



ANABRANCH  
BURONGA  
COOMEALLA  
CURLWAA  
DARETON  
ELLERSLIE  
GOL GOL  
MONAK  
POMONA  
POONCARIE  
RUFUS RIVER  
TRENTHAM CLIFFS  
WENTWORTH

# Community Engagement Strategy

2024

# INTERPRETER SERVICES



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If you require assistance reading and understanding this document, customer service staff of Wentworth Shire Council are happy to assist in the arrangement of a free interpretive service.

To arrange an interpreter, please contact Council on 03 5027 5027, or visit a Council Office listed below.

COUNCIL  
OFFICES



**Midway Community Centre**  
3 Midway Drive, Buronga NSW 2739



**Wentworth Visitor Centre (Main Administration Office)**  
61 Darling Street, Wentworth NSW 2648





We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work, and pay our respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.



The Kiilalaana group (Shantelle Thompson dancers) portraying the connection of the land and water through dance at Namatjira Water Tank Commissioning event, Dareton.



# Our Objectives



*Wentworth Shire is a vibrant, growing and thriving region*

**ECONOMIC**



*Wentworth Shire is a great place to live*

**SOCIAL**



*Wentworth Shire is a community that works to enhance and protect its physical and natural environment*

**ENVIRONMENTAL**



*Wentworth Shire is supported by strong and ethical civil leadership with all activities conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner*

**CIVIC LEADERSHIP**



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Images in this document were sourced from Council's Image Library unless otherwise stated. Cover image: Local business owners consultation session at Wanderer's Crossing River Retreat (formerly known as Willowbend Caravan Park), Wentworth.

This document was compiled by Wentworth Shire Council.  
Copies of this program can be viewed online at [wentworth.nsw.gov.au](http://wentworth.nsw.gov.au)

This revised version was endorsed by Council on 18 December 2024.  
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# Wentworth

## at a glance



**8.04%** of our population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (State average is 3.44%)

Proclaimed a Shire on 23 January  
**1879**

Area (sq. km)  
**26,256**



**7,487**  
Estimated Residential Population (2021)

Largest industry of Employment is Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing with **23.5%** of the population



**27.9%**  
Mining is the largest industry sector with (\$363,285,000) gross revenue



**3** Libraries

**1** Hospital

**8** Schools

**1** TAFE Campus

**2** Aerodromes

**29.51%** of homes are owned outright



**45.48%**

Working age Residents (30-64 yrs old) : **2,860**  
(state average is 45.46%) : Employed Residents

**4.5%** Unemployment Rate (2022)

Year 12 education as the highest form of education

Wentworth Shire residents  
**28.7%**

vs.

Other areas of NSW  
**52.13%**

**\$75,544**  
per capita Gross Regional Product



The Median Wage for Households:  
Wentworth  
**\$1,066/wk**



State (excl. Greater Sydney)  
**\$1,434/wk**



Greater Sydney  
**\$2,077/wk**

The individual median wage is **\$716** per week with **28.1%** of people earning over **\$1,500** per week.

**43 years old**

is the Median Resident age (State median is 39)

**28.54%** of Residents are aged under 25 (State average is 30.05%)

**20.42%** of Residents are aged over 65 (State average is 17.59%)



**29.99%** of families earn over \$130,000 vs. state average of 43.86%

**WORTH SEEING WORTH DOING!**  
WENTWORTH and surrounds



**422km**  
ADELAIDE

**583km**  
MELBOURNE

**1,044km**  
SYDNEY

599km of sealed road

1,429km of unsealed road

Based on data from the 2021 Census data. \*Data collected from Remplan and ABS

# Overview

Councils are required to establish and implement a strategy (called its Community Engagement Strategy) for engagement with the local community when developing its plans, policies and programs for the purpose of determining its activities (other than routine administrative matters).

This Community Engagement Strategy outlines how Council will undertake public consultation and community engagement involving Council decision making and, importantly, in the development of our Community Strategic Plan.

Council's Community Strategic Plan sits within an 'Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework' (IP&R) that draws together our Community Strategic Plan with a Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Resourcing Strategy.

Our Community Engagement Strategy underpins these plans. Consulting with, involving and collaborating with the community enables Council to identify and prioritise key local community needs and aspirations and align resources as appropriate endeavouring to meet those needs and aspirations.

## The framework recognises:

- That most communities share similar aspirations: a safe, healthy and pleasant place to live, a sustainable environment, opportunities for social interaction, opportunities for employment and reliable infrastructure; and
- That council plans and policies do not exist in isolation.

By drawing together various council plans, it allows both Council and the community to understand how the plans interact and to get maximum leverage from their efforts by planning holistically and sustainably for the future.

Furthermore, it provides other organisations that work in collaboration with Council for example government agencies, non-government organisations, and community-based groups - with the community's vision for the future.

Council is committed to providing opportunities for the community to contribute to solutions and be involved in its decision making processes.

It is important to understand that not every decision before Council requires engagement. Community engagement does not replace the statutory decision making functions of Council. Rather, it informs and guides it.



## Objective

The objective of this document is to outline a community engagement strategy for Wentworth Shire Council in line with Council's strategic objectives. Primarily the Community's Vision: Wentworth Shire will work together to create a thriving, attractive and welcoming community.

### The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Clearly demonstrate Council's commitment, expectations and processes for Community Consultation and Engagement
- Establish a set of principles for guiding Council's community consultation and engagement activities
- Provide a framework for a coordinated, well planned approach to engagement that is genuine and inclusive and meets the needs of each stakeholder group (not one-size fits all)
- Provide guidance on the provision of feedback to communities, stakeholders and partner agencies about how their contribution has influenced the development of strategic plans and policy
- Provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating Council's engagement activities to incorporate feedback to improve and/or enhance engagement experiences
- Meet the legislative requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

#### Strategy 1

### Our Economy

*Wentworth Shire is a vibrant, growing and thriving region*



#### Strategy 2

### Our Community

*Wentworth Shire is a great place to live*



#### Strategy 3

### Our Environment

*Wentworth Shire is a community that works to enhance and protect its physical and natural environment*



#### Strategy 4

### Our Leadership

*Wentworth Shire is supported by strong and ethical civil leadership with all activities conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner*





# Introduction

## Wentworth Shire: Our Community profile

Situated at the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers, Wentworth Shire is home to vibrant communities, a diverse agricultural sector, unique natural environments, and significant Cultural Heritage.

Strategically located bordering NSW and SA, and at the cross-roads of the Sturt, Silver City, and Calder Highways, Wentworth Shire provides important linkages to the major ports of Sydney (1,075km), Melbourne (585km), and Adelaide (420km).

The Sturt Highway (a key national freight route) and the Silver City Highway, intersect the Shire from east to west, and north to south respectively.

It has a population of approximately 8,000 people and covers an area of 2,616,926 hectares (26,000 sq. km).

Council's greatest population density is in the townships of Wentworth, Dareton, Buronga and Gol Gol situated on the southern boundary (along the Murray River).

The remote township of Pooncarie is located on the Darling River, approximately 120km north of Wentworth.

Known as the 'Gateway to the Outback', Wentworth Shire has become an important outback destination for tourists, and combined with cross-border neighbour Mildura the region attracts over 300,000 visitors annually; a number of which are return visitors.

Additionally, the shire boasts a number of local, regional and national events including major sporting events, arts and culture events, and a range of annual community events.

As part of both the NSW Western Division and cross-border Sunraysia region, Council continues to

foster collaborative partnerships with government agencies, neighbouring councils, and is a member of a number of organisations that work together to represent the needs of our region.

### Our commitment

Council's approach to community engagement will generally involve the following five processes:

1. Providing information to the community, e.g. existing plans and strategies, fact sheets, statistical information, and discussion papers. The aim of providing information is to assist in establishing where we are now.
2. Seeking information from the community by obtaining feedback on the levels of service the community wants and is willing to pay for, suggestions, opinions and other relevant information that may assist in the planning process. The aim of seeking information is to assist in establishing where we want to be.
3. Involving the community in working through the issues raised and developing objectives and strategies for the plan. The aim of involving the community is to assist in establishing how we will get there.
4. Charting the course of action to assist in determining outcomes or making final decisions.
5. Providing feedback to enable stakeholders to understand how their input informed the course of action, direct feedback or public exhibition of plans may be undertaken.

Wentworth Shire Council is committed to ongoing stakeholder engagement that is:

- **Inclusive and targeted** - ensuring that a broad range of community members have input into developing policies and plans. We will seek to engage with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds, women, people with a disability, older people and young people

- **Transparent** - we will provide a transparent and open approach with our engagement activities
- **Innovative and accessible** - we will use a range of tools and methods to ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate

- **Informative and respectful** - we will provide information to participants to enable them to contribute in a meaningful way. We will seek to foster mutual respect by listening to all ideas and contributions and responding where possible. We will respect people's privacy by storing all information in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1988 (NSW)* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*.



# Principles

## International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Our approach to community engagement is built upon a spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum identifies that there are different levels of engagement from Informing through to Empowering. No single approach to engagement will serve every project. The spectrum requires that the level of engagement must be determined by considering the issues, problems or opportunity requiring engagement, the objectives to be achieved by engaging, and the extent that the community can assist us to make decisions.

The Spectrum shows that differing levels of public participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of impact of the decision to be made. The five levels of public participation are: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower.

### The IAP2 Core Values are:

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process;
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision;
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers;
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision;
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate;
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way; and
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<b>Public Participation Goal</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternative opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>Council's Promise</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
<b>Role of the Community</b>	<b>Listen</b>	<b>Contribute</b>	<b>Participate</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Decide</b>



## ***Applying IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to Council***

When planning community engagement activities, Council staff will work with the Economic and Community Development Officer to consider and select the level of participation that best defines the public's role for that activity.

It is important to remember that the level of participation in decision-making should be proportionate to the impact of the decision being made – strategic decisions that influence longer-term outcomes for the whole community or have flow-on effects for other decisions should have a much higher degree of community participation than a decision that impacts a very small sector of the community for a very short timeframe.

Council staff will endeavor to plan their community engagement activities in a timely and effective manner.

## ***Engagement tools***

**To inform:** Press releases, public notices, community newsletter, website, social media, letter box drops

**To consult:** Community meetings, surveys and questionnaires, public meetings, focus groups, forums and workshops, community newsletter, website, social media, public exhibition

**To involve:** Community meetings, Focus groups, Forums and Workshops, Committees, Online information – e.g. websites, email news, social media.

**To collaborate:** Community meetings, Focus groups, Forums and Workshops, Online information – e.g. websites, email news, social media.

**To empower:** By ensuring that the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence are apparent in all community engagement

## ***Stakeholder participation mapping***

Stakeholders refers to any person or group of persons who have or feel they have an interest, or can affect/be affected by an issue or decision. If stakeholders are not properly identified, the responses gathered from the community engagement process are likely to be flawed because the information gathered is from people who have little or no connection with the issues.

Stakeholder mapping (analysis) allows engagement to be specifically tailored to the targeted stakeholder group and the issues of relevance to each stakeholder group.

Undertaking stakeholder mapping is vital for effective two-way communication as it reduces the risk of marginalising groups or individuals.

It assists to gain real community ownership of decisions or projects and ensures that communication is occurring with the right people at the right time.

There are a number of criteria that can be used to segment stakeholder groups.

The first way is the type of stakeholder as described in the following categories.

The second important consideration is the capacity of the stakeholder groups to engage.

This is particularly important for “hard to reach” stakeholders such as children and youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older people, and people and communities who are geographically isolated or transport disadvantaged.

Understanding the capacity of the target stakeholder group's ability to participate influences the methods of engagement that can be used.

Another factor in determining a stakeholder's ability to engage is their understanding of the issues or opportunities.

## Stakeholder categories

Stakeholders can be grouped into one of the following four categories:

**Latent/passive:** these individuals and stakeholders don't demonstrate an interest in the issue/project/decision at all

**Emerging:** these individuals and stakeholders are starting to form ideas and opinions on issues, projects and decisions

**Aware:** these individuals and stakeholders are aware of issues, projects and decisions and demonstrate knowledge of the topic and can confidently comment on it

**Active:** these individuals and stakeholders are doing or saying something about an issue, project or decision and are trying to influence others to their position.

## Key Stakeholders

Our key stakeholders are any one who has an interest in the issues that impact Wentworth Shire Council and who should be included in the engagement process. This includes government agencies, visitors, school and education providers, local business and industries, community user groups, residents and property owners, Councillors, Council staff and the media.

A community engagement project plan identifies relevant stakeholders in order to understand their perspective, noting they are the keys to the engagement process.

The details and content of an engagement project plan are modelled around stakeholder engagement objectives and will describe:

- Community target groups
- Level of engagement and objective
- Engagement activity
- Barriers to participation
- Strategies to reduce barriers
- Feedback process, and
- Council Responsible Officer

## Community Participation Plan

### Related to environmental planning functions

Wentworth Shire Council's Community Participation Plan (CPP) sets out when and how the community will be engaged regarding Council's planning related functions. The preparation and implementation of a CPP is a requirement of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 NSW (EP&A Act)*.

The CPP has been designed to make public participation in planning clearer for the community, by identifying, in one document, how and when the community can participate in the planning system.

The level and extent of community participation will vary depending on the location, scope of the proposal under consideration, and potential impact of the decision.

Council's CPP sets out Council's planning function and includes exhibition timeframes associated with all Development Assessment and Strategic Planning Matters. This document can be viewed online at [www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au)

## Evaluation

Wentworth Shire Council will evaluate the effectiveness of the Community Engagement activities by:

- Reviewing the results of any surveys, feedback forms and public sessions
- The overall level of outreach achieved by the community engagement across the community
- Measure and review Council performance against service standards related to engagement approaches
- Releasing the results where appropriate through reports, infographics and social media posts or via Council website
- Use the feedback and results to improve future Community Engagement activities and plans
- Council also commits to establishing a continuous improvement process to ensure the Community Engagement Framework is continually evolving.

## Have your say

Council welcomes comments and submissions from the community.

If you would like to become involved in any of the activities listed, you should make contact with the Office of the General Manager, at the Wentworth Shire Council.

Telephone (03) 5027 5027 or email: [council@wentworth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@wentworth.nsw.gov.au)



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