

### **8.13. Online Engagement Programs**

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**ATTACHMENTS:** Nil

#### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council on the establishment of two new online engagement programs, to complement and enhance existing communication and engagement programs.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Increased use of online engagements is a proactive demonstration of Council's innovation in community engagement and its ongoing commitment to open government. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased use of and interest in online events/engagements. In response, two new online engagement programs have been established:

1. Information Sessions Program - aims to educate and inform the community, both residents and local businesses, on local government matters including intent to provide advance inform on topical issues, as well as to inform Council projects (draft/amended plans and strategies) open for consultation, by way of a public exhibition period.
2. Online Panels Program - to commence ahead of the next review of the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan*, which will occur following the next local government election. Its initial purpose will be to inform the review of the plan, with long term aim to recruit demographically representative theme-based panels that can be engaged to inform other Council projects.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Equipment required for the Information Sessions Program is readily available as various Council Departments are already running online events. The Online Panels Program will be facilitated via Council's existing online engagement tool, the Your Say North Sydney site. Additional costs include, promotion and marketing, as well as online presentation skills training, which can be sourced from existing operating budgets.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. THAT** the Online Engagement Programs report be received.

## **LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

### **5. Our Civic Leadership**

#### **5.3 Community is informed and consulted**

## **BACKGROUND**

The new online engagement programs relate to Council's:

- *Delivery Program/Operational Plan* - project 5.3.3.03 Investigate new and complementary engagement mechanisms to meet the different needs of the community
- *Community Engagement Protocol*
- *External Communications Strategy*

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the level of community interest in online events/engagements. Due to current physical distancing requirements/Public Health Orders and individual concerns/anxiety about indoor physical gatherings there is increased expectation for online engagement.

Council has held numerous online events since the start of the pandemic. In most cases participation is high e.g. with an average of 76 participants in online sustainability events, which is significantly higher than the maximum number of places per physical event. Council also successfully trialled two online information sessions on 15 September 2020 as part of the public exhibition of the Kirribilli and McMahons Point Public Domain Upgrade Masterplans, with the Kirribilli session attracting 27 participants and an average of 51 participants throughout the McMahons Point session.

## **CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Community engagement will occur via the feedback invited in response to the individual Information Sessions and/or project-specific public exhibition periods.

## **DETAIL**

Council has established two new online engagement programs to complement and enhance existing communication and engagement programs, including the North Sydney Community Precinct System.

## 1. Information Sessions Program

Commencing with a pilot program to be delivered over the next six months, the Information Sessions Program will involve one to two events held per month and will cover a range of topical content. Delivered in place of the Ward Forums Program which were cancelled due to COVID-19, the program aims to educate and inform the community, targeting both residents and local businesses, on local government matters, with the intent to inform the community of issues in advance; as well as to inform the public of Council projects (draft/amended plans and strategies) open for consultation by way of a public exhibition period.

The following table details the initial session topics (not in any order):

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Precis</b>
Tree Regulations/Canopy Management	The purpose of this session is to explain the objectives and canopy targets of Council's <i>Urban Forest Strategy</i> and recent Development Control Plan changes.
Neutral Bay/Cremorne Village Public Domain Upgrade Masterplans	Relates to a project-specific engagement strategy that involves the public exhibition of draft Masterplans; including the pilot closure of Young Street, Neutral Bay. The purpose is to provide an overview of the draft plans and encourage stakeholder feedback.
Planning Proposals	The purpose of this session is to explain how Planning Proposals work.
Development Assessment (DA) Process	The purpose of this session is to explain the DA process and provide an update on changes to the NSW planning system, including ePlanning.
Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) Action Plans	Multiple sessions convened by LATM Zones, explaining the role of LATMs and detailing what's planned for the remainder of 2020/21 per Zone.
Annual Report	This session will highlight the key achievements of 2019/20 including Council's financial position.
NSOP Redevelopment	Post tender assessment, the purpose of this session is to provide a progress update on this major project.

The program format will be standardised as follows:

- Webinar format (screen shared by host) with participant microphones disabled and chat function enabled, allowing participants to ask written questions during the

session, which the host will attempt to answer following the presentation.

- Pre-registration required before release of login details, in accordance with Council's cyber security standards;
- In addition to collecting questions in advance to help focus the presentation content, pre-registration will collect (optional) demographic information about participants - age range, suburb, household type - to inform Council of the stakeholder profile interested in each event/project and whether cross section of stakeholders was reached;
- One-hour maximum limit per session, including questions;
- Option for related sessions to be held one after the other on the same date;
- Dates/timing to be determined in consultation with the Corporate Events Calendar;
- Promotion must commence a minimum of two weeks prior to each session;
- Session recording to be made available the day after the session and/or the presentation slides;
- All questions (including those answered during the sessions and any taken on notice) will form a FAQ to be added to the respective web page after the event; and
- A post evaluation will be sent to participants, to collect constructive feedback to help Council improve/enhance the program.

Presenters will include a mix of senior staff and officers/project managers dependent on the topic. The Mayor will be invited to participate as a co-host in all Information Sessions that relate to a plan/strategy on public exhibition. Special guests may also be invited as Q&A panel members, dependent on the topic.

Equipment required to run this program is readily available inhouse. Additional costs include promotion and marketing as well as online presentation skills training can be sourced from existing budgets.

## **2. Online Panels Program**

Council's former online panels program (which ran between 2013 and 2015) will be reinvigorated in 2021 ahead of the next review of the *North Sydney Community Strategic Plan*, which will commence following the next local government election.

The program involves recruitment of interested individuals, who reside or have a strong affiliation with the North Sydney LGA, to join a series of themed online panels, categorised by the five 'strategic directions' of the current Community Strategic Plan:

1. Living Environment - includes natural environment, environmental sustainability, open space and recreational planning and facilities.
2. Built Infrastructure - includes asset management, public domain planning and maintenance, traffic and transport operations including parking management, and sustainable transport.
3. Future Planning - includes strategic land use planning/development, economic development, and regulatory compliance.

4. Social Vitality - includes community development/services, arts and culture, health and well-being and library and heritage services.
5. Civic Leadership - includes governance, financial management, community engagement, customer service, records management, information technology and enterprise risk management.

The online panels will be one of multiple engagement methods employed as part of the mandatory Community Engagement Strategy to be prepared to inform the Community Strategic Plan review; and will be subject to terms and conditions. Beyond participation in the review of the Community Strategic Plan, the long-term intent is to recruit demographically representative panels that can be engaged to inform other Council projects.

The program will be facilitated via Council's existing online engagement tool, the Your Say North Sydney site. It involves individuals subscribing to the Your Say North Sydney site to create a database. Individuals can subscribe to more than one panel.