeholder collaboration, Site Meeting Tours and Personal Briefings.
- Some revision of trigger levels also needs to be considered. The Citizens Panel trigger for Shire-wide and locality based high impact levels should be 1 not 3 as at present. Again, as this is a key tool for Council's Strategy, this would seem more appropriate and help underpin credibility of the Strategy within the community.

empowerment

There is an opportunity for Council to develop an additional level of engagement within the Empowerment Goal of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. Council model, as so far developed, seems to be missing the opportunity to create a higher order participation tool which would facilitate specialist community involvement and collaboration at the policy and strategic planning level. An example of this could be:

- The establishment of specialist 'Community Boards' in areas such as, for example, environment and sustainability, social and community planning, and rural and urban development. Board members would be selected on the basis of experience and expertise and each Board could include a Councillor and member of the Executive Team in keeping with the intended level of community member input.

While these Boards would act in an advisory capacity, their intent and composition would vary considerably from the already existing mainly single issue advisory committees. There is also potential for the Boards to themselves develop specific consultation programs to inform them.

access to councillors

Councillors are the elected community representatives, and we believe that there is a need within the Strategy to allow for regular opportunities for community members and Councillors to have dialogue. This would be in addition to the already existing formal access sessions.

One suggestion could be the use of the concept of community 'village voice' meetings held perhaps on a quarterly basis in Shire villages and suburbs. This again would assist with building dialogue and understanding between Council and the community. It would be seen as a positive initiative with Councillors going to the community to listen to their ideas and issues on a regular basis and providing opportunities for broad 'bottom up' input.

Pottsville Community Association Inc.
P O Box 56
POTTSVILLE BEACH NSW 2489

23 July 2010

The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
P O Box 816
MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484

Attention Communications and Marketing Unit - Tiffany Stodart

Re: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

This Association has, in the past, continued good consultative relations with Council. We wish to be involved in the above Strategy and be part of the Council's planning and decision making process into the future.

The Association represents a fair proportion of the Pottsville residents and ratepayers, and would continue to have a strong say for input on our local issues, to assist Council with the requirement for Community Engagement.

Yours faithfully

Mike Wells



Secretary, Pottsville Community Association
mwsurveys@bigpond.com Ph 02 6676 0994

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No.	COMM. ENGAGEMENT
DATE	27 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO:	Green S
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SECRETARY.

20 Queen Street
Fingal Head
NSW 2487
Monday 26 July 2010

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	<i>Community Engagement Strategy</i>
DOC. No:	
RECD:	29 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO:	<i>BALONIN, N</i>
HARD COPY	<input type="checkbox"/>
IMAGE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Mr Neil Baldwin
Public Officer
Tweed Shire Council
Murwillumbar NSW 2484.

Dear Mr Baldwin,

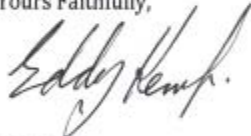
I acknowledge receipt of the copy of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy that you so kindly sent me. Thank you.

I took the time to read it this morning and my first thoughts were that this initiative by Council is a step in the right direction.

As you would recall, late last year we were both participants in a meeting at your Murwillumbar offices at which the matter of community consultation was the major topic. I'm sure that you would also recall my expressions of frustration with the process as it then stood. Without wishing to delve any further into past events it is my fervent hope that Council is successful in this important proactive initiative.

I will be most interested to read the final draft when it becomes available.

Yours Faithfully,



Eddy Kemp

Ashur -7

PO Box 75
Tyalgum 2484
28 June 2010
02 6679 3774

The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
Murwillumbah 2484

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DOC. No:	
RECD:	30 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO:	GREEN, S.
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Re: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

Dear Sir,

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy produced by the Tweed Shire Council is not appropriate and needs to be redrafted.

The draft appears to be centered around someone's desire to set up a citizen's panel and fails to come to grips with the requirements of the recent amendments to the Local Government Act, and the associated Guidelines and Manual. The citizen's panel, as described, is only about output/project consultation.

It is the General Manager's responsibility to inform the community about the process and provide background information to enable the development of the Community Strategic Plan. The Council must engage the community in the development of the plan, not just consult. This draft shows that this has not been understood by Council.

The majority of people with whom I have discussed the draft are not interested. They either know nothing about it, 'glaze over', or just don't 'get it'. Putting a draft document on the TSC web site and/or asking individuals and groups for comment is not community engagement. Read the manual. How can anyone comprehend this draft without a good understanding of the associated Guidelines and the Manual?

I would like to see the Councillors and the Directorate present themselves at public meetings around the shire to explain the whole process. This would include how Council is going to implement the requirements of the Act, and incorporate the framework for implementing the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and the Operational Plan. The Community Strategic Plan must identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future. If Council can't arrange this, what hope is there for the remainder of the process.

The Tweed Shire Council has missed the target completely with this draft. The document doesn't meet the requirements of the Act and needs to be redrafted. I suggest that Councillors and the Directorate arrange a workshop with people who are interested and have some knowledge of the proposed process (ie, have actually read the draft, the Guidelines and the Manual), to restructure the contents of the draft. And we certainly don't need 800 randomly selected ratepayers, who generally want their elected Councillors to make good decisions and get on with it.

Your faithfully,



Bob McDonald

**TYALGUM DISTRICT
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC**

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL
FILE No: <i>Community Engagement Strategy</i>
DOC. No:
RECD: 30 JUL 2010
ASSIGNED TO: <i>Green, S</i>
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The Secretary

*Post Office Box 1
Tyalgum NSW 2484*

ABN 27 506 140 369

Email: info@tyalgum.org

Co-ordinator: Verdandi Worldtree : 02 6679 3306 worldtree@sctelco.net.au

Secretary: Joan Ecclesshare : joanecc@primus.com.au

21 July 2010

The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
Murwillumbah 2484

Re: Community Strategic Plan

Dear Sir,

Attached is a submission from our organisation on the proposed Community Engagement Strategy (CES).

We feel that this engagement strategy needs to concentrate more on identifying the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals for the proposed Community Strategic Plan (CSP). While some strategies in the draft can be used for other purposes in the future, the CES should focus more on the CSP. The SCOPE of the CES is far too broad and should focus on the development of the CSP in the first instance.

There are two major concerns with this so called strategy. Firstly the TSC doesn't indicate 'outcome' as being a benefit for the community with effectiveness measures and secondly, the strategy doesn't show how the CSP is to be developed, rather it relies excessively on the Citizens Panel for its promotion.

TSC needs to understand the basic difference between *outputs* with efficiency measures of quality, quantity, cost and timeliness, and *outcomes* with effectiveness measures/benefits for the community. Outputs are to be shown to support an outcome and if a particular output doesn't support an outcome, it is feasible to stop doing that output. This is necessary to allow for proper performance management auditing. The Community Strategic Plan should be about community outcomes, not TSC outputs.

The TDCA would prefer to see detail of the proposed Citizens Panel published in a separate document to allow the CES to more clearly show how TSC intends to engage the community in developing the required Community Strategic Plan. The development of the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and the Operational Plan need to be clearly understood by the community at this early stage. The TSC's Engagement Strategy appears to be more about the community having input into projects than the development of outcomes for the CSP.

TYALGUM DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION INC

The Secretary

*Post Office Box 1
Tyalgum NSW 2484*

ABN 27 506 140 369

Email: info@tyalgum.org


Co-ordinator : Verdandi Worldtree : 02 6679 3306 worldtree@sctelco.net.au

Secretary: Joan Ecclesshare : joanecc@primus.com.au

TDCA sees the CES as a jumble of jargon that will confuse the average ratepayer, if they have even attempted to respond to Council's requests to download and try to comprehend it.

TDCA wants to see this submission given the recognition that it deserves and not the frivolous replies received previously to our submissions. TDCA would appreciate consideration be given by the Mayor, Councilors and the TSC Directorate to this submission, and for TSC's reply to be signed by the GM. TDCA puts in a lot of effort on these important documents and a condescending reply by a non-decision making subordinate officer is not appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Verdandi Worldtree

Co-ordinator

Tyalgum District Community Association

Tweed Community Strategic Plan

Submission prepared by Tyalgum District Community Association

TSC does not have a good record of being receptive to the local community in the Tweed area. There have been too many recent instances of council going against the wishes of the community for anyone to believe that all of a sudden, through the magic of the internet, things are going to change. People don't care anymore because TSC has not properly informed the community about Strategic Planning issues. In fact, if you mention 'Strategic Planning', most people (including council staff) reply in terms of the councils Rural & Urban Planning function. How many people do you think have actually downloaded and comprehended the CES and its connection to the requirements of the DLG P&R Manual? The Water Augmentation Group complained bitterly about the TSC consultation process, and the councillors always said that they would have the final say anyway, which is in the Act.

We are concerned that the TSC Draft Community Engagement Strategy does not align with the requirements of the P&R Guidelines. The Manual sets out the process as follows.

The Community Strategic Plan

The Community Strategic Plan is the highest level plan that a council will prepare. The purpose of the plan is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to plan strategies for achieving these goals. In doing this, the planning process will consider the issues and pressures that may affect the community and the level of resources that will realistically be available to achieve its aims and aspirations. While a council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the local government area, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as State agencies and community groups may also be engaged in delivering the long-term objectives of the plan.

The Delivery Program

This is the point where the community's strategic goals are systematically translated into actions. These are the principal activities to be undertaken by the Council to implement the strategies established by the Community Strategic Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy.

The Delivery Program is a statement of commitment to the community from each newly elected council. In preparing the Delivery Program, Council is accounting for its stewardship of the community's long-term goals, outlining what it intends to do towards achieving these goals during its term of office and what its priorities will be.

The Operational Plan

Supporting the Delivery Program is an annual Operational Plan. It spells out the details of the Delivery Program – the individual projects and activities that will be undertaken for the year to achieve the commitments made in the Delivery Program.

Put simply, the community contributes to the development of desired outcomes (with strategies and performance measures) for the CSP, the Mayor and Councillors identify in the Delivery Program how these strategies can be translated into actions with available resources, and the GM indicates in the Operational Plan the individual projects to be implemented within the year to progress the Delivery Program.

The Planning and Reporting Guidelines is quite clear on the requirements and Essential Elements to produce the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and the Operational Plan. TSC's effort at producing a draft CES document doesn't have our support.

Issues of concern;

1. PROMOTION BY COUNCILLORS & SENIOR STAFF

The P&R Manual indicates that;

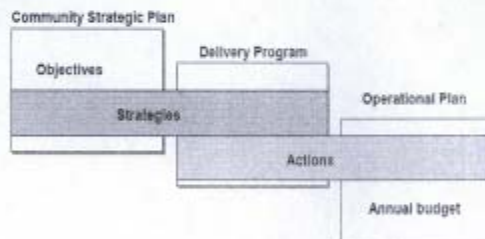
The success of the planning process relies on the commitment of the Mayor and the General Manager as well as all Councillors. Without strong support and commitment, Council will find it difficult to develop and implement a meaningful plan.

The Mayor, as spokesperson for Council, is the public face of the planning process. The Mayor is responsible for explaining the purpose of the Community Strategic Plan to the community and for encouraging public support for the planning process.

Strategies for community engagement for the CSP should focus on councillors and senior staff attending facilitated meetings around the shire to address local community desired outcomes, and not specific projects. With the final CSP in hand, councillors for the next election can propose how they intend to achieve the outcomes that pertain to the local government area and the community will cast their votes. We don't need to stray from the DLG requirements and reinvent something else. Below are two critical diagrams that need explaining to the public at open forums before the public make any decisions. This should be included in the CES.



Local Government Planning and Reporting framework



Will TSC consider having facilitated meetings around the shire with the Mayor, Councillors, GM and Directors in attendance to promote the development of the CSP?

2. THE STRATEGY

The strategy as presented is too vague and concentrates more on technological innovations in data collection than on the requirements of the DLG P&R Manual to develop desired community outcomes for the Tweed community. We have some experience in absorbing and understanding these documents but we can't understand the content of the CES as presented, and are unable to relate it totally to the requirements of the P&R Manual. We suggest that the average ratepayer would not have a clue about the big picture in this instance because it hasn't been explained properly. A CES document needs to be produced that is more readable to the average ratepayer. Even the small article in the Tweed Link 22 June 2010 reads like a spin doctor's bowl of alphabetical soup. The CES should be in plain text without photos and decoration. The CSP should be referred to as the Tweed CSP and not the Council's CSP to indicate that it belongs to the community.

Will you agree to simplifying the CES? (ie, rewrite it)

3. TERMS

In the text box titled 'TERMS', the definitions for 'Community Engagement' and 'Strategy' don't fall into place with the explanations in the P&R Manual.

(TSC) Community Engagement: The processes used to inform, consult and involve the Tweed community and other interested parties about proposals or policy changes relating to Council services, events, strategic plans, issues, projects and the like.

(DLG) Community Engagement Strategy

A strategy based on social justice principles for engagement with the local community when developing the Community Strategic Plan.

(a) 'Community Engagement', in terms of the strategy required by DLG, should be about preparing a Community Strategic Plan, not venturing into areas to be covered later by the Delivery program and the Operational Plan. The CES should be about developing a Community Strategic Plan that is designed to identify what individuals, community groups, state agencies and Council can do to deliver the desired outcomes identified by the community. It is not about Council services, events, strategic plans, issues, projects and the like.

(b) 'Strategy': Implementing a Community Engagement Strategy - defined(?) as a skillful(?) management to achieve an objective - satisfies the foreshadowed requirements of the Division of Local Government through the proposed amendments to the Local Government Act 1993. What does this actually mean? Can you rewrite it in plain English? In what context is 'foreshadowed' and 'proposed' used?

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The P&R Manual states; *'Each council must prepare and implement a Community Engagement Strategy based on social justice principles (equity, access, participation and rights) for engagement with the local community in developing the Community Strategic Plan', and Council is required to base the Community Engagement Strategy on social justice principles and this extends to the community engagement process.*

Why aren't these social justice principles in the TSC engagement strategy?

5. TIMEFRAMES

The Proposed Timeframes box addresses the new web technologies but we don't have a timeframe for developing the Community Strategic Plan.

When will development of the CSP commence and finish?

6. COUNCILLORS RESPONSIBILITIES

TDCA does not understand the differentiation between Councillors responsibilities as set out in the Act, and the attempt to have the community select projects for implementation.

The following have been extracted from the CES.

Council operates within the Local Government Act 1993 which empowers councillors, elected as representatives of the community, to make decisions on their behalf.

Council functions under the Local Government Act 1993 which gives ultimate responsibility for decision making to Councillors, who are elected by the community to make decisions on its behalf. To further achieve the IAP2 objective of empowerment for the community, this strategy aims to give the Tweed community greater input during the collaborate, involve, consult and inform stages of engagement, to inform Councillors and assist in effective decision making.

In the consult stage the Citizens Panel would provide input and feedback to proposed projects and initiatives.

The manual states; It is also important to understand the difference between community consultation and community engagement.

The manual specifically indicates that to 'Empower' is:- To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Throughout the CES, it is indicated how the Council is endeavouring to facilitate input for decision making from the community, but at the same time, the community is being told that under the legislation, councillors are elected to make decisions on behalf of the community.

Which is it? What are the responsibilities of the Mayor and Councillors in developing a CSP?

7. CITIZENS PANEL

While a 'Citizen Panel' could provide some useful feedback, the engagement strategy needs to define the difference between what Councillors are responsible for and what decisions the community can make. Could you please explain the difference?

The Citizens Panel will consist of less than one percent of the population at any one time, that is if the majority take up the offer. We would suggest that at the end of twelve months, less than one half of one percent could still be contributing. Rural is about 70% of the shire in area but will only have 80 on the panel, probably reducing to below 50 by the end of twelve months. There are more than fifty localities in 'Rural' and each locality would be lucky to end up with one person contributing to the panel. This is clearly not a good representation of the area and is not acceptable.

When the CSP is being prepared, during the first twelve months we assume, there cannot be a scenario where 99% of the population isn't able to contribute to the development of desired outcomes for the next ten years.

Will TSC agree to base representation on area/localities as well as population?

Will TSC rethink this strategy for community input into the development of the CSP?

8. COMMUNITY GROUPS

There is no strategy to show HOW you are going to engage community groups in the TSC Draft CES. The DLG essential elements pertaining to this issue are set out below.

Essential Element 1.1

The Community Strategic Plan should be developed with the understanding that it will be delivered as a partnership between Council, state agencies, community groups and individuals. It should address a broad range of issues that are relevant to the whole community.

Essential Element 1.5

As a minimum, the Community Engagement Strategy must identify relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outline methods of engaging each group.

TDCA would like to see a specific panel set up to develop outcomes for the CSP. If Council is going to persist with the Citizens Panel, the TDCA's suggestion would be to utilise the Water Augmentation model that allowed interested individuals/groups to permanently register, rather than a small selection for twelve months, who might not give a toss. In this way, the continuity of the panel could be maintained with new interested parties joining as they see fit. TDCA would like to see an 'interested parties' model instigated rather than a 'lucky dip' method.

Will a separate panel for development of outcomes be set up for the CSP?

Will community groups be able to register permanently on the panel?

Will the Council agree to outlining methods of engaging each relevant stakeholder group within the community?

9. THE DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

In a letter to us dated 18 May 2010, signed by Peter Brack, Corporate Compliance Officer/Acting Public Officer, it was stated that *"The initial Draft Community Strategic Plan that will form part of the community engagement, has been founded upon a number of strategies that have been excised from Tweed Futures 04/24 Strategic Plan, which are either continuing or anticipated to commence in the future; together with other strategies contained in State Government or other Council Plans, all of which have undergone some form of community consultation and input."*

In a previous letter signed by Neil Baldwin, Manager Corporate Governance/Public Officer, we were advised that; *"The associated Community Strategic Plan is currently being prepared and it is designed to be put on public exhibition for community consultation in the latter part of this year."*

Can you please provide the TDCA with a copy of the initial Draft Community Strategic Plan to enable the TDCA to add additional comment to this process.

10. ENGAGEMENT MATRIX

The TDCA is at a loss to understand the 'engagement matrix' on p7 of the CES.

Please advise what this is about and how it relates to the development of the CSP.

-----Original Message-----

From: Menkit Prince [mailto:earthlove@essentialoilcookbook.com]
Sent: Tuesday, 3 August 2010 5:55 AM
To: CommunicationsTSC
Cc: menkit
Subject: Exhibition Query: Draft Community Engagement Strategy

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	Comm ENGAGEMENT
DOC. No:	STRAT
REC'D:	- 3 AUG 2010
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IMAGE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make comment on the Draft Community Engagement Strategy, the deadline for which is today.

First of all, the citizen's panel will be comprised of people in the biggest population area i.e. the coast. Therefore for issues that are rural, such people will have no interest or motivation to study issues as it will likely not impact them. Far better to involve people who are most affected and local. These are the people council should be listening to first and /foremost/.

Secondly, it is better to seek the view of those who have the most interest in the matter. By far the 'silent majority' happen to be apathetic and uninformed so of what value is their opinion, especially if they don't even want to give it?

It is only right that those who are geographically closer or more interested should overshadow the broader community.

If TSC chooses 800 residents randomly, what is the chance that the vast majority of them have no knowledge of the issues, no time or interest to study or research issues and decide not to participate in the panel or drop out?

Where is the transparency in a process where TSC could be manipulating the database pool? It remains to be seen whether environmental activists will be chosen in this pool or not. The habit of picking names out of

hats is not what I would regard 'best practice' for taking care of such an environmentally significant area as Tweed Shire. It would be far wiser to choose people who have educated themselves to the issues and can give TSC impartial and credible feedback.

In relation to stakeholders, wildlife is often negatively impacted but they have no voice. Hopefully organisations that speak up for wildlife will be considered key stakeholders for that reason (Tweed Valley Wildlife Carers, Team Koala, Caldera Environment Centre, No Rally Group etc)?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

Sincerely,
Menkit Prince

TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL	
FILE No:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
DOC. No:	
RECD:	- 3 AUG 2010
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The General Manager
Tweed Shire Council
PO Box 816
MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484

Ms Kim Hollingsworth
347 Rowlands Creek Rd
Uki NSW 2484
Phone: 66795881
Email: kim347@bigpond.com

SUBMISSION - RE: 'Draft Community Engagement Strategy (2010)'

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a resident /ratepayer and I am having trouble being included, being provided with community access to council meetings. I would like to be informed, and while I don't wish to be a nuisance I persist in my endeavours to participate. I object to the 'Draft Community Engagement Strategy (2010)' being totally inadequate as far as addressing my individual problems with my community engagement. As a disabled person (extreme inability to sit/stand) due to severe back injury, I have found lying in the foyer quite inadequate. I have felt humiliated and excluded.

I am aware of efforts to improve the sound quality in the foyer but as yet I have found it unsatisfactory. The volume of the microphones has been improved; this gave me a glimmer of hope, short-lived, as I was able to hear the people addressing council during the community access meeting, but not the councillor's questions. I have been unable to follow a full council meeting as it seems too difficult for people to keep concentrating on using their microphones, especially during heated debate.

Mr. Neil Baldwin spoke to me about a trolley so I may lie my own mattress on it in the foyer, so I don't have to lie on the floor, this was 4 months ago, also the idea of eventually providing a screen in the foyer for myself and others to view the council proceedings on, he said this would take quite sometime to organize, and I have heard nothing about progress on either solution.

I now feel a better solution would be to have the council meetings streamed live to the website and I take this opportunity to make a formal request this be included in your strategy. It would then be possible for anyone, in the whole of the shire and beyond, to access the council meetings; to feel included, to keep informed, to follow their particular issues on a month to month basis. All ratepayers and residents, other disabled people, the elderly, any community groups could all follow the meetings.

This would 'ensure all stakeholders have opportunities to participate and no sector of the community is disadvantaged'. It would ensure 'groups at risk of

exclusion, from public debate such as the elderly, indigenous, and people with a disability' are included, by being able to stay more fully informed.

I refer to page 8, Citizens Panel,
'PURPOSE

Provide considered input regarding plans, priorities, services and performance.....'

To genuinely become engaged and informed representatives of the community these 800 people will need to closely follow issues, they will need to follow what is happening at council meetings. I ask you to please seriously consider how much more effectively and easily these people will be able to provide 'considered input' if they can switch on their computers, go to your website and watch council meetings 'live'.

It is in the interests of the whole community that these individuals are fully engaged and fully informed. The size of the public gallery in council chambers will not accommodate a modest say 10%, 80 people, and I would anticipate many more of these people will be interested enough to want to attend meetings. Other interested stakeholders will be wanting these people to be properly informed and I am sure they will encourage them to watch the processes and debates that take place in council meetings, as well as informing them of their own (differing stakeholder) agendas. Council will have no control over the information fed to them by various stakeholders. Stakeholders do not need to now the names of the individuals on the 'Citizens Panel'; they will only need to become more diligent at spreading their concerns shirewide.

I object to the draft strategy not outlining what will happen if someone declines the invitation to be on the Citizens Panel. According to the draft strategy members may withdraw at any time also. The processes proposed to replace citizens who are invited but decline or choose to withdraw, should be published ahead of adoption of this strategy. How is the non biased 'representative' nature of the panel going to be seen to be maintained? I object to this question not being addressed in this strategy document and recommend more detail be given.

Under the Heading 'YOUTH', ON PAGE 10, 'nominations will be sought from youth to join the Panel, by completing an online nomination form.' This means they as youth have more of a chance than I do, as a disabled person, to be on the citizens panel, how can this be fair and unbiased? I object to this and would request I am allowed to nominate to be on the citizens panel as well.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Kim Lauren Hollingsworth

**SUBMISSION ON
TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL
DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
3 August 2010**

Lodged on behalf of No Rally Group Inc

**By
Michael McNamara
Pumpenbil NSW 2484**

INTRODUCTION

In general terms it is good to see Council attempting to take a planned approach to community engagement.

While the draft Community Engagement Strategy represents, in some ways, a move in the right direction, more detailed consideration needs to be given to the underpinning philosophy and rationale and the actions proposed if Council is to introduce an effective Community Engagement Strategy.

Comparing the space (amount of text) and number/range of actions allocated to each of the identified key stages of community engagement give an interesting perspective on the relative importance, to Council, of each of the stages.

Informing the community takes by far the most space and includes the greatest number and range of actions. Actually listening to the community ranks far lower in Council's mind by this measure.

Council's effort in the draft strategy to identify and classify the range of stakeholders is an interesting exercise. By making a distinction between "community organisations and groups" and "interest groups" it unfortunately introduces a false dichotomy which inadvertently (it is hoped) divides rather than unites the community. For many in the community their involvement in these groups gives expression to their desire to be proactively involved in the life of the community in which they live and work.

Interest groups, as defined in the list of stakeholders, represent a community-based grass roots effort to enhance and/or defend the community's interests in the face of sometimes powerful and well resourced "vested" interests. They represent a real, and often effective, process of empowerment of the community to impact on its own development and well being. It is in the interests of both Council and its Community for the strategy to recognise this and to incorporate strategies for Council to engage effectively with these groups.

The legislative context for the strategy is also an important consideration. The Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009 imposes certain requirements on Community Engagement Plans which it requires Councils to develop (and review on a regular basis). The draft strategy fails to adequately address at least some parts of those legislative requirements.

The draft strategy fails to meet the requirements of the Guidelines from the Division of Local Government. If it did then strategies to seek the views of disadvantaged groups would be evident.

The draft strategy does not implement the recommendations of the manual prepared by the Division of Local Government.

The general thrust of this submission is that the draft plan needs to be rejected and the process of developing the plan needs to start over from scratch.

Various objections are raised as Issues with Comments and Recommendations.

ISSUES / COMMENTS

Legislative Context

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy is developed in the context, and under the requirements of the Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009.

In this legislation the Community Engagement Strategy exists to inform the development of Council's Strategic Plan by way of an amendment to the Local Government Act 1993.

The relevant section of the amendment is:

(4) The council must establish and implement a strategy (its community engagement strategy), based on social justice principles, for engagement with the local community when developing the community strategic plan.

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy fails to meet the requirements of the legislation (or at least fails to show how it meets them) in two areas:

1. *The Community Engagement Strategy must be based on social justice principles.*

Social justice principles are described by the Division of Local Government in the following terms:

“Social Justice is about promoting a more socially inclusive society for all people, and in particular for those groups of people most likely to be marginalised or in vulnerable situations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, children, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disabilities, older people, women and young people.

Social Justice Principles

Social justice is based on four interrelated principles of equity, rights, access and participation, to ensure that:

*There is **equity** in the distribution of resources*

***Rights** are recognised and promoted*

*People have fairer **access** to the economic resources and services essential to meet*

their basic needs and to improve their quality of life and

*People have better opportunities for genuine **participation** and consultation about*

decisions affecting their lives.”

DLG Social Justice Framework 2008-2012, April 2008, p1

These principles are not evident in the draft plan as exhibited by Council. In some parts it even operates in opposition to these social justice principles.

If the draft strategy were based on social justice principles then it would be evident in the draft that:

- Resources were allocated to assist residents from disadvantaged groups to have access to information and to contribute to the decision making process, implementing the equity principle.

- There would be explicit acknowledgement of the rights of all residents to participate in the process.
- Actions would be evident that increased access for residents from disadvantaged groups.
- Specific actions would be evident that increased opportunities for residents from disadvantaged groups to participate in the community engagement process.

Unfortunately, none of the above are evident in the draft strategy. This needs to be addressed.

One possible action, among many, is to broadcast Council meetings and Community Access live on the internet. This would assist residents with mobility related disabilities, and those for whom the public gallery is unsuitable, to stay informed. It would also have the flow on benefit of allowing residents, who might be unable for some reason to attend, to stay informed.

State and Federal parliaments are broadcast live when they are sitting. The state parliament, both upper and lower houses, is broadcast on the internet through the parliamentary website.

Council should embrace this technological opportunity to connect with its community. It is clear from its participation in the filming of a pilot TV program by Channel 7 recently that Council has no fundamental objection to the broadcast of proceedings at Council meetings or Community Access.

There are many other possible actions that could be incorporated to meet the specific needs of, and to assist, residents from disadvantaged groups to participate more fully in the community engagement process. These should be explored in collaboration with residents and representative groups.

2. The Community Engagement Strategy informs the development of the Community Strategic Plan.

The primary purpose for the development of the Community Engagement Strategy is to inform the development of the Community Strategic Plan. Whatever other roles Council may have in mind for the strategy or aspects of it are additional to that primary focus.

It is disappointing therefore that the Draft Community Engagement Strategy makes scant reference to the Community Strategic Plan or its development. It fails to outline how the actions contained in the draft strategy will assist the community to have input into the development of the Community Strategic Plan.

The draft strategy does not outline the range, scope or detail of information to be provided to the community during the development of the Community Strategic Plan.

The timeline for implementation of the Community Engagement Strategy is limited to the citizens panel.

Guidelines and Manual from the Division of Local Government

In Circular 10-01 (dated 21 January 2010) the DLG notified Councils that:

“In accordance with section 406 of the Local Government Act, councils are advised that the *Planning and Reporting Guidelines for local government in NSW* have been released. The Division of Local Government has also prepared a supporting Manual to assist councils in their implementation of these reforms.”

The Guidelines are mandatory. The Manual, while not mandatory, sets out to assist Councils to develop a Community Engagement Strategy.

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy fails to comply with the Guidelines and follow the Manual in important areas:

- *Social Justice Principles*
As set out above, the draft strategy fails to implement the Guidelines' requirement that it be based on social justice principles.
- *Community Strategic Plan*
The draft strategy fails to set out how it will contribute to the development of the Community Strategic Plan.
- *Timelines for implementation*
The draft strategy fails to set out an appropriate timeline for the implementation of the strategy (acknowledging the role of Councillors in finalising the strategy), concentrating rather on the implementation of only one action within the draft strategy.
- *Community Engagement rather than consultation*
The draft strategy fails to recognise the distinction between consultation and engagement even though this is spelled out in the DLG Guidelines and Manual.
- *Engaging with stakeholder groups*
The draft strategy fails to meet the requirement of Essential Element 1.5 from the IPR Guidelines in that, having identified "relevant stakeholder groups" Council fails to "outline methods that will be used to engage each group".
- *Expected levels of service*
The draft strategy fails to outline how Council will gain a broad community view on the "expected levels of service expressed by the community" let alone how Council will give "due consideration" to these views as required by Essential Element 1.4.

If this strategy, when adopted by Council, remains non-compliant with the Guidelines then Council should expect that community members will raise their concerns about this non-compliance with the Division of Local Government and other relevant agencies.

The Manual, while not mandatory, sets out to assist Councils to develop a Community Engagement Strategy. Where Council acts at variance with the manual it is incumbent on Council to justify this variance.

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy fails to implement the legislative requirements for the Community Engagement Strategy.

Page 3

Stakeholders

Adjacent councils and regional bodies

Area Consultative Committees no longer exist. They were replaced in 2009 by Regional Development Australia. The local representatives on RDA are Max Boyd and Michael Kenny. A draft strategy released by TSC should at least be "up to date" in regard to who the Council's stakeholders are!

Interest groups

While this section identifies a number of types of community/public interest groups the specific strategies listed later in the document do not show how the Council intends to actively engage with these groups in a meaningful way that acknowledges their contribution to community life.

The DLG Manual states:

“When developing the Strategy, Council should consider the various reasons why community members may wish to be involved in the planning process. For example:

some people will have ‘place-based’ interests – they are concerned for the future of their particular town, village or suburb

some will share a common interest, such as a business group, or a sporting organisation

others will share common needs, for example people who need child care or public transport

some will be motivated by negative experiences with Council or community organisations and will want to address specific issues

some will be motivated by philosophical commitments, for example, to sustainability or good governance.

Council should consider all these motivations when identifying stakeholders and determining how and when they may best be engaged in the planning process.”

DLG – IPR Manual, January 2010 p39

The draft strategy does not adequately recognise the role or value of “interest groups” in representing community interests and views.

By excluding groups generated from within the local community, and expressing views held within the local community, Council is hardly recognising the right of people to “*better opportunities for genuine **participation** and consultation about decisions affecting their lives*”

Page 4

Defining Community Engagement and Methods of Engagement

The intention sounds wonderful but is negated by experience in the Tweed Shire. Unless Councillors are prepared to listen then no amount of increased input by residents will lead to their “empowerment”.

The general point is that, unless the Council is prepared to actively listen and respond to community views and wishes then this entire strategy is a waste of time.

The Local Government Act includes provisions for plebescites to be conducted as non-binding indications of the community’s wishes but this provision is not mentioned in the draft strategy.

Council currently conducts Community Access each month on the Thursday before the Council meeting. Community Access rates only a brief mention (in the section dealing with Scope) as a means of engaging the community in the issues facing the shire. This is disappointing because it is one of the few ways that residents are able to determine what matters are raised with Council. It is also an open and transparent means of so doing. As currently implemented it is a very one way process, with only limited capacity for a conversation with Councillors to ensue. Community Access could be enhanced to allow residents addressing Council to ask questions of Councillors. This would contribute to empowering the community.

Given the level of complaints about Tweed Shire Council it is patronising in the extreme and bordering on the absurd to claim that additional input will lead to empowerment of the community.

The DLG Manual prepared to assist Councils develop a Community Strategic Plan and a Community Engagement Strategy provides strong recommendations to Councils.

In considering the preparation of a Community Engagement Strategy the Manual recommends:

“When preparing the Strategy, it is important to consider groups whose voice may not normally be heard in community discussions. This might include people with disabilities, Aboriginal communities, people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people, people in geographically isolated areas, single parents, and the elderly. Council is required to base the Community Engagement Strategy on social justice principles and this extends to the community engagement process.”

DLG – IPR Manual, January 2010 p38

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy fails to adequately address this recommendation and provides no rationale for it not being addressed.

Only some of the groups identified in the DLG Manual are identified at any time in the draft strategy. Where they are referred to it is only in relation to the Aboriginal Advisory Committee and the Disability Access Advisory Committee. The other groups do not even get a look in. They do not seem to register on Council’s radar.

The draft strategy does not even adequately explain how these committees operate and does not outline the benefits to the community of their existence and operation. It does not, for example, give any concrete evidence that their existence and operation makes any discernible difference to the way in which Council deals with these groups or the benefits to members of these groups of the existence and operation of the committees.

The questions that should be addressed (but have not been) in relation to Council Advisory Committees in developing the Community Engagement Strategy include:

- How have these committees benefited the community?
- What is their track record in having recommendations to Council adopted?
- How is the “lot” of the community members whose concerns these committees supposedly address better off?

As far as the draft strategy is concerned they just exist – and that justifies their continued existence. The logic seems to be:

- Council is busy.
- Some community members are busy.
- Everything is fine.

This seems, on reading the draft strategy, to be the logic in relation to all the Council’s activities related to community engagement.

INFORM

The Tweed Link includes notification of meeting dates for some limited range of Community/Interest Groups. This facility would enhance the other aspects of community engagement if it were extended to all community based interest groups.

Tweed Link could also contribute to the *Consult* stage and the *Involve/Collaborate* stages by incorporating a Letters to the Council section similar to Letters to the Editor in newspapers. Residents could be encouraged to contribute their views directly, subject to the usual requirements relating to space and appropriateness of the comments in relation

to insulting or libellous comments. Council would maintain editorial control of the publication.

Council and, more importantly, the Community, have nothing to lose and much to gain by encouraging and welcoming the exchange of diverse views in relation to issues facing the community.

Page 5

CONSULT

Citizens Panel: Based on media reports and the contents of the draft strategy it is somewhat optimistic to refer to the proposed Citizens panel as a “representative sample”. There are fundamental problems with this model of consultation based on unavoidable sampling bias. This is explored further elsewhere in this submission.

Gold Coast City Council has already, according to media reports, rejected this model.

Tweed Shire Council website: Reference to “independently moderated online forums” begs the question of who the independent moderators will be.

Surveys: The Citizens Panel is given as an alternative to surveys. Given the problems with sampling error this is inappropriate.

The draft strategy makes no mention in this section of community interest groups. Members of these groups, because they take an active interest in the issues addressed by the group, often have specialised knowledge, expertise, skills and understandings that would assist Council in its decision making. The strategy should be amended to identify appropriate ways to consult with these groups.

The comments in the *Inform* section above are relevant here as well.

INVOLVE/COLLABORATE

Citizens Panel: Problems with unavoidable sampling bias make this proposal inappropriate.

Tweed Shire Council website: Again, who will be “independently” moderating the forums? How will their independence be guaranteed?

As with the *Consult* stage the draft strategy does not mention community interest groups. This is inconsistent with past and current practice in the appointment of people to Council Advisory Committees. The specialised knowledge, expertise, skills and understanding on particular issues that is held by members of these groups should be actively sought by Council through this strategy.

The comments in the *Inform* section above are relevant here as well.

EMPOWER

What this section effectively says (in a cursory manner taking up all of 3 lines of text) is that Council is going to do nothing to empower the local community.

This section should be expanded to identify a range of strategies that give voice to a commitment to actually empower the community to be more engaged in setting the course for the future of the Tweed. It could include reference to “town meetings” and plebescites as well as other methods to gauge community concerns and wishes.

There are many facilitation processes that seek to gain consensus about aims, objectives and specific action proposals. These processes should be used in a proactive way by Council to seek community consensus through an open and accountable consultation process.

Consulting, and taking notice of, the views of community interest groups can greatly assist in empowering the community.

The best way that Council could empower the community is to actually listen to the views of that community and respond in ways that support and enhance the community, rather than by castigating groups who express views at odds with the Council as “a vocal minority” (as has often been the case).

Page 7

Engagement Matrix

It seems odd that the proposed Citizens panel would only be used “on rare occasions” or “on specific occasions” in the Consult and Involve/Collaborate phases but “Personal briefings” or “Meetings by invitation” are recommended to occur “every time”.

This preference for small “secret” meetings is one of the factors that have led to distrust of Council. It leads to a public perception that “deals are being done behind closed doors” and is at odds with the stated “openness” of Council.

The engagement matrix needs to be reworked to determine and ensure that community wishes on the level of involvement are being met.

The engagement matrix should be expanded to incorporate the comments in the *Inform* section above.

The engagement matrix does not acknowledge the role or relevance of community based interest groups. This diminishes its value as a working tool for Council officers.

Open and accountable consultation with stakeholder groups, especially interest groups, needs to be a higher priority in the Community Engagement Strategy.

Page 8

Citizens Panel

This proposal is only one action amongst many in the draft strategy, yet takes up an inordinate amount of space and projected resources.

The proposal to form a “representative” citizens’ panel seems, on the basis of media reports and the comments in the draft strategy, to be an effort by Council to find a means to read the “view of the community” (the majority view) on selected issues or proposals.

Even if this panel was to be representative of the views of the community, which is not assured, there are many cases at law where the “majority view” is not the legal requirement. The “majority view” can also shift as a result of media and other influences. Council’s role, as stated in the Local Government Act, is also to lead rather than follow the community.

The draft strategy states that “Panel members will be randomly selected from Council’s ratepayer database and a resident non-ratepayer database. Residents who are not ratepayers can register their interest and go into the database pool for random selection.”

This raises a number of issues related to participation and the claimed representative nature of the panel:

1. The proposal considers only three variables in establishing a “representative” citizens’ panel. These variables are location, age and gender.

As shown by the list of stakeholders in the draft strategy there are many other variables that are just as important and should be considered.

The proposal does not outline how Council will ensure that small business, farmers, welfare agencies/organisations, resident ratepayers, non-resident ratepayers, resident non-ratepayers, different types of family groups, unemployed people, differing socio-economic groups and other identifiable groups are represented. It does not outline how Council will ensure that their views are heard.

2. The proposal establishes different “classes” of community members and treats them differently in relation to their chances of participation in the panel. Resident non-ratepayers will have to lodge an expression of interest to be considered for membership of the panel. This is despite the fact that many in the “class” may well have been resident, and committed financially to the area, for many years.

Some of the groups who are impacted by this, who may not be adequately represented in any panel constituted as proposed include:

- Residents of multiple occupancy (MO) communities, which may be company or co-operative title
- Long term residents who rent
- Residents of aged care facilities (whether self managed or supported accommodation)
- Residents of caravan parks or establishments such as Noble Lakeside Park

Resident non-ratepayers, according to the figures in the draft strategy make up approximately one third of Tweed Shire residents. The draft strategy does not outline how Council will ensure that one third of the panel comprises members of this group.

As an example of this as a problem for Council (and the claimed representativeness of the panel) it is possible that less than 267 resident non-ratepayers (1/3 of 800) may register their interest in being on the panel. If this were the case Council would have two options.

The first is to automatically select those who nominate. This loses the randomness of the selection process and may not be representative according to a number of variables. They may not even be representative of resident non-ratepayers as a group for a number of reasons.

The second option is to put the nominations into the same pool as the ratepayers (100% of whom are listed because Council’s ratepayer database is the source of their names) and then randomly select. This would destroy any notion of “representativeness” according to many possible variables. It would also lead to gross under-representation of resident non-ratepayers on the panel.

Following the reasoning of the draft strategy, two residents who have lived in the Tweed Shire for similar periods of time and have undertaken similar economic and other community activity, one who purchased freehold and another who purchased on an MO, will be treated differently by the Council in seeking their views. This seems unfair.

That the resident of the MO must register their interest in participating in the Panel introduces sampling error.

3. Resident (and non-resident) ratepayers would tend to be in a higher socio-economic group than resident non-ratepayers (because they own or are paying off their home or investment property and hence could be expected have a higher disposable income). By establishing a selection process that favours representation by resident and non-resident ratepayers the Council is actually entrenching social disadvantage in its engagement plan. This could hardly be said to be basing the plan on social justice principles!
4. Participation in the panel, if selected, is not mandatory. In other words, being “selected” does not guarantee participation in the Panel. This factor introduces sampling error because only those with strong views or vested interests are likely to agree to participate.

The draft strategy does not outline what will happen if someone declines the invitation to be on the Citizens Panel. This is a significant omission. The processes proposed to replace citizens who are invited but decline should be published ahead of adoption of this strategy.

5. According to the draft strategy members may withdraw at any time. The draft strategy does not state how the “representative” nature of the panel will be maintained if members withdraw. The strategy should indicate how replacement members would be selected or how the process will allow for the shifting balance of numbers on the panel.
6. The Engagement Matrix shows that the panel will only be used on rare or specific occasions. If this is the case then on one level it hardly seems worth the effort. That aside it also means that the wording of the questions asked of panel members and the processes involved in the operation of the panel take on added importance. The draft strategy does not indicate the means by which Council will ensure that the questions asked of the panel are fair and reasonable rather than leading or loaded.

The draft strategy does not indicate what range of information will be provided to panel members to assist them to form an informed decision.

The processes envisaged represent a move away from face-to-face discussion of issues in an open and transparent way towards the use of technology. This is disappointing.

Use of email and internet forums to gauge panel members’ views runs the very real risk of getting uninformed and hastily constructed views.

7. The establishment of a Citizens Panel, however constructed, raises concerns about interference with the roles and duties of elected Councillors under the Local Government Act.
 - Councillors are required to show leadership in their community. The proposed Citizens Panel could see them responding to short term concerns rather than the long term needs of the community.
 - Given the concerns listed above, the views expressed by such a panel would most likely not be representative of the community’s real views.
 - Consultation and community involvement and empowerment are important, but under the Local Government Act Councillors are required to make their decisions in the best interests of the community. The outcomes of the Citizens Panel may not be in the best long term interests of the community.

- Even if the panel turned out to be truly “representative” of the views of the community on all issues referred to it then problems/issues arise for Council (and Councillors). The establishment of the panel and publication of its “decisions” would build false expectations about the status of those decisions vis a vis the role of Councillors voting in Council meetings. If the decisions were not published it would contribute to an increased perception of secret deals on the part of Council.
- Establishing the panel could create an informal (and unelected) alternative power base in relation to local issues and development decisions.

Overall, this proposal is inherently prone to sampling error, is unlikely to provide the “representative” view that Council claims to be seeking and fails to demonstrate that it is based, as required by the legislation, on social justice principles.

Page 10

YOUTH

The proposal to establish a Youth Panel does not make any reference to representativeness.

This section refers to the electoral roll even though the electoral roll was discarded as a method of selection for the Citizens Panel. It is an irrelevant reference.

In general this is a simplistic approach based on the flawed proposal for a citizens panel. It should be reworked to implement real strategies to seek the views and input of local youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Defer consideration of the draft strategy by Council until such time as the issues and concerns raised in this submission have been addressed.
 2. Rework the proposed actions in each key stage of the engagement process to incorporate positive, open and accountable ways to engage with community/public interest groups.
 3. Broadcast Council meetings and Community Access live on the internet.
 4. Replace references to NRACC by Regional Development Australia (Page 3).
 5. Extend the Tweed Links notification of meeting dates to all community based interest groups.
 6. Incorporate a “Letters to the Council” section into Tweed Link as outlined in this submission.
 7. Remove references to the Citizens panel (Page 5).
 8. Rework the Engagement Matrix (Page 7) to ensure that Council’s strategy and processes align with community expectations and wishes and recognise the contribution to public debate and development of public policy by “interest groups”.
 9. Delete the proposal for a Citizens Panel (Pages 8 – 10)
 10. Replace the Citizens Panel with:
 - a. telephone surveys using established polling groups (e.g., Newspoll, Galaxy etc) on particular issues.
 - b. “town” meetings on specific issues
 - c. open and accountable processes to engage “interest groups” in the consultative process
 - d. a more interactive Tweed Link allowing feedback
 11. Remove the reference to the electoral roll in the section relating to the proposed Youth Panel. (Page 10).
 12. Ensure that the Youth Panel is representative of young people across the Shire.
 13. Rework actions for engaging with local youth in line with social justice principles and other recommendations in this submission.
 14. Include Community Access in the actions to be taken to engage the community.
 15. Revamp Community Access to allow for conversations between residents and Councillors, including the capacity of residents addressing Council to ask questions of Councillors.
 16. Highlight the opportunities for individuals and community/public interest groups to initiate workshops with Councillors and Council officers.
-

CALDERA ENVIRONMENT CENTRE
DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

(Draft Copy)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
TWEED SHIRE COUNCIL
FILE No: STRATEGY
DOC. No:
RECD: -5 AUG 2010
ASSIGNED TO: GREEN, S
HARD COPY IMAGE

There is a common perception that decision making in Tweed Shire lacks transparency, and that community consultation is "too little, too late".

Consultation around the Tweeds 'Water Strategy', and even for this "Draft Community Engagement Strategy" has not gone back to the basic strategic level, but options are presented at the 11th hour and in a very limited way. (A contracted menu of options).

Except for a period between (say) 1995 – 2000 when Cr. Bruce Graham and council's planners like Graham Judge, Douglas Jardine and David Broyd consulted with the community on issues such as the 'Catchment Management Strategy', 'Towards 2000' and 'Tweed Futures' strategies, Council has not consulted early enough or widely enough on most issues. The 'Tweed Vegetation Management Plan' was a notable exception. The Caldera Environment Centre supports and applauds the operation of committees like 'The River' and 'Coastal' Committees. But these tend to be the exception, not the rule.

Stakeholder committees and fairly moderated and representative Public Meetings are immediate, transparent and interactive in a way that 'virtual' electronic consultation is not.

The Draft CES is not an adequate response to the very detailed legislation which is claimed to be at the core of the & CES. The proposed 'Citizens' Panel' is almost a distraction from more fundamental inadequacies in Council's consultation and strategic planning 'modus operandi'.

- The representative/stakeholder select committee process is effective and efficient because community and council representatives meet around the table as equals to develop policy in an orderly and reasoned way through dialogue and interactive discussion. Quality outcomes depend on fair (inclusive) representation and co-operative & intelligent discussion. Trust is built over time during the process and consensus (decisions) are reached after the development period. Small groups of fair-minded constructive, interested and well-informed people are likely to reach beneficial (good) conclusions than a huge group of disconnected and uninformed people who may not be very involved or interested. Provided membership is broad and democratically selected and well-intended, the committee system is likely to be more transparent and result in more equitable (wiser) outcomes.
- Well moderated Public Meetings can result in a feeling of participation and empowerment. The process is quick and there is immediacy, inter-action and transparency. Public discourse provided the basis for ancient Greek democratic processes was the forebear of modern democratic processes and instructions. Ideas can be ventilated and developed over an hour or two. Public meetings helped to develop the "Tweed Futures" strategy and were well and enthusiastically attended. There can be a surprising degree of consensus if the process is well/fairly facilitated. There are not enough public meetings are opportunities to inform and develop policy on a live/real time venue in Tweed Shire.
- The 'Tweed Link' is a vital tool for council communication for which Cr. Ron Cooper deserves credit. This organ could be improved if it was more attractive and inter-active.

A 'Letters to the Editor' page would make 'The Link' more relevant and interesting. If time frames were punctual, 'The Link' could provide a better, cheaper and more accurate means of communication than the proposed citizens panel.

Sometimes the paper verges on sanitised propaganda and often the response times after announcements are published are too short. Announcements may even be out-of-date by the time they reach our letter boxes.

More use of colour may be more attractive but would depend on cost/effectiveness.

We feel the Link is an important asset which could be improved and made more friendly and relevant.

- The proposed Citizens Panel system has some fundamental problems/flaws.
 1. Can the 'randomly' selected panel be truly representative? For example, the 'Rural' component is relatively small in population but covers a huge (disproportionately large) geographic area of great variety and importance in environmental, ecological and natural asset terms. Population numeracy should not be the only criteria for fair representation social profile, residency and rate-payer status are areas of concern and potential conflict. Who decides the methodology? Who ensures fairness and transparency?
 2. Many of those selected will have no interest in, or understanding of, many of the issues being discussed. Apathy and ignorance abound. Why should these people be consulted if they are not engaged socially?
 3. The questions asked and the answers given must be framed and interpreted by whom and how? Bias, ambiguity and 'editing' is inevitable. The results lack credibility for these reasons. Much information may be needed for all but the simplest of issues.
 4. The process is not transparent. The broad community cannot know the way questions are developed, or the way conclusions from answers are presented to the decision-makers.
 5. The 'empowerment' and 'action' steps of the full five-step model are not to be incorporated. This distorts the intent and integrity of the panel proposal.
- Public Access via the five minute opportunity before Council meetings is totally inadequate for all by the simplest issues. Council 'Agendas' are not published in time for adequate public response. Councillors seem immune to even very well presented and reasoned entreaties (addresses).
- Workshop presentations are more valuable than the five minute (quickie) access but the council often seems to be unwilling to leave baggage/attitudes/prejudices at the door, and listen with an open mind and in a creative frame-of-mind.

CONCLUSIONS

- The Draft Community Engagement Strategy does not address the amended Local Government Legislation at the fundamental level intended. The options open for discussion are typically (for Tweed Council) not nearly enough and not sufficiently strategic (radical or basic).
- Many good mechanisms exist and have been successfully employed in the past (as discussed above). It seems that Council is too introverted and paranoid to freely and fairly engage with the public at the fundamental or strategic stage of policy formulation before the allocation of scarce resources is decided.
- What is needed is not so much new mechanisms but a fair dinkum attitude towards engagement. The hands should be open, palms forward not clenched into fists behind the back. The minds and attitudes should also be open with all the cards on the table and all participants seated equally around the table in the full light of day.
- The CEC looks forward to a useful workshop meeting on the subject of community engagement and consultation by those who have made submissions and with the relevant council officers, before any further development of policy.

E.P. Hopkins (Hop.E) Coordinator C.E.C. 4 Queen Street, Murwillumbah
(typed submission following)

336 Butlers Rd + Caldera Enviro Ctr - Po Box 5090.

From: Jules Lewin [juleslewin@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, 21 July 2010 12:30:06 AM

To: Corporate Email

Subject: Feedback on TSC Website - I refer to my email of 5.2.09, your response of 23.2.09 & my response of 23.2.09 (all enclosed). Website still not W3C compliant & visually accessible. Detailed explanation of concerns with website enclosed.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jules Lewin** <juleslewin@gmail.com>

Date: 15 July 2010 10:50

Subject: Feedback on TSC Website - Update request

To: webmaster@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Dear Webmaster,

It is quite some time since you assured me that the Council website would soon be W3C compliant and visually accessible. If anything, things have gone from bad to worse. For instance:

- The first column "What's New" doesn't have a margin.
- The font size is still small, and there is no option to increase the size.
- There is not enough contrast between font and background colours.
- The site map leaves a lot to be desired
- The search bar is inadequate. For instance, put "disability" as search term, and the first few hits refer to an arts workshop in 2006. It then goes on to the Draft Management Plan of 2006-2009.
- Some pages link to nowhere or have been dead for several years eg the Coat of Arms.

A quick check by accessibility programs shows that the home page has 18 errors.

The W3C validator of the home page shows 15 CSS errors , 67 xhtml 1.0 transitional errors and 12 warnings. I know a lot of the errors are relatively unimportant, but on the other hand the screenreader has a difficult time negotiating the website.

When can we expect to have a visually accessible, W3C-compliant website?
When will the website move on from stage 1?

Council has referred to Web 2.0 facilities for the new Community Engagement Strategy, but if the website still doesnt comply with W3C standards, how is this possible?

Yours sincerely

Julie Lewin

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Julie Lewin** <juleslewin@gmail.com>

Date: 23 February 2009 12:09

Subject: Re: Feedback on the Tweed Shire Council Web Site

To: webmaster <webmaster@tweed.nsw.gov.au>

Dear Web Development Team,

Many thanks. I'll look forward to being able to use an accessible, W3C-compliant Council website within the next 6 months.

Regards
Jules

2009/2/23 webmaster <webmaster@tweed.nsw.gov.au>

Dear Jules

Thank you for your email. We understand your concerns and appreciate your feedback.

Council is currently working on moving towards the establishment of a Content Management System which requires a complete revamp of the entire Tweed Shire Council website including:

- the look of the website;
- improved site navigation;
- improved search and A-Z facilities; and most importantly
- ensuring we meet the W3C standards, web record keeping legislation and improved visual accessibility.

I can assure you your comments have been noted and we are doing our best to work towards ensuring our website is accessible for all of our customers and complies with a range of industry standards from web record keeping to visual accessibility.

Please be patient with us during this time as we progress the new website over the next 4 – 6 months. I understand during this time you may have some frustrations with accessibility however we do value your feedback so please continue to advise me directly of these and we will do our best to work through them and ensure you have access to the information you require.

Kind regards

TSC Web Development Team

From: juleslewin@gmail.com [mailto:juleslewin@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, 5 February 2009 3:23 AM
To: webmaster
Subject: Feedback on the Tweed Shire Council Web Site

I do not find the web site easy to navigate because Visually inaccessible.

I regularly access information on your web site.

I would be grateful if you could tell me when Council expects to have an accessible website. Will Phase 2 of the "new" website be visually accessible? When is Phase 2 scheduled to go online?

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager.
Opinions, conclusions and other information in this message that do not relate to official Council business shall be understood as neither given nor endorsed by it.
www.tweed.nsw.gov.au

This email has been scanned by the MessageLabs Email Security System

From: Ari Ehrlich [ariommm@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, 18 July 2010 10:56:21 PM
To: Corporate Email; CommunicationsTSC
Subject: Draft Community Engagement Strategy - Request for Extension - Further work is needed on clearer definition & clarification if this is to be an equitable representation of the people of Tweed Shire - Ari Ehrlich

I request an extension on the deadline for Draft Community Engagement Strategy

My understanding of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy is that there are 3 main issues:

1. Community Group vs "Interest Group" classification of our community groups and the implications for access to Council engagement processes.

Abridged extract: Stakeholders [noteworthy]

Tweed Shire residents: Those who reside in the Tweed local government area.

Tweed Shire ratepayers: Those who own rateable land located in the Tweed local government area.

Businesses/Industry: Owners, operators and employees of small, medium and large businesses. Also includes business chambers, utility companies, economic development and tourism industry groups.

Community organisations and groups: Includes not-for-profit civic, cultural and religious organisations, groups and networks. Volunteer groups. Funded organisations. This also includes sporting and recreation clubs and associations, including RSL clubs, neighbourhood and community centres.

Interest groups: Includes representative groups with an interest in particular issues, such as environmental, elite sporting organisations and peak bodies, museum and heritage, disability advocacy and indigenous organisations. Interest groups are also area-based groups, such as progress and residents associations, including RSL clubs, neighbourhood and community centres.

Interest groups: Includes representative groups with an interest in particular issues, such as environmental, elite sporting organisations and peak bodies, museum and heritage, disability advocacy and indigenous organisations. Interest groups are also area-based groups, such as progress and residents associations who represent communities in specific localities ..., [and others]

2. Council Redefinition of the proposed IAP2 Model:

Abridged extract: Defining Community Associations who represent communities in specific localities ..., [and others]

2. Council Redefinition of the proposed IAP2 Model:

Abridged extract: Defining Community Engagement and Methods of Engagement

Best practice community engagement as prescribed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies the key stages stages of engagement as INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE, EMPOWER.

[Note the IAP2: EMPOWER = "Public Participation Goal: To place final decision-making in the hands of the public"]

Council functions under the Local Government Act 1993 which gives ultimate responsibility for decision making to Councillors, who are elected by the community to make decisions on its behalf. To further achieve the IAP2 objective of empowerment for the community, this strategy aims to give the Tweed community greater input during the

collaborate, involve, consult and inform stages of engagement, to inform Councillors and assist in effective decision making.

For practical purposes, the key stages can be described as INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE/COLLABORATE.

NOTE: From "... , INVOLVE, COLLABORATE, EMPOWER" the model is reduced to "... , INVOLVE/COLLABORATE."*

Note further that INVOLVE/COLLABORATE is not a term used by IAP2. They are separate stages in the process, therefore the term INVOLVE/COLLABORATE needs to be explained further to the community what it is that is meant.]

3. The processes which Council have devised to gain input from the community move councils engagement away from access for our community groups and replaces them with a system of random selection of 800 people:

Further work needed on this issue.

, Lions and Probus. Funded organisations such as St Joseph's Youth Service, Salvation Army and The Family Centre. This also includes sporting and recreation clubs and associations, including RSL clubs, neighbourhood and community centres.

Interest groups: Includes representative groups with an interest in particular issues, such as environmental, elite sporting organisations and peak bodies, museum and heritage, disability advocacy and indigenous organisations. Interest groups are also area-based groups, such as progress and residents associations who represent communities in specific localities.

..., [and others]

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Abridged extract: Defining Community Engagement and Methods of Engagement

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For practical purposes, the key stages can be described as INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE/COLLABORATE.

NOTE: From "... , INVOLVE, COLLABORATE, EMPOWER" the model is reduced to "... , INVOLVE/COLLABORATE."*

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3. The processes which Council have devised to gain input from the community move councils engagement away from access for our community groups and replaces them with a system of random selection of 800 people:

Further work is needed on clearer definition and clarification if this is to be an equitable representation of the people of Tweed Shire, so please extend the deadline.

Sincerely Ari Ehrlich Tyalgum

From: Elizabeth Jack [liffyjack@y7mail.com]
Sent: Monday, 19 July 2010 9:23:25 AM
To: Corporate Email
Subject: Submission regarding the Draft Community Engagement Strategy - Elizabeth Jack

--- On **Sun, 18/7/10, Brian <brian_@me.com>** wrote:

From: Brian <brian_@me.com>
Subject: URGENT - Draft Community Engagement Strategy.
To:
Received: Sunday, 18 July, 2010, 11:11 AM

Dear community group email guardians.

Please agree to forward the following to the membership mailing list of your group. It really is important.

Please help.

Hope you all well.

Brian.
Caldera Environment Centre.

Tweed Shire Council Draft Community Engagement Strategy - Submissions close Tuesday 20th July (tomorrow (!), ...

Item 7: [GM-CM] [Draft Community Engagement Strategy](#) Page 39

Council "..., must identify relevant stakeholder groups within the community and outline methods of engaging each group.

The [Draft Community Engagement Strategy](#) outlines the measures and methods for involving the Tweed community in Council strategic planning and decision making processes.

RECOMMENDATION [of staff to council]:

That Council adopts the [Draft Community Engagement Strategy](#) Version 1.0 for the purpose of public exhibition for a period of 28 days."

The above item has been passed by Council.

The Community Engagement Strategy will determine how the Council must engage with us, the community.

A 28 day period has been announced for the community to make comment about how they would change it such that genuine community consultation exists. **Submissions close Tuesday 20th July (tomorrow (!)**

Please forward this email to Council asking for a time extension for yourself and for your community group, ... before Close of Business 4pm Tuesday 20th July.

Please.

My understanding of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy is that there are 3 main issues:

1. Community Group vs "Interest Group" classification of our community groups and the implications for access to Council engagement processes.

Abridged extract: Stakeholders [noteworthy]

Tweed Shire residents: Those who reside in the Tweed local government area.

Tweed Shire ratepayers: Those who own rateable land located in the Tweed local government area.

Businesses/Industry: Owners, operators and employees of small, medium and large businesses. Also includes business chambers, utility companies, economic development and tourism industry groups.

Community organisations and groups: Includes not-for-profit civic, cultural and religious organisations, groups and networks. For example, volunteer groups such as Rotary, Lions and Probus. Funded organisations such as St Joseph's Youth Service, Salvation Army and The Family Centre. This also includes sporting and recreation clubs and associations, including RSL clubs, neighbourhood and community centres.

Interest groups: Includes representative groups with an interest in particular issues, such as environmental, elite sporting organisations and peak bodies, museum and heritage, disability advocacy and indigenous organisations. Interest groups are also area-based groups, such as progress and residents associations who represent communities in specific localities.

..., [and others].

2. Council Redefinition of the proposed IAP2 Model:

Abridged extract: [Defining Community Engagement and Methods of Engagement](#)

Best practice community engagement as prescribed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) identifies the key stages stages of engagement as INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE, COLLABORATE, EMPOWER.

[[Note the IAP2: EMPOWER = "Public Participation Goal: To place final decision-making in the hands of the public"](#)]

Council functions under the Local Government Act 1993 which gives ultimate responsibility for decision making to Councillors, who are elected by the community to make decisions on its behalf. To further achieve the IAP2 objective of empowerment for the community, this strategy aims to give the Tweed community greater input during the collaborate, involve, consult and inform stages of engagement, to inform Councillors and assist in effective decision making.

For practical purposes, the key stages can be described as INFORM, CONSULT, INVOLVE/COLLABORATE.

NOTE: From "..., INVOLVE, COLLABORATE, EMPOWER" the model is reduced to "..., INVOLVE/COLLABORATE."*

Note further that INVOLVE/COLLABORATE is not a term used by IAP2. They are separate stages in the process, therefore the term INVOLVE/COLLABORATE needs to be explained further to the community what it is that is meant.]

3. The processes which Council have devised to gain input from the community move councils engagement away from access for our community groups and replaces them with a system of random selection of 800 people:

Further work needed on this issue.

Please forward this email to Council asking for a time extension for yourself and your community group, pre 4pm Tue 20th July (tomorrow (!)).



My understanding of the Draft Community Engagement Strategy is that there are 3 main issues:

1. Community Group vs "Interest Group" classification of our community groups and the implications for access to Council engagement processes.

Abridged extract: Stakeholders [noteworthy]

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Further work needed on this issue.

Yves Picard
