

Community Engagement Strategy

2022



City of
Wagga Wagga

Acknowledgement of Country

Wagga Wagga City Council gulbali-yanhi ngurambang-gu Wiradjuri-gu walumaldhaany-galang. nganha bala mayiny Wiradjuri. yindyamali-yanhi mudyiganggalang-bu balumbambal-bu balugirbam-bu yindyamali-yanhi bagaraygan nguarambang-gawali-i yandu muran.

wigi wagga wagga-dha ngiyanhi gulbali-bu yindyamali-bu guwiinyguliyalagu buyaa-bu giilaang-galam-bu. ngiyanhi gulbali-bu yindyamali-bu guwiinyguliyalagu dhaagun-giyalam-bu bila-galang-giyalam-bu. gulbali-yanhi Wiradjui-mayiny ngurambangguwal-bu bala yarruwala-bu waluwin-bu walabangan-bu dhirrangal-bu.

Wagga Wagga City Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Wiradjuri people, and pays respect to Elders past, present and future and extends our respect to all First Nations Peoples in Wagga Wagga.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and rivers. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Wiradjuri and First Nations communities.



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Mayor's welcome

Welcome to Wagga Wagga City Council's Community Engagement Strategy.

Council is committed to high quality engagement with our community. As a multicultural city, Wagga Wagga is made up of a number of diverse communities, and we want every resident to have the opportunity to become involved in the decision making that impacts their lives. That's why we have produced this strategy so you can understand the opportunities available for your involvement.

Community engagement is simply the conversation between you and Council.

This conversation includes information sharing, consultation, and active participation between local government and communities. Community engagement can range from reading Council News to keep up to date with what is happening in your community, to filling out an online survey, receiving a letter about a neighbour's development application, or attending a facilitated workshop on a masterplan or project.

Council recognises that community members are all unique, with their own experiences, skills and expertise. We want to make the most of your knowledge when making decisions. Council can influence matters that affect your lives which is why we want your input. We need community participation to ensure that everyone has access to fair and informed decision making.

Council welcomes the increased role that Councillors are expected to play in community engagement. As your elected representatives, we encourage you to contact your Councillors to discuss the future of the community with us.

Contact details are available via wagga.nsw.gov.au/councillors or by phoning 1300 292 442.

We trust that this strategy will smooth the path to good communication. It is with pleasure that I commend Council's updated Community Engagement Strategy to you.

We look forward to your contribution.



Councillor Dallas Tout
Mayor of the City of Wagga Wagga

Our purpose

Wagga Wagga City Council is here for one reason – to serve you, our community.

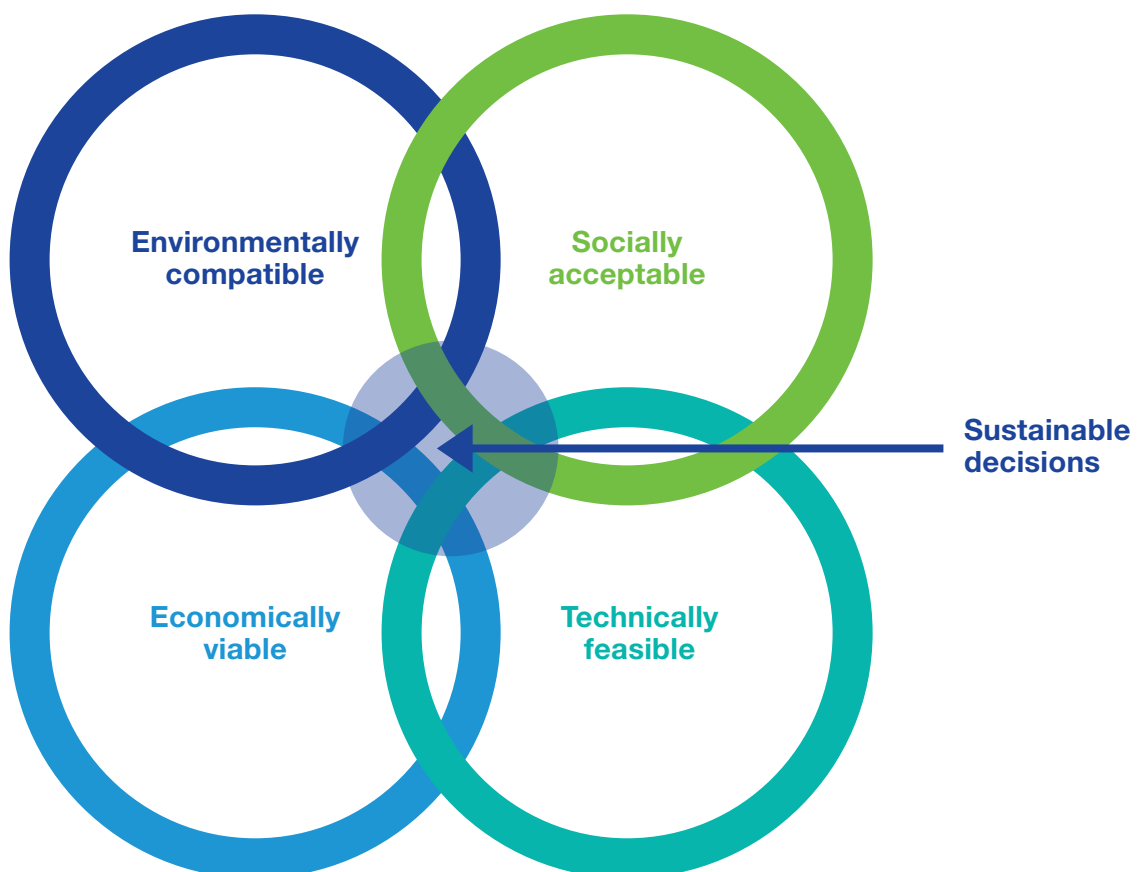
That's why we want you to be part of our governance and decision-making process. By working together, we can create a region that feels like home for everyone.

In order to work together, we need to communicate with each other.

We've created this Community Engagement Strategy to map out the ways we'll stay in touch.

Benefits of community engagement

- Community is better informed
- Links Council with the community
- Council gains a better understanding of community needs and issues
- Reduces misconception and misinformation
- Community has sense of commitment and ownership
- Results in better decisions



Council's charter

It's part of our charter (section 8 of the Local Government Act 1993) to provide adequate, equitable, appropriate, efficient and effective services and facilities, after community consultation.

We're committed to ensuring every single community member has an equal opportunity to participate and be involved in Council's decision making.

Principles

This Community Engagement Strategy is based on social justice principles:

- Equity
- Access
- Participation
- Rights

We also employ our Corporate Values in all our dealings:

- Innovation
- Trust
- Respect
- Teamwork

Our Community Strategic Plan also has key objectives to achieve community participation in decision-making, with a goal to be 'a community that is informed and involved in decisions impacting on us'.

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

IAP2 is considered best practice, which is why we've used it to shape the future of community engagement at Wagga Wagga City Council. The core of the Community Engagement Strategy is to involve residents in determining the future of their Local Government Area.

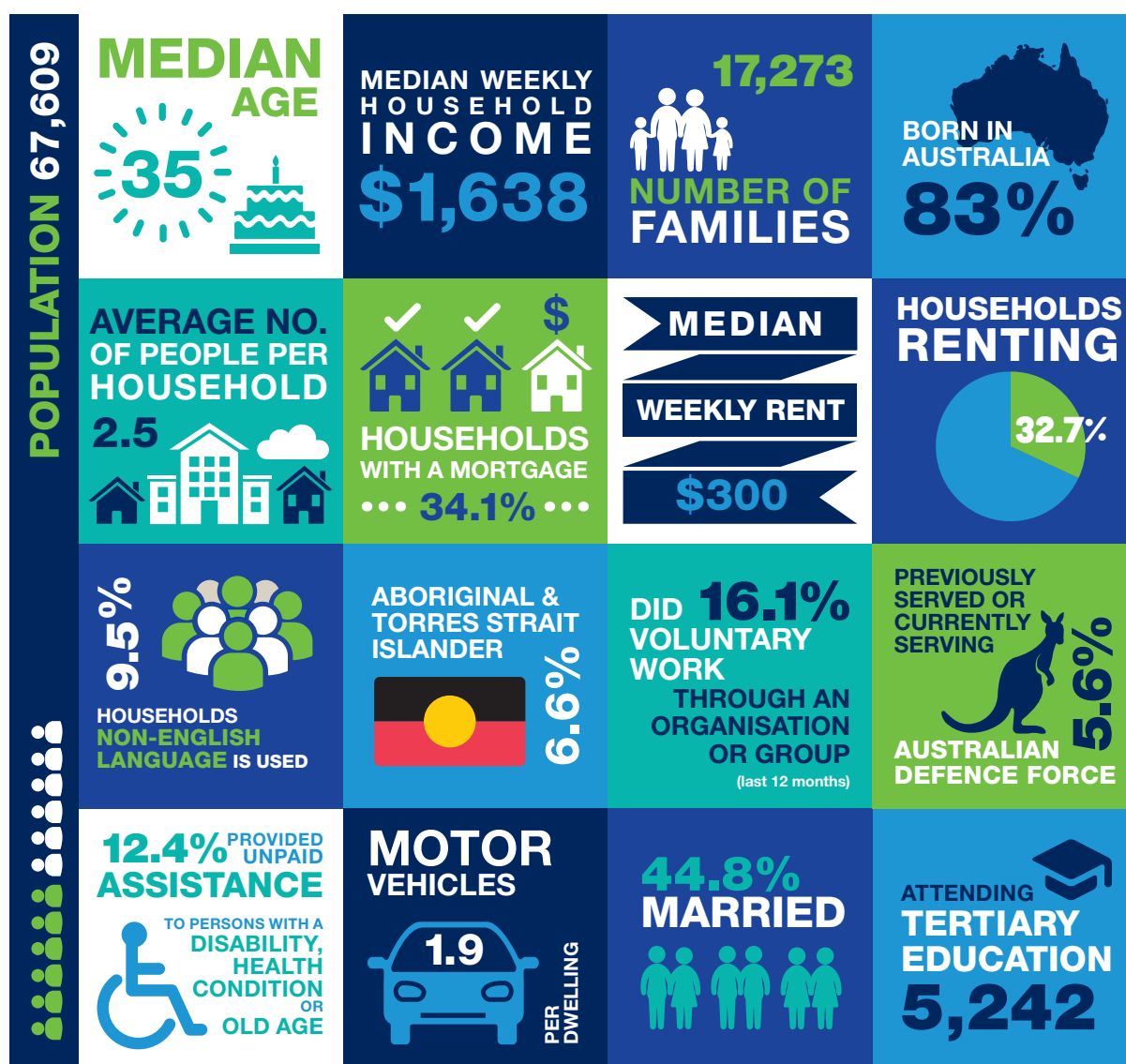
IAP2 provides guidelines and considerations to ensure that our community engagement represents our community, and the engagement activities have real purpose and produce quality outcomes that are representative of the wishes and aspirations of our community. IAP2 also provides for feedback about the activities Council facilitates so that they can always be improved upon.

To learn more about IAP2 and its importance please visit: iap2.org.au

Our community

Wagga Wagga's resident population is estimated at 65,770 in 2020*. Council is responsible for the Wagga Wagga Local Government Area (LGA) which covers an area of 4,825.9 km2 and includes the city of Wagga Wagga and surrounding villages: Tarcutta, Ladysmith, Mangoplah, Uranquinty, Collingullie, Oura, Humula, Currawarna and Galore.

IAP2 considers the community to be any individual or group of individuals, organisation or political entity with an interest in the outcome of a decision – often referred to as stakeholders. They may be, or perceive that they may be, affected directly or indirectly by the outcome of a decision. Internal stakeholders (individuals who work for or with the decision-making organisation) are also part of the community and the community participation process should reflect their needs as well.



Source: 2021 Census Data

Many voices

We'll make sure we listen to all perspectives in our community by:

- using a wide range of communication methods to reach the widest cross section of residents
- engaging with targeted community groups
- accommodating participants' needs.

Villages & Suburbs

Council is committed to visiting Wagga Wagga's suburbs and villages to meet and engage with communities across our LGA when planning and facilitating engagement.

As part of our communication and engagement processes Council will travel to locations at times preferred by local communities to encourage participation and to gather feedback.

Feedback from engagement activities will be reported back to communities who attended engagement activities to continue the relationship between Council and participants.

Community engagement target groups

- Wiradjuri and First Nations people
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)
- People of all abilities
- Families
- Single parents
- Children
- Young people
- Older people
- Villages and rural communities
- Community groups
- Stakeholders (business, government, private)
- Councillors
- Council staff

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a conversation between you and Council. Sometimes referred to as public participation or participatory democracy, it's the process of involving people in the decisions that affect their lives.

Wagga Wagga City Council relies on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) guidelines to define community engagement.

Community engagement is ...

'an intentional process with the specific purpose of working across organisations, stakeholders and communities to shape the decisions or actions of the members of the community, stakeholders or organisation in relation to a problem, opportunity or outcome.'

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

IAP2 is considered best practice, which is why we've used it to shape the future of community engagement at Wagga Wagga City Council.

Types of community engagement



For more information on IAP2, visit iap2.org

Levels of engagement

Community engagement can involve a broad range of activities, depending on the desired outcome. It starts in the planning stages of any initiative that impacts the community.

Inform

When a decision has already been made or action is required. We want to ensure residents are aware of information or activities that may impact them.

Consult

When we seek input, feedback or advice from affected residents, to ensure the final project or decision takes everyone's viewpoint into consideration.

Involve and collaborate

We work directly with the community throughout the entire project.

Empower

The project is undertaken by the community, with support from Council.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing level of public impact 					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns 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.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Style	"Here's what's happening"	"Here are some options, what do you think?"	"Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?"	"Let's work together to solve this problem"	"You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?"
Example tools	- Fact sheets - Websites - Open houses - Publishing social media - Newsletters - Email distribution	- Public comment - Focus groups - Surveys - Public meetings	- Workshops - Deliberate polling	- Citizen advisory committees - Consensus-building - Participatory decision-making	- Citizen juries - Ballots - Delegated decisions

Ways we engage

Community engagement at Wagga Wagga City Council is guided by two documents:

Community Engagement Strategy (this document)

- Overview of how Council will engage with the community
- Summary of methods and techniques
- Identification of the main groups we will focus on engaging with
- Reference to best practice required under the Act
- Resources dedicated to engaging with the community

Community Engagement Toolkit

This is an internal resource that provides templates and resources to help Council staff identify and engage with community stakeholders.



Engagement Support

Council staff are also supported in their objectives to engage with the community using different methods to achieve the best outcomes.

Councillors

A Councillor's role in community engagement is to participate as an elected member, listen to the views of the community and consider these views when making decisions. Community engagement provides valuable opportunities for Councillors to hear and understand the voice of the community and ensure this voice is properly represented when Council meet and make resolutions which impact the future of our community.

Council staff

A Council staff member's role in community engagement is to organise, facilitate and record the discussion, provide feedback, evaluate the engagement and consider the community's views when making recommendations to Council.

Both Councillors and Council staff are encouraged to avoid dominating or directing community discussions, but rather let discussions move forward in an open, respectful and inclusive way.

Communication and Engagement Officers

Our Communication and Engagement Officers form an important communication link between the community and Council, and are responsible for developing and implementing innovative and effective communication and community engagement programs.

Communication and Engagement Officers provide expertise and guidance on communication and engagement approaches and methods in partnership with the responsible staff member for the project or initiative.

Our Communication and Engagement Officers also provide advice to individuals across the organisation to enable them to effectively use the Community Engagement tools to ensure the community is kept informed, engaged and actively involved.

For more information you can contact Council's Communication and Engagement Officers on 1300 292 442 or via email: engage@wagga.nsw.gov.au

Engagement Methods

We stay in touch with our community in many ways, ensuring we consult with either the most relevant or a broad cross-section of our residents. These are some of the methods we use:

Online

Council's website provides a platform to keep the community informed on the progress of projects, proposals and outcomes – wagga.nsw.gov.au

Our engagement website is where members of the community can discuss, learn about and give feedback on selected policies and projects being considered or developed by Council – connect.wagga.nsw.gov.au

Current news and updates about council activities and projects are regularly published at wagga.nsw.gov.au/news

Council News is also available as a weekly email subscription, and can be found at wagga.nsw.gov.au/subscribe

Council News

Council News is published weekly, with an online version available at wagga.nsw.gov.au/councilnews

Council News covers project updates and information on Council activities including roadworks or disruptions, events, celebrations and milestones. Council News helps us keep the community up to date with everything we're doing on their behalf.

Social media

Our social media platforms help us communicate with the public and community leaders about Council activities. Currently, Facebook and Instagram are our most used platforms.

We link our social media posts through to the relevant policies, plans or articles so residents can easily discover the full picture.

We post regularly about a wide range of topics of interest to the community. We also use paid promotion to reach and engage with more people if we're seeking community feedback or participation on an important issue.

Community groups

Community groups, associations and committees are valuable for giving and receiving feedback on a range of issues. For a localised issue it may only be selected individuals or associations that are consulted. Where appropriate, Council will consult directly with a community group on an as-need basis. Examples of this includes community-based meetings as a part of the Flood Futures consultation process – wagga.nsw.gov.au/floods

Occasionally Council hosts neighbourhood meetings in identified rural villages and small communities, where community members can raise issues and speak directly to Councillors and Council staff. To request a neighbourhood meeting call Council at 1300 292 442.

Letterbox drops

Council sometimes seeks feedback on construction, or offers information on roadworks, projects or other topics through leaflets or flyers delivered to an affected area. The flyer will summarise the relevant issues and advise of any changes that will affect the resident or business while also providing information on where residents can get more information or talk to relevant Council staff.

Addressed letters

Personally addressed letters will be mailed to households that are directly affected by planned works or proposals. It will outline the issues and invite comment. It will always indicate where the comment should be directed within Council. Residents may, of course, request a response via letter.

Receive petitions

Petitions are a valuable tool for community members to gauge the feeling of other residents and communicate that information to Council and Councillors. How Council receives and responds to petitions generated by residents or stakeholders can be found in the policy document: 'POL082 - Petitions Policy'.

Surveys

Surveys can be a great way to get feedback from residents about specific issues or topics. In producing and using surveys Council will ensure that residents can provide open feedback as well.

Results from surveys, including actions as an outcome of a survey, will be communicated back to the community or groups that took part in the survey.

Site visits

Site visits are useful when it is necessary for Council staff or Councillors to be able to visualise the issue or concern being raised by a member of the community, or to meet community members in their environment.

Location visits

Council staff will endeavour to visit villages and communities within the Local Government Area. These visits will be communicated to residents and progress associations, or similar groups, in advance of the visit so that adequate representation of the village residents can occur. Council's aim in visiting the villages is to reduce the distance between residents' place of residence and the Council. Feedback gained from these visits will be used on determining matters and the results of this engagement will be communicated back to residents.

Personal briefings

These are held at the request of a member or members of the local community to discuss particular issues with a responsible officer, which may include a Councillor. Initial contact should be made via 1300 292 442.

Media releases

Media releases and conducting interviews with local journalists are important methods in sharing information with the community. If it is part of the engagement process, the Council spokesperson will indicate to the media representative that feedback from the community is being sought and is valued. Media releases are also available to the community on our website: www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/news

Media opportunities

Council staff will engage media and appear in front of TV, radio and newspaper representatives on a regular basis to answer questions posed by journalists. The importance of television is not to be understated as a way of reaching the community, and it has been identified as the most important medium in influencing opinion of Council's performance in the 2021 Community Survey.

Briefs will be provided to media following Council meetings, in person where practical, and queries will be responded to by staff, with the assistance of the Communications and Engagement team.

Council staff will also inform media representatives with messages that are in the interest of residents and stakeholders and where Council wish for those messages to reach a wide audience. This could include disruptions to traffic due to Council work, information regarding emergencies where Council is authorised to comment, or in relation to projects, programs or opportunities that are relevant to the community.

Email

Community members can contact Council or Councillors at any time by emailing council@wagga.nsw.gov.au

Telephone

Council is always available on the other end of the phone and has a 24-hour call centre. Contact us on 1300 292 442.



Reporting on engagement activities

Methods of feedback

We want to make sure that when you have participated in Community Engagement activities, you feel your contribution is valued and utilised during the process. Council undertakes a commitment that:

The information we collect through consultation with the community is reported back to detail the opinions and feedback from the community.

Council will endeavor to provide information about:

- Consultation activities undertaken
- Number of people and organisations who participated
- Feedback from communities
- Online engagement activity, including number of visitors, interactions (documents downloaded or submissions made), video views and comments
- Social media statistics

Formal reports to Council will contain a statement about how we engaged with the community when providing recommendations.

We also share the results through our community engagement platform:

connect.wagga.nsw.gov.au



Evaluating engagement activities

Evaluating

To evaluate the success of the engagement activity staff look at who was engaged, and in what way, and question if messages were communicated effectively to stakeholders, and feedback correctly recorded. This self-evaluation is an important step for any engagement activity undertaken by Council.

Council staff will look at:

- Process – how well was the process designed and implemented?
- Appropriateness – was the engagement appropriate to the audience and the outcome being sought?
- Reach - were the people reached representative of those affected by the decision?
- Outcomes – were the intended outcomes of the engagement achieved?

Council staff undertaking engagement activities are also encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the engagement with participants – this may be via a follow-up survey or questionnaire. Honest feedback will help Council ensure that future communication and engagement techniques are improved to make them more relevant. All feedback will be considered in the spirit in which it is offered.

Ongoing community engagement

Council is dedicated to ensuring that ongoing Community Engagement activities evolve to meet the needs of the community. To ensure the ongoing needs of both Council and the community are met effectively, Council will:

- Continually review and update methods of engagement for relevance
- Try to combine, where possible, engagement activities to ensure convenience, value and reduced duplication of activities.
- Communicate through a variety of platforms, both online and offline so that no-one in the community is purposely disadvantaged.
- Continue to provide updates to the community and stakeholders.

Key Engagement Activities

The following are examples of key publications where engagement activities occur to get input from the community in order to create documents and plans that reflect the wishes of the community:

Community Strategic Plan (CSP)

The 'Community Strategic Plan 2040' is the document that defines how we want to grow into the future and as a community it is important for us to have. This document also needs to outline what we want and need as a community now.

The Community Strategic Plan guides us all in how to achieve these goals and how we can measure if we are on track or not. The plan was created in 2017 after Council's most extensive community engagement activity, which aimed to gather the input of a wide variety of voices throughout the community.

All Abilities Inclusion Action Plan 2026

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to making our community inclusive and accessible for all. Developing and implementing a All Abilities Inclusion Action Plan 2026, we feel it is important for us to have a document that reflects what the community wants and needs in relation to all abilities. It is important to also focus on how we can continue to make Wagga Wagga a liveable city and to grow into the future.

Reconciliation Action Plan 2021 (RAP)

The Wagga Wagga Reconciliation Action Plan 2021 provides a framework to demonstrate Council's commitment to our Wiradjuri and First Nations community members.

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to reconciliation and developing meaningful relationships with our Wiradjuri and First Nations Peoples to ensure there is genuine respect and equitable opportunities.

Community Safety Action Plan 2026 (CSAP)

Wagga Wagga City Council is committed to developing a liveable city which is safe, thriving, connected, innovative and inclusive.

The Community Safety Action Plan (CSAP), formerly the Wagga Wagga Crime Prevention Plan, provides a roadmap forward for key agencies and council to work together to prevent crime and increase community safety.

Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

The 'Wagga Wagga Local Strategic Planning Statement - Wagga Wagga 2040' sets the long-term strategic framework for planning and development in the City of Wagga Wagga local government area over the next 20-years.

It addresses issues of strategic significance to the Council, guiding development through the introduction of new planning policies, strategies or actions related to land use and development.

How can you participate?

Participation can be as easy as providing feedback on plans or proposals, participating in surveys, or attending workshops or public meetings. Members of the community can attend Council Meetings in person, or watch live on Facebook.

To learn more about engagement opportunities community members are encouraged to subscribe to Council News online or follow Council's various social media pages. Information about participation opportunities will be advertised in Council's weekly news publication as well as promoted through social media.

Projects and engagement can be found at connect.wagga.nsw.gov.au or community members can always contact Council via 1300 292 442 to ask questions or lodge requests.





Contact us



Visit our website
wagga.nsw.gov.au



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City of Wagga Wagga



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council@wagga.nsw.gov.au



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1300 292 442



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**City of
Wagga Wagga**

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