



Internal consultation engagement report

Community Engagement Strategy – Update 2026

Council is committed to fostering meaningful and measurable community engagement that supports better, more sustainable outcomes for the municipality while strengthening the diversity of community voices.

This report summarises the key insights and findings from the engagement undertaken as part of the review and update of the draft Community Engagement Strategy.

Consultation period

20 Jan 2026 until 30 April 2026

Promotional activities

Dedicated Staff Your Say Page | Staff Flyers

How staff got involved



12
key
stakeholder
interviews



29
survey
responses



9
Attending
Councillor
Workshop



Recommendations based on what we heard

- Rewrite the Strategy in clearer, more accessible language to make it easier for community members to understand how and when they can be involved.
- Strengthen the focus on promoting equity, diversity and inclusion by formalising existing work and ensuring engagement is intentionally inclusive, particularly for groups who are traditionally under-represented.
- Develop and deliver in-house community engagement training to tailor content to Council's specific context while achieving cost savings compared to external providers.
- Merge internal Communications and Engagement working groups to reduce duplication and enable more efficient and coordinated delivery.
- Develop a Community Engagement Policy to provide a clear governance framework, defining roles, responsibilities, and minimum standards for engagement across Council.

What's next

The Draft Community Engagement Strategy will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days, providing the community and stakeholders with the opportunity to review and provide feedback. Where appropriate, amendments will be made in response to feedback prior to submitting the final Strategy.

Our methodology

To inform the update of the Community Engagement Strategy, a range of review and engagement activities were undertaken:

Comprehensive implementation assessment

An assessment of the Strategy's implementation was completed using an evaluation matrix aligned with the three key action areas. This process assessed the consistency, maturity, and effectiveness of engagement practices across the organisation.

Independent desktop review

An external desktop review by qualified engagement consultant Kathryn Ridley assessed the Community Engagement Strategy 2024–2028 against legislative requirements and sector-wide best practice. The review found that the Strategy meets legislative obligations, while identifying opportunities to strengthen alignment with the intent of the Local Government Act and incorporate additional elements of best practice. A total of 20 recommendations were provided to improve readability, address information gaps, and build on existing strengths.

Staff survey

An organisation-wide staff survey that received 29 responses. This provided a strong snapshot of staff confidence, capability, and perceived gaps in undertaking community engagement.

Stakeholder interviews/focus groups

Internal stakeholders were engaged through a mix of individual and group interviews, involving 12 key staff from the strategic planning, corporate planning, community outcomes, and property teams.

Councillor workshop

A Councillor workshop was held on Thursday, 16 April, to present the strategy and request feedback, attended by six Councillors and three Directors.

Key themes and findings

Desktop review

The review found that the current Community Engagement Strategy 2024-2028 (CES) is meeting legislative requirements; however, some improvements could be made to ensure it reflects the intent of the *Local Government Act*. The strategy also includes elements of best practice, which can be built upon in the next iteration.

In view of the results of the desk-top analysis, the following actions are recommended to enhance the existing Community Engagement Strategy:

1. Write the strategy for the community, specifically write in plain English, use icons and diagrams to explain key concepts and minimise written content and move staff focused information (e.g. checklists) to the appendices or staff toolkit. **Adopted**
2. Include a message from the Mayor and/or CEO to provide context and emphasise the importance placed by Council on effective and meaningful engagement. **Adopted**
3. Define the word 'community' and the term 'community engagement'. **Adopted**
4. When defining 'community engagement' give a few examples of the types of things Council engages the community on e.g. local or major projects, strategies and plans, service delivery including levels of service. **Adopted**
5. Move the Principles to the front of the document. They should be one of the first things we see.
6. Move information on how the strategy was developed to the appendices. **Adopted**
7. Include key information about the community and feature this early in the document e.g. community profile. **Adopted**
8. Include information on the challenges and opportunities for engagement based on your community profile, the results of community engagement and other research that identifies barriers to engagement. **Adopted**

9. When referencing the IAP2 framework take into consideration that the community is very rarely 'empowered' to make the final decision. Under a local democracy model, the council is made up of the community's elected representatives and therefore is considered the final decision maker. **Adopted**
10. Under stakeholder groups (page 10 of the strategy), also include examples of the types of forums used to engage them e.g. youth council, business forums, advisory panels. This also promotes relevant forums to interested individuals. **Adopted**
11. Dedicate more space in the strategy to 'Decision making' (page 11) and:
 - a. explain at a high level (diagram recommended) the typical community engagement and decision making process that people can expect.
 - b. explain when the community might not influence decision making.
 - c. keep the information on "other things" the Council considers as part of its decision-making. **Partly adopted**
12. Under 'Actions' on page 9, reorder these to lead with the community focused actions i.e., Meet community where they are, Close the loop and Build staff capacity
13. Consider moving content about 'Diversity, equity and inclusion' (page 11 of the strategy) under 'Actions' on page 9 and potentially create another Action area to demonstrate the Council's commitment to achieving this objective. **Adopted**
14. Also under 'Actions', make specific reference to engaging representative samples of the community and how this will be achieved. **Due to limited resourcing not adopted at this stage.**
15. Under Council's strategies and action plans (page 11) talk about the role the Community Engagement Strategy plays in developing these, specifically the review of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP). **Adopted**
16. Include case studies that demonstrate engagement in action inclusive of at least one activity that involved a diverse range of participants and/or excelled in engaging a target group or cohort that is traditionally 'hard to reach.' **Adopted**
17. Dedicate a page, possibly at the rear of the strategy, that explains how the community can get involved. For example, key contact numbers, websites, forums.
18. Promote the benefits of getting involved in Council's community engagement activities, possibly by way of inclusion in the strategy's opening message.
19. Develop a Community engagement policy, that reflects the strategy's principles, to support a consistent approach to the strategy's implementation. **Adopted**
20. Include outcome measures for evaluating the effectiveness of the overall strategy, not just output measures against actions (e.g. number of activities). For example, % of community that are highly satisfied with Council's community engagement, % of participants that agree an engagement activity reflects the engagement principles (Open and honest, Proactive etc.) **Taken onboard for the evaluation**

Staff survey

A staff survey was undertaken between 20 January and 13 February 2026 to inform the update of the Community Engagement Strategy. A total of 29 staff members participated, representing all Council directorates, with the highest participation from Corporate and Commercial (41%) and Strategies and Communities (38%). Most respondents had worked at Council for between one and three years (48%).

The survey results indicate a strong awareness of community engagement across the organisation. More than 86% of respondents were aware of the existing Community Engagement Strategy, and 76% were aware of the Your Say Kiama platform. Over 60% of respondents had previously been involved in community consultation or public exhibition activities, and 59% indicated they were likely to undertake engagement activities within the next 12 to 24 months.

The findings highlighted opportunities to strengthen staff capability and support. While 59% of respondents were aware of the Community Engagement Toolkit, only 31% had completed formal engagement training through the Engagement Institute's "Essentials of Engagement" course. Confidence levels in planning and delivering engagement activities were generally positive, with 61% feeling confident or very confident; however, 28% reported being only somewhat confident.

Resourcing and time constraints emerged as key themes throughout the survey. Half of the respondents felt they had only adequate resources to a small extent, and staff identified budget, staffing capacity, clearer role expectations, leadership support, and earlier project planning as important areas for improvement. Staff consistently noted that engagement should be considered earlier in project development and embedded into project plans from the outset.

Feedback on community pop-ups was generally positive, with 79% of participating staff finding them useful. Suggestions for improvement included better promotion, aligning pop-ups with existing community events, realistic expectations around attendance, and additional staff support and training for face-to-face engagement.

The survey also highlighted a need to strengthen evaluation and “closing the loop” practices. Nearly half of respondents reported they rarely evaluate engagement activities, citing time constraints, limited frameworks, and a need for clearer tools and training. Staff also expressed interest in practical resources such as templates, talking points, example scenarios, communications support, and clearer guidance on roles and responsibilities.

Based on the insights of the staff survey, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Build staff knowledge and confidence by developing and delivering in-house community engagement training focused on the principles of community engagement, roles and responsibilities, engagement planning and evaluation, and practical techniques for managing face-to-face engagement activities and difficult conversations.
2. Strengthen internal tools and resources by continuing to enhance the Community Engagement Toolkit with practical templates, talking points, example scenarios, communications support materials and clearer guidance on engagement processes and responsibilities.
3. Support continuous improvement and shared learning by holding debrief sessions following engagement activities, particularly face-to-face consultations and pop-ups, to capture staff experiences, challenges and key learnings.
4. Increase staff awareness and organisational understanding of the revised Community Engagement Strategy by launching the updated strategy through internal activities such as staff briefings, roadshows and morning teas that promote the key principles, actions and expectations of best practice engagement.
5. Improve efficiency and community participation by aligning pop-up engagement activities with existing community events and opportunities where appropriate, helping to increase visibility, reduce duplication and better connect with the community where they already gather.

Stakeholder interviews/focus groups

Internal stakeholders were engaged through a mix of individual and group interviews, involving 12 key staff from the strategic planning, corporate planning, community outcomes, and property teams.

The following observations have been made:

- Strong organisational support for community engagement, with continued support for the existing action areas of building staff capacity, meeting the community where they are, and closing the loop.
- IAP2 training was viewed positively, particularly for staff involved in high-stakes or ongoing engagement activities; however, staff identified a need for complementary in-house training tailored to Council processes and projects.
- Strong interest in more practical and Council specific inhouse training, including recorded sessions to support staff turnover and build organisational knowledge. Suggested training topics included:

- roles and responsibilities in community engagement
 - analysing and summarising feedback
 - planning and evaluating engagement activities
 - managing difficult conversations and negative feedback
 - practical techniques for pop-ups and face-to-face engagement
 - culturally appropriate engagement practices
 - understanding statutory engagement requirements.
- Opportunities were identified to strengthen pop-up engagement activities through the consistent involvement of planning staff, recognising that many community enquiries relate to planning matters and would benefit from specialist advice and support.
- Support for Councillor workshops and training to strengthen understanding of community engagement principles, equitable engagement practices, and the role of Councillors in engagement processes.
- Opportunities identified to strengthen engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including clearer processes, culturally appropriate practices, and improved guidance on engaging with representative groups and First Nations stakeholders.
- Strong support for improving coordination and collaboration across Council, including:
 - aligning engagement activities with existing community events and programs
 - improving cross-promotion of projects and engagement opportunities
 - embedding engagement earlier into project planning and project management frameworks
 - streamlining working group and internal communication processes.
- Feedback highlighted opportunities to continue enhancing the Community Engagement Toolkit with practical resources such as:
 - templates and communication plans
 - event and pop-up resources
 - talking points and example scenarios
- Staff identified the importance of reaching a diverse cross section of the community and working more closely with community outreach team representatives, networks and target groups to improve participation and inclusivity.
- Closing the loop was recognised as important, however staff identified challenges relating to time, resources and competing priorities. Suggestions included using social media, Council communications and digital platforms to better communicate outcomes and how feedback informed decisions.
- Opportunities were identified to improve evaluation and capture community sentiment following engagement activities and community events.
- Reviewing and summarising submissions was identified as resource intensive, with interest in exploring technology and AI tools to support analysis and reporting processes.
- Other operational improvements identified included:
 - avoiding engagement during peak holiday periods
 - integrating customer feedback and complaints data into engagement insights
 - improving clarity around formal versus informal engagement processes
 - strengthening debrief and reflection opportunities following engagement activities.

Recommendations

Collectively, these activities provided clear insights into what is working well, where practices are inconsistent, and where clearer strategic direction and guidance are required.

Proposed Strategy updates

The following updates are proposed in response to the findings of the review and engagement activities:

- **Written for the community**
The Strategy has been rewritten in clearer, more accessible language to make it easier for community members to understand how and when they can be involved.
- **New action area: Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion**
This formalises existing work and ensures engagement is intentionally inclusive, particularly for groups who are traditionally under-represented.
- **In-house Community Engagement training**
Developing training internally will allow content to be tailored to Council's specific context while delivering cost savings compared to external training providers.
- **Merging of internal staff working groups**
Combining Communications and Engagement-related working groups will reduce duplication and support more efficient and coordinated delivery.
- **Development of a Community Engagement Policy**
A new Policy will provide a clear governance framework, defining roles, responsibilities, and minimum standards for engagement across Council.

Overall, these updates focus on strengthening existing practice, improving consistency across the organisation, and making engagement processes clearer and more transparent for staff, Councillors, and the community.

Related Documents

- [Community Engagement Strategy Update: Best Practice Review](#)
- [Community Engagement Strategy Update: Staff Survey](#)



Draft Community Engagement Strategy

2026–2030



KIAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
your council, your community

Acknowledgement of Country

Kiama Municipal Council acknowledges the Wodi Wodi people on Dharawal Country as the traditional custodians of the land on which our Municipality is located.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to our community.

Smoking ceremony, 2025

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

3 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country 2

 Message from the Mayor 4

 What is community engagement? 5

 Our commitment to community engagement 6

 Local characteristics, opportunities and challenges 7

 How we engage 9

 Our process 9

 Level of engagement 10

 Decision making 10

 Who we engage 11

 Roles and responsibilities 12

 Engagement methods matrix 13

 Actions 14

 Case study: Kiama Local Housing Strategy 16

 How to get involved 17

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

4 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Message from the Mayor

It is my pleasure to present the Community Engagement Strategy 2026-30 to our community.

Listening to our community is an essential component of how we operate at Kiama Municipal Council.



It is in our DNA and it is a non-negotiable for any Council worth its salt.

We are here to serve the community and that is why it is vital that we consult with everyone who wants to have a say when we make decisions that affect all residents of our local government area.

The Community Engagement Strategy will be the guide for our organisation, from the Councillors and all staff members, to be committed to open and honest discourse.

We pride ourselves on transparency so that we are accountable for our actions, which may not always be popular but will always be what we think are the responsible ones for the Kiama LGA.

Kiama Council is committed to keeping you informed throughout the life of any project, big or small.

We offer various ways for the community to have their say, whether that's online, face to face at our community pop-ups, via surveys, workshops and those good old-fashioned methods of sending mail or making phone calls.

Please continue to have your say, be heard and help us build a bright future for Kiama.

Councillor Cameron McDonald
Mayor, Kiama Municipal Council

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

5 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is how Kiama Municipal Council works with the community to share information, seek feedback, and involve people in decisions that affect them.

It is about encouraging open conversations with the community on the development of Council plans, policies, programs, services, and key decisions. Listening to community feedback helps Council understand local needs, values, and ideas, and supports better decision-making.

Council recognises that local knowledge, lived experience, and community ideas are essential to achieving better and more sustainable outcomes for our community.

The Social Justice Principles guide our approach to community engagement:

[Access](#) | [Equity](#) | [Participation](#) | [Rights](#)

When we engage

Community engagement is undertaken when:

- There is an opportunity for the community to influence actions, outcomes, or decisions
For example, when developing a new strategy, plan, policy or project, the community is invited to help inform the final document or decision.
- There is a legislative or statutory requirement
For example, when a development application or planning proposal is on public exhibition, the community can review the information and make a submission before a decision is made.
- Council determines that engagement will strengthen outcomes, relationships, or community trust.
For example, when changes to services are being considered, or a project may affect residents.

About this strategy

The Community Engagement Strategy provides a strategic framework for Council to deliver meaningful and measurable community engagement that supports better, more sustainable outcomes for the municipality while strengthening the diversity of community voices. The Strategy sets out how Council engages with the community in the development, review and implementation of the strategies, policies and action plans that guide Council's services, priorities and day-to-day operations, as outlined in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The Strategy forms part of Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting framework which empowers the community to play an integral role in determining the goals, actions and strategies for the Kiama LGA. Engagement findings are used to inform evidence-based decision-making and ensure that Council strategies and plans reflect community needs, values and lived experience.

Statutory requirements

The Strategy also supports Council's statutory engagement obligations under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. Under the Act, Council maintains a Community Participation Plan (CPP), which sets out how and when the community is engaged on planning and development matters in line with statutory exhibition and notification requirements. Together, the CPP and this Strategy form Council's framework for both statutory and non-statutory community engagement. For more information about the CPP, see [Community Participation Plan, Kiama Council](#).

6 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Our commitment to community engagement

Council is committed to fostering meaningful and measurable community engagement that supports better, more sustainable outcomes for the municipality while strengthening the diversity of community voices.

Our principles are:

- **Open and honest**
Engagement will be transparent and clearly communicate how community feedback will be considered and how decisions are made, including explanations where feedback cannot be adopted.
- **Proactive**
Engagement will seek to understand community perspectives early in the decision-making process, before options are finalised.
- **Genuine**
Engagement will actively listen to community views, ensuring feedback is respectfully heard, accurately captured and thoughtfully considered.
- **Inclusive and accessible**
Engagement will meet the community where they are, using approaches that enable people of diverse backgrounds, abilities and circumstances to participate meaningfully.
- **Accountable**
Engagement will support clear oversight through ongoing communication. Council will close the loop by keeping the community and stakeholders informed at all stages of the project lifecycle and demonstrating how input has influenced outcomes.

Item 14.1

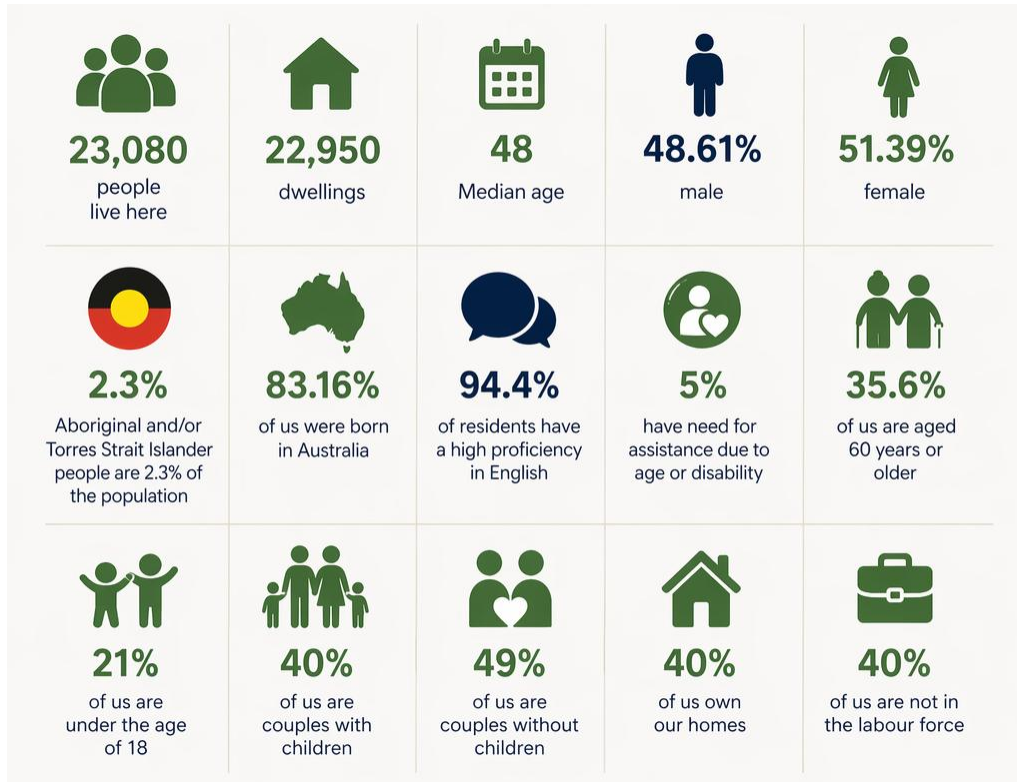
Enclosure 2



7 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Local characteristics, opportunities and challenges

Understanding our community to build a stronger, more connected and inclusive future.



Source: <https://app.remplan.com.au/kiama/community/summary>

Challenges and opportunities

Kiama LGA's community characteristics create both challenges and opportunities for how and when community engages. Understanding these factors helps Council design inclusive, responsive and effective engagement approaches across the municipality.

An ageing population

The Kiama LGA has a higher median age than the NSW average, with a growing number of residents aged 60 and over. This presents both opportunities and responsibilities for Council. Older residents bring valuable life experience, skills and knowledge that enrich our community, and many make significant contributions through volunteering and active participation in community life. Council will continue to provide a mix of traditional and accessible engagement methods to support older people to participate.

Community Pop-up for Nighttime Economy Strategy, 2026

9 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

How we engage

Community engagement is undertaken when there is an opportunity for impacted communities to influence specific actions, outcomes or decisions or when there is a statutory requirement to do so.

Our process

Every engagement is tailored to the project and the people it affects. While approaches may vary, Council follows a consistent four-step process. Staff are supported by a community engagement toolkit that includes templates and practical guidance for undertaking community engagement.

Stage	Description
Design	We start by understanding what the project is about and who may be affected. At this stage, we: - clarify the purpose and scope of the engagement - identify stakeholders we need to hear from - decide what feedback can influence This helps ensure engagement is clear, targeted and meaningful from the outset.
Plan	We then plan how the engagement will work. This includes: - selecting the right ways to engage (for example, surveys, workshops, pop-ups and/or online tools) - considering timing, resources and accessibility needs - setting out how feedback will be collected and used Planning helps make engagement inclusive, realistic and well-coordinated.
Deliver	During this stage, we conduct engagement activities. We: - invite community and stakeholders to share their views - provide clear information to support participation - collect and record feedback in a consistent way We monitor engagement to ensure it serves its purpose and reaches the intended audience.
Close the loop	After engagement, we review and share what we heard. This includes: - analysing and summarising feedback - reporting to decision-makers and project teams - communicating outcomes back to the community We explain how community input was considered and how it influenced decisions, helping build trust and transparency.

10 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Level of engagement

Council uses four levels of community engagement, based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum. The appropriate level of engagement for each project is determined by a range of factors, including the engagement's purpose, the level of impact on the community, the complexity of the issue, legislative or statutory requirements, and project timeframes.

While the IAP2 Spectrum includes an 'empower' level, this is rarely used because final decisions are made by elected councillors who represent the community.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Engagement goal	To provide community with the right information to help them understand a Council plan, policy, program or activity.	To gather community feedback on a Council plan, policy, program or activity.	To work with community in the development of a Council plan, policy, program or activity, ensuring their views are clearly understood and considered.	To partner with community in the development and delivery of a Council plan, policy, program or activity.
Council commitment	We will keep you informed throughout the life of the project.	We will keep you informed, listen to your feedback, and share how community input influenced our final decision.	We will work with you to ensure your feedback is directly considered and share how community's input influenced our final decision.	We will incorporate your advice and recommendations into our final decision.
Example methods	Council website Social media Council e-newsletter (Kimunico)	Online or paper surveys Call for submissions Community pop-ups	Digital engagement Workshops Panel discussions	Council committees Working groups

Decision making

Community views, ideas and local knowledge are an important part of Council's decision-making process. However, community feedback is one of several considerations that inform decisions, as shown in the diagram below.



Diagram adapted from Wollongong City Council, Community Engagement Strategy 2024

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

11 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Who we engage

Our community includes many different people and groups, with a wide range of interests, priorities and needs. Meaningful engagement helps Council understand these different perspectives and make balanced, informed decisions.

When planning community engagement, Council will identify and consider stakeholders who may be interested in, affected by, or benefit from a specific action, outcome or decision. Additional effort will be made to reach underrepresented groups (i.e. young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people living with disabilities) to deliver inclusive engagement approaches that are culturally appropriate and responsive to their needs.

Key stakeholder groups include, but are not limited to, the following:

Key stakeholders	Description
Residents and ratepayers	People who live in and/or pay rates within the Kiama Local Government Area (LGA).
Children and young people	Young people who live, study or spend time in the Kiama LGA represent the future of the community.
Communities of place	People connected by location, such as towns, villages, neighbourhoods or streets.
Communities of interest	Groups connected by shared activities, interests, events or experiences.
Communities of identity	People of different ages, cultural backgrounds, abilities, gender identities and religions.
First Nations communities	First Nations people in building a trusting and respectful relationship and upholding their culture, knowledge and heritage. A 'Aboriginal Engagement Protocols' will guide Council on engagement and consultation with the Aboriginal community, using a meaningful, culturally safe, supportive and accountable approach.
Communities of need	People who may be more affected by Council decisions or face barriers to participation, including people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, people with disability, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, renters, and those impacted by emergencies or disasters.
Schools and education providers	Early learning services, primary and secondary schools, and other education providers.
Business community	Local businesses, industry groups, business networks and chambers of commerce.
Users of Council facilities and services	People who use Council services and facilities such as libraries, parks, beaches, sporting facilities and recreation centres.
Community organisations and groups	Council committees, precinct and resident groups, community networks, faith-based organisations, volunteer groups, and sporting and recreation clubs.

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

The roles outlined below explain how community engagement is a shared responsibility across Council and the wider community. While this Strategy focuses on Council's engagement approach, its success depends on the active involvement of elected representatives, staff, and community stakeholders.

Community Emissions Reduction Plan Focus Group, 2025

13 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Engagement methods matrix

The following methods matrix provides an overview of commonly used engagement methods. Selection of appropriate methods will be based on the level of engagement required, project scope and complexity, available budget and timeframe, legislative or statutory obligations, and the needs of stakeholders and the community.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Council website	X			
Council e-newsletter (Kimunico)	X			
Social media	X			
Media release	X			
Local newspapers	X			
Rates notices	X			
Letters and email notifications	X			
Letterbox drops	X			
Posters, pamphlets, flyers	X			
Outdoor signage	X			
Print or digital factsheets and FAQs	X			
Doorknocking	X	X		
Presentation, meeting or briefing (in-person, phone or virtual)	X	X		
Opinion poll		X		
Comment, compliment, complaint form		X		
Calls for submission		X		
Council meetings or town hall engagements		X		
'Your Say Kiama' interactive website		X	X	
Online or printed survey		X	X	
Community pop-ups		X	X	
Online discussion board		X	X	
Citizen science (e.g. wildlife reporting)		X	X	
Reference or advisory groups		X	X	X
Committees or Special councils (eg, youth council)		X	X	X
Workshops		X	X	X
Focus groups		X	X	X
Panel discussions		X	X	X
Roundtables		X	X	X
Co-design			X	X
Working groups			X	X
Design charette			X	X
Deliberative forums				X
Consensus conference				X
Voting				
Citizens jury				

14 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Actions

These actions are intended to guide consistent, best-practice engagement across the organisation, noting that their delivery will be subject to available resources, legislative requirements and budget considerations.

Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion

Council will:

1. Provide clear and accessible information by using plain English and multi-modal formats, including offering key documents in Easy Read formats where appropriate.
2. Provide flexible ways to participate by offering a mix of face-to-face, online and paper-based engagement options, enabling people to engage with Council decisions in ways that suit their needs and circumstances.
3. Strengthen collaborations with community representatives to support engagement with communities of place, identity, interest and need.
4. Support co-design with underrepresented groups by collaborating with young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people living with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups to deliver engagements that are inclusive, culturally appropriate and responsive to their needs.

Meet community where they are

Council will:

1. Clearly communicate and promote engagement opportunities through a range of channels, including local newspapers, Council e-newsletters, the Council website, social media, rates notices, community pop-ups and other appropriate platforms, ensuring messaging is timely, accessible, and tailored to reach diverse audiences and increase community awareness and participation.
2. Coordinate community pop-ups across the LGA to reach a diverse cross-section of the community, ensuring activities are inclusive, accessible, and aligned with community availability, including seasonal, cultural, and location-specific opportunities to maximise participation.
3. Maintain and strengthen digital engagement platform, Your Say Kiama, to improve accessibility, reach a broader cross-section of the community and support timely, transparent participation.
4. Improve efficiency and reduce engagement fatigue by coordinating and combining engagement activities across Council where appropriate, enabling the community to provide feedback on multiple topics through streamlined, well-timed, and user-friendly processes.

Build staff capacity

Council will:

1. Strengthen internal tools and resources by continuing to enhance the community engagement toolkit, including templates and guidance that support staff.
2. Build staff knowledge and skills by developing and delivering in-house community engagement training, ensuring staff understand Council's commitment to best-practice engagement.
3. Merge the internal engagement staff working group with an existing working group to create a more streamlined forum that supports coordination and promotes best-practice community engagement.
4. Embed a culture of engagement by increasing visibility and understanding of community engagement through internal communications, leadership messaging, and sharing success stories, encouraging staff to incorporate engagement as a standard part of their work.
5. Establish clear governance by developing a Community Engagement Policy to support a consistent and organisation-wide approach to implementing the Community Engagement Strategy.

15 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Close the loop

Council will:

1. Continue to develop processes to close the loop in a variety of ways, including Council reporting, website, email, social media and other mediums, with a focus on explaining how and when community feedback was considered in the decision-making process.
2. Embed a culture of continuous improvement by regularly reviewing and evaluating community engagement practices, capturing lessons learned, and sharing insights across the organisation to build capability and ensure approaches remain effective, adaptive, and responsive to community needs.
3. Measure effectiveness and outcomes by assessing engagement activities against the objectives and principles of the Community Engagement Strategy, including equity, diversity and inclusion, and their contribution to the Community Strategic Plan's outcomes and strategies.
4. Explore community sentiment measurement tools to better understand community confidence, satisfaction and perceptions of Council decision-making and engagement practices.

Evaluation of the strategy

Evaluation of the Strategy will occur through:

- **Ongoing review** of engagement activities to assess alignment with the objective and principles of the Community Engagement Strategy, including equity, diversity, and inclusion
- **Annual reporting**, including progress against actions within the Operational Plan and reporting through Council's Annual Report
- **Contribution to Delivery Program outcomes**, demonstrating how community engagement has informed priorities, actions, and decision-making
- **Long-term review**, to inform future updates to the Community Engagement Strategy and support achievement of the Community Strategic Plan outcomes

Findings from evaluation activities will inform improvements to engagement practices, tools, and capability building and will be reported through appropriate reporting mechanisms.

16 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Case study: Kiama Local Housing Strategy

To demonstrate community engagement in practice, this case study highlights Council’s engagement in the preparation of the Local Housing Strategy. The Local Housing Strategy provides a long-term framework for sustainable, well-planned growth and supports the delivery of diverse and appropriate housing to guide the region’s housing needs over the next 20 years.

Why engagement occurred

Council undertook community consultation to ensure the strategy reflected local needs, community values and stakeholder expectations.

Engagement was used to gather feedback on growth locations, housing types, infrastructure considerations and the balance between development and Kiama’s identity.

Who was engaged

Engagement involved a wide range of participants, including:

- Residents across the municipality
- Precinct groups and community organisations
- Councillors and internal staff from planning, communications and community development
- Developers, industry representatives and state agencies
- Young people through targeted youth consultation.

When engagement occurred

Multiple phases of engagement informed the strategy:

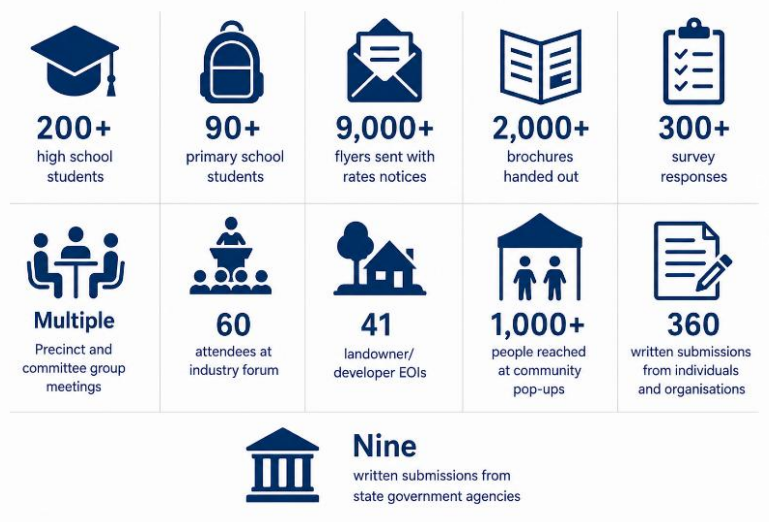
- 1 April to 3 June 2024 – community and stakeholder engagement for the Growth and Housing Strategy.
- 19 July to 16 August 2024 – public exhibition: Draft Growth and Housing Strategy (v1).
- 21 February to 27 April 2025 – public exhibition: Draft Local Housing Strategy (v2).

How engagement occurred

Engagement methods included:

- Online and written submissions
- Community pop-ups
- Youth consultation
- Stakeholder and combined committee workshops
- Meetings with precincts, industry and state government agencies.

How community got involved



17 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Key findings

Community and stakeholder feedback highlighted:

- Strong support for a strategic long-term approach to housing
- Concerns about infrastructure capacity and the need for clear planning
- The importance of protecting Kiama's character and environment
- Need for diverse, affordable housing options
- Desire for transparency and ongoing community involvement.

Feedback led to refinements in the draft strategy, including:

- Updated growth locations based on community and agency input
- Clearer infrastructure planning requirements
- Adjustments to housing diversity targets
- Stronger alignment with NSW Government planning frameworks
- These improvements contributed to the strategy's successful endorsement by the NSW State Government in October 2025.

How feedback informed the Strategy

These activities provided detailed qualitative and quantitative insights into community housing needs and priorities.

Related documents

- [Your Say Kiama - Local Housing Strategy](#)
- [Kiama Council Local Housing Strategy](#)



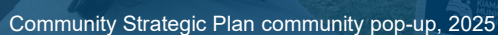
How to get involved

Online

Visit [Kiama Council's Your Say platform](#)

Visit the [Community Pop-up schedule](#) to find a session near you.

[Subscribe to Kiama Council News](#)



19 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Appendix 1: Community Engagement Report

The Community Engagement Report for the update of the Community Engagement Strategy is available at:

[Community Engagement Report - Your Say Kiama](#)

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

20 Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026–2030

Authorisation and version control

Owner/Responsible Officer	Manager Customer Experience
Department	Corporate and Commercial
Date adopted/endorsed	[date]
Resolution number (if applicable)	[number]
Next review date	December 2028
TRIM reference	26/48499

Variation and review

The Strategy should be reviewed within 3 months of the local government elections as part of the broader review of the Community Strategic Plan.

Date reviewed	Date adopted/endorsed	Brief detail of amendments
December 2015	March 2016	New Strategy
May 2023		Exhibited draft Strategy, withdrawn as required additional work
April 2024	June 2024	Reworked, redrafted Strategy
May 2026		Strategy update

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this Strategy.

Item 14.1

Enclosure 2

How to contact council

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In person

Our Administration Building located at 11 Manning Street Kiama is open 8.45am to 4.15pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays)



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