

Community Engagement Strategy

2026-30



Acknowledgement of Country

Sutherland Shire Council acknowledges the Dharawal people as the Traditional Custodians of the land within Sutherland Shire.

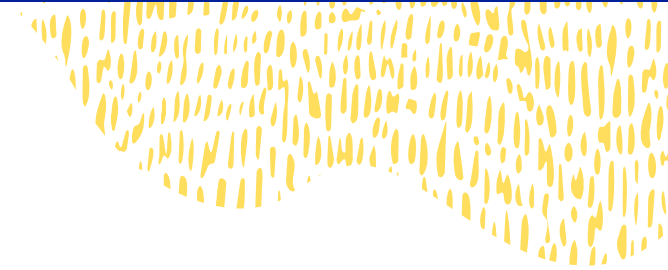
We value and celebrate Dharawal culture and language, and acknowledge the Dharawal people's continuing connection to the land, the sea and the community.

We pay respect to the Elders and their families, past, present and emerging, and through them, to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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Executive summary

Strong communities are shaped by the people who live, work and connect within them. Community engagement helps Council understand the needs, priorities, perspectives and aspirations of our community. These insights help inform decisions that support and enhance what people value most about living in Sutherland Shire.

Sutherland Shire Council is committed to meaningful, inclusive and transparent engagement. Our approach creates genuine opportunities for participation, strengthens trust and helps ensure decisions are informed by community perspectives.

Prepared in accordance with the requirements of the IP&R framework, this Community Engagement Strategy sets the direction for how Council engages with the community and stakeholders.

It supports a consistent and best-practice approach across the organisation, providing greater clarity about when and how people can be involved, how their feedback will be considered, and the role engagement plays in shaping decisions.

The Strategy is supported by a suite of implementation tools and resources, and is guided by Council's commitments to diversity, equity and inclusion. Together, these help embed accessible, inclusive and effective engagement practices across Council.

Priorities for 2026–2030

Broaden participation

Expand opportunities for more people to participate, with a particular focus on reducing barriers, promoting accessibility and reaching under-represented groups.

Embed engagement in planning

Strengthen the integration of community engagement into Council's planning, project development and decision-making processes, ensuring engagement is considered early and applied where appropriate.

Increase transparency

Build understanding of Council's decision-making processes and provide clearer feedback about how community input has informed outcomes.

Grow capability across Council

Build a stronger culture of best-practice engagement through improved tools, guidance, collaboration and capability development.

Foster continuous improvement

Strengthen evaluation, reporting and learning to continually improve engagement practices and outcomes.

By working together with our community, we aim to support informed participation, strengthen trust and contribute to a connected, inclusive and thriving Sutherland Shire.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is how Council listens to, and learns from, the community to help shape decisions about the plans, projects, policies and services that affect people and places across Sutherland Shire. It helps us understand community needs, interests, priorities and perspectives, and provides a structured process for those insights to be gathered, analysed and considered in decision-making.

Community engagement can take many forms. Our approaches are tailored to the needs of the people affected, the nature and scale of the project or decision, and the level of influence the community can have on the outcome. We seek a broad range of perspectives and work to reduce barriers to participation by providing accessible and inclusive opportunities for people to contribute. This helps ensure engagement is representative, responsive and informed by diverse community experiences.

Why do we engage?

Community engagement supports better decisions and better outcomes by recognising the community's right to participate in civic decision making and to have their views heard on matters that affect and interest them. Bringing different community perspectives into Council's planning and delivery helps ensure Council's decisions are informed, inclusive and reflective of our community's diverse needs.

Engagement also fosters open and transparent decision making, opportunities to work through shared challenges, and builds understanding of Council's role, priorities and constraints that helps strengthen trust between Council and the community.



Legislative requirements

In addition to our commitment to meaningful engagement, this Community Engagement Strategy has been developed in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* and supports Council's obligations under the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

This Strategy also aligns with planning legislation, privacy and information access requirements, child safe obligations, and broader legislative responsibilities relating to inclusion, accessibility and transparency.

Relevant legislation and Council documents

Inclusion, accessibility and anti-discrimination

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (State)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Federal)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Federal)
- *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* (State)

Planning and local government

- *Local Government Act 1993* (State)
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (State)
- NSW Community Participation Plan (CPP) 2026, made under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Privacy, information access and record keeping

- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (State)
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (State)
- *State Records Act 1998* (State)

Child safety

- *Children's Guardian Act 2019* (State)
- NSW Child Safe Standards

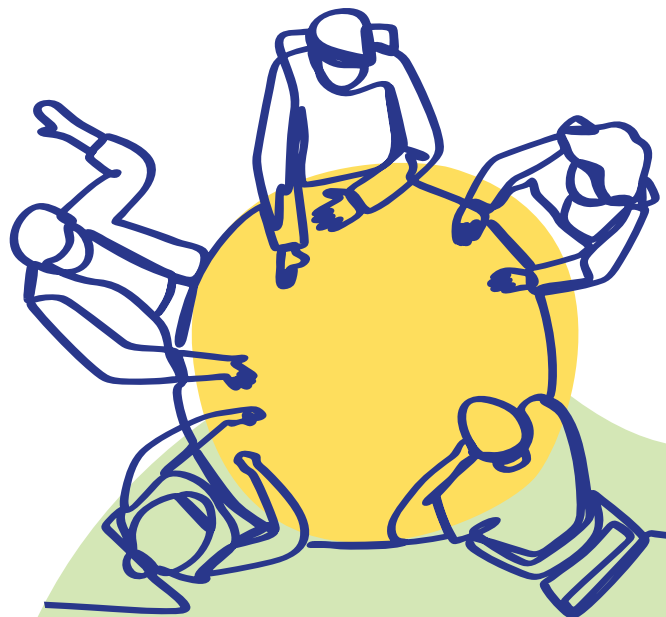
Related Council documents

- Disability Inclusion Action Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Child Safe Action Plan
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework

Community participation in planning

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) sets out mandatory minimum requirements for community participation in relation to Council's planning functions.

Planning exhibition and function follow the [NSW Community Participation Plan \(CPP\)](#) which sets out state-wide requirements for how and when the community can participate in planning processes. This Strategy complements the NSW CPP by guiding Council's broader approach to community engagement across its functions.



Our community engagement principles

These principles guide how Council works with our community. They set clear expectations about how and when people can be involved, and how we commit to listening, learning and reporting back. They also reflect the important social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights.



Right to be involved

People have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, neighbourhoods and wellbeing.

Where decisions have a direct or disproportionate impact, we commit to involving people with lived experience early and meaningfully.



Timely

We plan engagement early and provide opportunities for input when it can be most effective. We support participation through clear information, appropriate notice and realistic timeframes.



Transparent

We are clear about why we are engaging, what is open for input, and what is not. We explain constraints honestly and report back on how community input influenced decisions.



Accessible and inclusive

We design engagement to be accessible and inclusive, so anyone who wants to be involved can take part in a range of ways.

We aim to maximise participation by removing barriers where we can and supporting involvement across a wide range of needs, experiences and circumstances.



Learning from practice

We reflect on each engagement to understand what worked and what could be improved. We use this learning to strengthen future engagement and build trust over time.



Tailored

We tailor engagement to the decision, the people affected and the level of influence available. We use a mix of approaches to reduce barriers and meet people where they are.

Our community vision

Council's [*Community Plan – Towards 2035*](#) outlines a shared vision for a connected and safe community that respects people and nature, and supports active lives in a strong local economy. This Strategy aligns with that vision and directly supports the three Community Priorities under the Trusted Leadership (TL) theme.

TL1. Engaged community

- 1.1 Community engagement** to understand views, aspirations, challenges and opportunities that inform decision-making.
- 1.2 Accessible and inclusive** diverse communication and engagement activities.

TL2. Strong partnerships with stakeholders

- 2.1 Effective partnerships** with all levels of government and the non-government sector.

TL3. Transparent and honest leadership

- 3.1 Ethical behaviour** in everything we do.
- 3.2 Financial responsibility** and management of Council assets.
- 3.3 Customer experience** interactions that are simple and supportive.

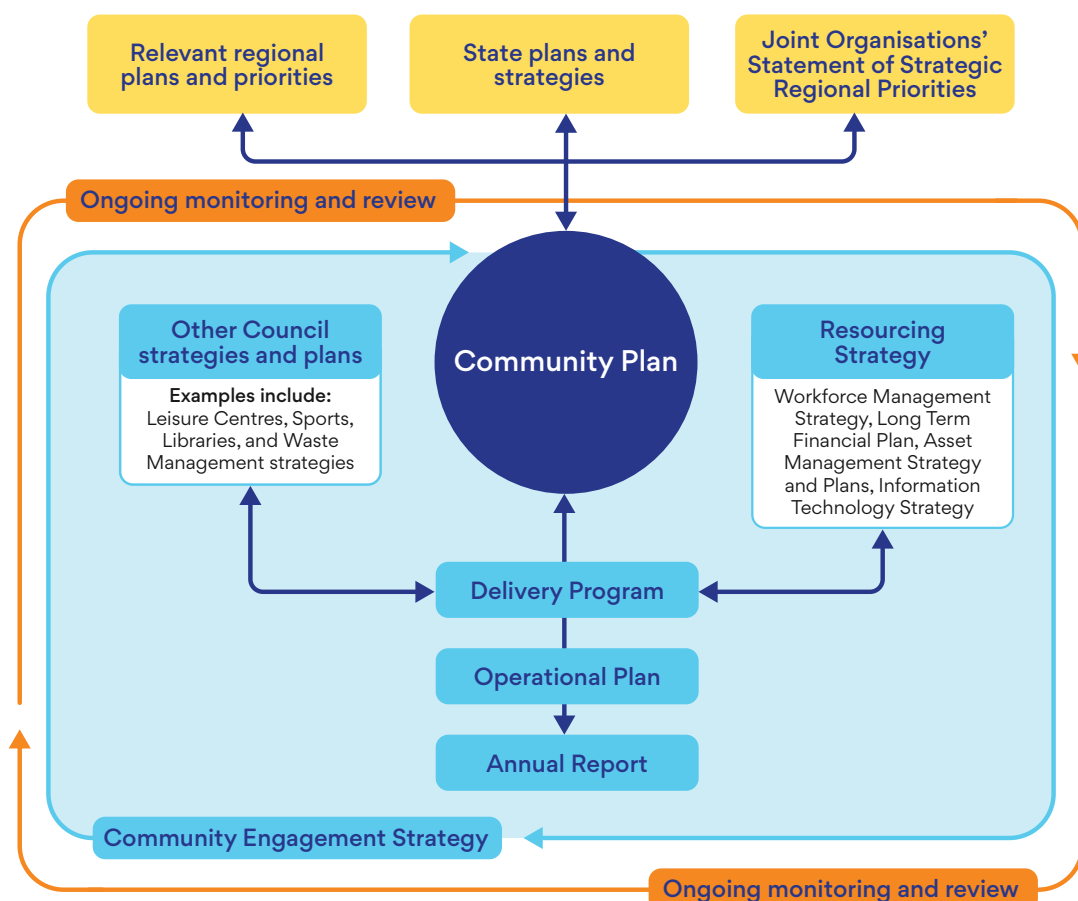
Community voices shaping our future

Council's plans and strategies work together to achieve the community's long-term vision for the Sutherland Shire. Through the IP&R framework, community priorities and aspirations are translated into clear plans, strategies and actions.

Community engagement is embedded throughout the development, review and renewal of Council's IP&R documents. Community input helps identify priorities, inform strategic direction, and review progress over time, ensuring Council's plans continue to reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.

Different opportunities for participation occur at various stages of the IP&R cycle. Some engagement activities focus on identifying priorities and aspirations, while others seek feedback on draft plans, strategies or proposed actions.

The diagram below shows how community input contributes to the development and review of Council's IP&R documents.



Our approach to community engagement

Our approach to community engagement is guided by the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#), an internationally recognised framework for best-practice engagement.

The spectrum includes five levels of participation: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower. Engagement does not necessarily progress through every level. Instead, the spectrum helps Council select the most appropriate approach based on the purpose of the decision, its potential impact, opportunities for community influence, legislative requirements and available resources.

While the level of community influence on a decision is different across the spectrum, each level plays an important role. **Inform** supports transparency, understanding and informed participation, and is often an important foundation for meaningful engagement.

Empower is the highest level of the spectrum and places final decision-making in the hands of the community. In local government, this level has limited application, as Councillors are elected to make decisions on behalf of the community.

Increasing opportunities to help shape decisions					
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, 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.
Commitment to the community	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 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 look to you for 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.

Choosing the right approach

The Community Engagement Spectrum provides a framework for selecting the most appropriate level of community participation for a project, plan or decision. While the Spectrum outlines different levels of participation, there is no single approach that suits every situation.

Council considers a range of factors when selecting the most appropriate engagement approach. This helps ensure engagement is meaningful, inclusive and proportionate, while reflecting the people affected, the nature and potential impact of the decision, and the opportunities available to influence outcomes.

What we consider

Council considers a range of factors, including:

1. Who is affected or interested?

- How many people may be impacted?
- Are the impacts localised or more widespread?
- Are particular communities, groups or stakeholders likely to be more affected, or more likely to face barriers to participation?

2. What is the level of impact?

- How significant is the decision for the community?
- Could different communities, groups or individuals experience the impacts of this decision differently?
- Will it affect services, facilities, places, programs or future planning?
- Are the impacts likely to be short-term or long-term?

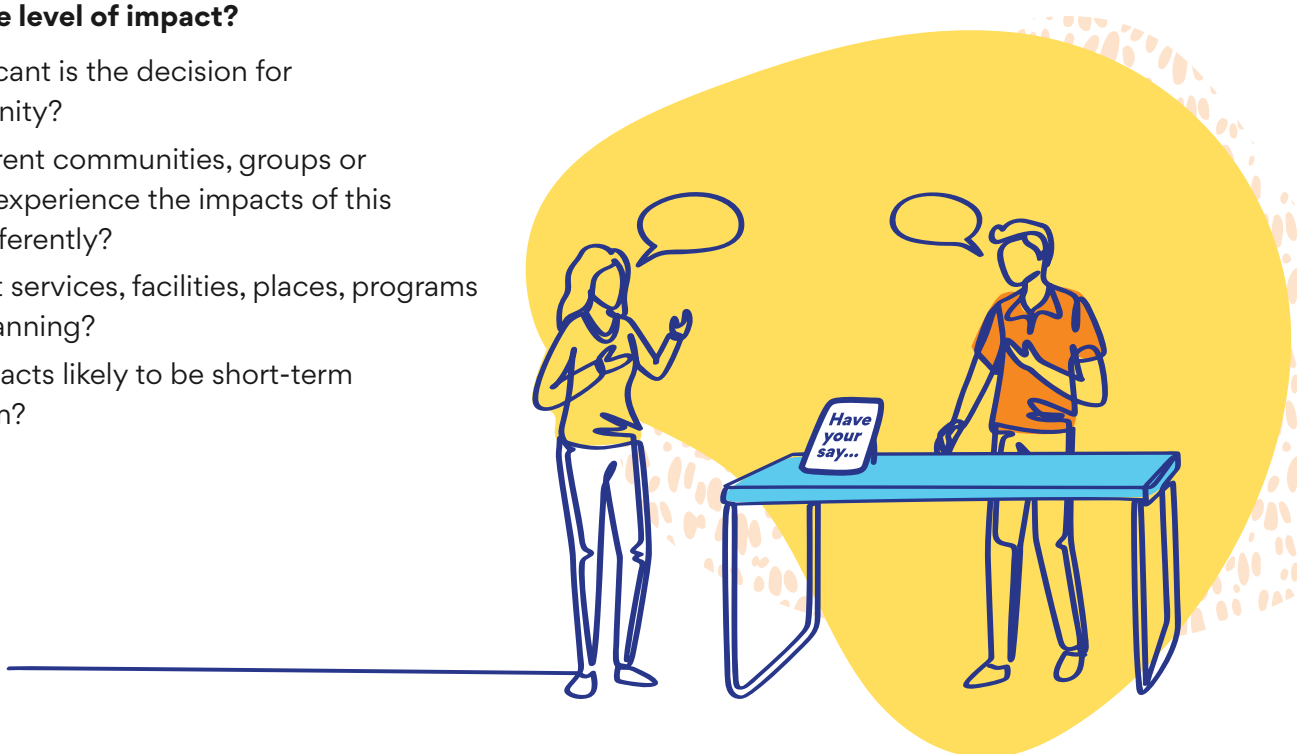
3. What opportunities exist for community influence?

- Can community feedback meaningfully influence the outcome?
- What aspects of the decision can be influenced by community feedback?
- Are there legal, technical or other requirements that limit what can be changed or decided?

4. What level of community interest is anticipated?

- Is the issue likely to attract interest more broadly in the community?
- Are there particular perspectives, experiences or interests that need to be understood to help inform the decision?
- Is the issue likely to generate strong community interest, concern or debate?

These considerations help Council determine the most appropriate level of engagement for each project, plan or decision.



Spectrum levels in practice

The examples below illustrate how different levels of the Community Engagement Spectrum may be applied.

They are indicative only, as the most appropriate level of engagement will depend on the circumstances of each project, plan or decision.

Some planning matters have specific community participation requirements set by NSW legislation. Information about these requirements can be found in the [NSW Community Participation Plan \(CPP\)](#).

Engagement level	May be used for
Inform	• project updates and construction notifications • planned road, park or facility closures • changes to operating hours, services or programs • emergency or safety information • communicating decisions made by Council
Consult	• draft strategies, plans and policies • upgrades to parks, playgrounds and community facilities • reviews of Council services and programs • traffic, parking or local area improvements • identifying community priorities and needs
Involve	• redesign of community facilities or public spaces • projects affecting particular suburbs, centres or user groups • projects with significant local impacts • development of long-term service improvements • initiatives requiring detailed community input throughout the process
Collaborate	• co-design of parks, public spaces and community facilities • place-based planning and precinct renewal projects • long-term strategic planning initiatives • projects involving multiple stakeholders and competing priorities • development and testing of options with the community
Empower	• participatory budgeting initiatives • community voting processes • community-led funding or grant allocation programs • delegated community decision-making processes

Our community at a glance

Understanding who makes up our community helps us to design engagement approaches that are relevant, inclusive and respectful. The diversity of our community means people experience engagement differently, and meaningful engagement requires flexible approaches that respond to community needs, capacity and changing circumstances.

Key insights

- Our population is ageing, highlighting the importance of accessible engagement methods and opportunities beyond digital channels.
- Our growing cultural diversity reinforces the need for inclusive communication and culturally appropriate engagement approaches.
- Household composition, housing types and life stages vary across Sutherland Shire, meaning engagement methods must be tailored to different audiences and needs.



Population*

241,327

Population over 60

57,189

↑ **+15%**
by 2036

Youth (15–24)

26,974

↑ **+11%**
by 2036

Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander

1.4%

Living with
disability

4.5%

Linguistically
diverse

14%

Overseas
born

19%

Households with children

47% ↑ **+5.8%**
by 2036

Rental households

22%

Total businesses

23,556

Lone person households

22% ↑ **+12.9%**
by 2036

Unemployment rate

3.1%



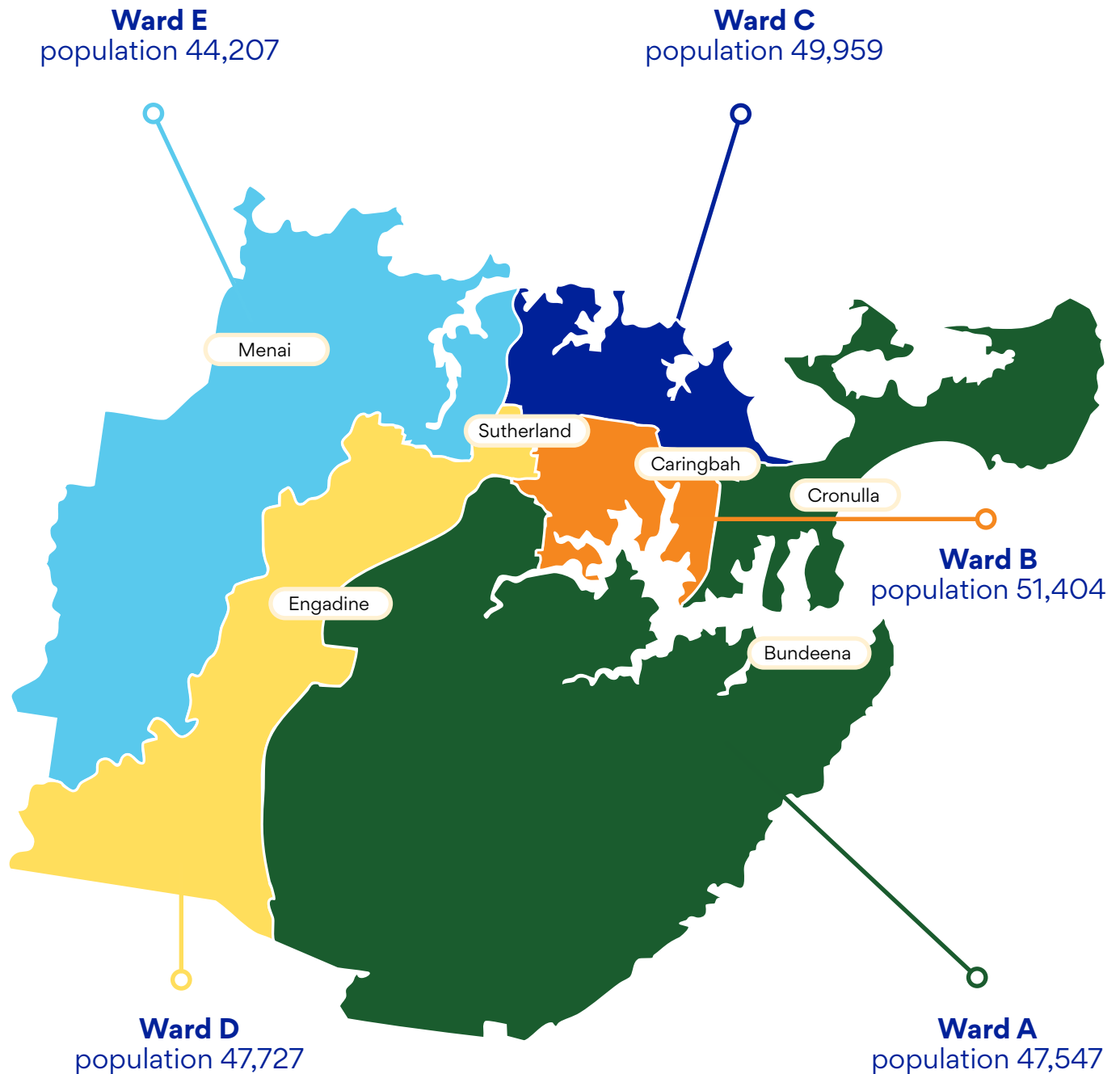
*ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP) 2025. All other figures based on 2021 Census data.
Source: Profile ID <http://www.id.com.au/sutherland>

Community Engagement Strategy 2026–30

Where our community lives

Sutherland Shire spans approximately 370 square kilometres and is home to 241,327 people*. Our community is made up of diverse neighbourhoods and local communities across five wards, each contributing to the character of Sutherland Shire.

The map below shows the location and population of each Council ward.



*Ward population figures are estimates based on ABS Estimated Resident Population data. These estimates are calculated for smaller geographic areas and then combined to align with Council ward boundaries. As a result, the total of all ward populations may differ slightly (up to 0.2%) from the total population estimate.

Engaging our diverse community

Council is committed to providing inclusive and accessible opportunities for people to participate in decisions that affect them.

For each project, Council considers who is affected and tailors engagement approaches to reflect the nature of the decision, its potential impacts and the needs of the people and groups involved. Guided by Council's [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework](#) we aim to provide equitable opportunities for participation by recognising different needs, reducing barriers to engagement and considering how people may experience decisions differently.

The table below outlines some of the key considerations Council may take into account when planning to engage with stakeholder groups identified in this Strategy. Depending on the project, additional groups and perspectives may also be identified and included in the engagement planning.

Council recognises people have multiple and intersecting identities and experiences. We apply an inclusive approach to engagement that seeks to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our community, that may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, cultural background, gender, sexuality, caring responsibilities, socioeconomic circumstances and geography.

	Stakeholder group	Key considerations in tailoring our approach
Community members	People directly affected by a decision	• fairness and prioritising those experiencing the greatest impacts • providing opportunities to ask questions and raise concerns as proposals develop • clearly explaining what can change, what cannot, and why • recognising cumulative impacts from multiple or overlapping projects • recognising that those most affected may require more targeted opportunities to participate
	Residents and ratepayers	• recognising that engagement preferences, life stages and housing circumstances vary across the community, including renters, young adults, families and older residents • providing flexible opportunities that suit different lifestyles, schedules, locations and communication preferences
	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, including elders and representative bodies	• identifying appropriate cultural authority and representation, and not assuming any one person or group speaks for all • respecting cultural protocols and preferred ways of engaging and sharing knowledge • engaging early on matters that may affect Country, culture, heritage, place, naming or community wellbeing • creating culturally-safe environments that support trust and relationship-building over time • consultation fatigue and community capacity • considering whether Native Title rights, interests or claims may be relevant to the decision and engaging with the appropriate Traditional Owner groups and representative bodies where required

	Stakeholder group	Key considerations in tailoring our approach
Community members	Children, young people and families	- child safety and wellbeing requirements, aligned with Council's Child Safe policies and procedures - the need for safe, welcoming environments that address power imbalances between adults and children - ensuring participation is voluntary and age-appropriate - being clear about why children and young people are being engaged and how their views will be used - respecting school hours, family responsibilities and competing demands - providing feedback in ways children and young people can understand
	Older people, seniors and carers	- recognising the valuable experience, local knowledge and community connections this group bring - providing a mix of online, written, telephone and face-to-face participation options - considering accessibility, mobility, transport, vision and hearing requirements - recognising varying levels of digital confidence and access to technology - providing clear information and allowing sufficient time for participation - recognising caring responsibilities and competing time commitments
	People with disability	- accessibility needs, including physical access, communication formats, digital accessibility and sensory considerations - the diversity of disability and the range of access needs, communication preferences and support requirements - participation options that respect dignity, independence and choice - avoiding assumptions about capacity or capability - valuing lived experience as expertise, particularly where decisions affect access, inclusion or everyday use of places and services - engaging as early as possible when accessibility, inclusion or participation may be affected
	People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	- recognising the diversity of cultures, languages and lived experiences across the community - identifying possible language, literacy and cultural barriers to participation - providing translated information or interpreting support, where required - working with trusted community networks and organisations to support awareness and participation - using culturally responsive and inclusive engagement approaches
	Visitors to Sutherland Shire	- focusing on information relevant to visitor needs - providing clear, simple and accessible information to support safety and wayfinding
Community organisations	Schools and other educational services	- safeguarding obligations and appropriate engagement channels - school calendars, workloads and operational constraints - being clear about the purpose of engagement and expected outcomes
	Community, sporting, cultural, volunteer and environmental groups	- volunteer capacity and time constraints - the value of existing networks, local knowledge and strong community connections - seeking a diversity of views within and beyond organised groups
	Service providers	- their specialist knowledge and insights into community needs and barriers - community capacity and the risk of over-burdening services - being clear about the role service providers are being asked to play
	Council reference and advisory groups and committees	- clarifying purpose, scope and expectations - ensuring members have adequate information and time to provide advice - recognising advisory groups complement, but do not replace, broader community engagement

	Stakeholder group	Key considerations in tailoring our approach
Business and sector groups	Local business community	- operating realities such as trading hours, seasonality and time pressures - clearly explaining potential impacts on access, parking, deliveries or customer activity - respecting time and keeping engagement focused and relevant - recognising that impacts may vary between business types, locations and operating models
	Interest and industry groups	- transparency about how sector input will be considered alongside broader community perspectives - seeking evidence-based input that informs options and decision-making - ensuring engagement is balanced and not dominated by a single viewpoint
Government and institutional stakeholders	Neighbouring councils and relevant regional bodies	- cross-boundary impacts and shared community interests - opportunities for coordination, alignment and efficient engagement
	Emergency services and government agencies	- statutory roles, responsibilities and timing requirements - the need for clear roles, decision pathways and coordination - supporting coordinated planning that reduces confusion for the community
	Federal and State Members	- providing accurate and timely information - supporting constituent enquiries and intergovernmental coordination
Communication agencies and internal stakeholders	Local media	- supporting public understanding of engagement opportunities and decisions - providing clear and consistent information
	Council employees	- the value of staff perspectives as community members - clarity of roles and expectations
	Councillors	- recognising Councillors' role as elected representatives of the community - providing timely and accurate information to support informed decision-making - ensuring engagement findings are communicated clearly and objectively - supporting Councillors to understand community perspectives, themes and emerging issues - maintaining transparency regarding engagement scope, methodology and outcomes

When we engage

We recognise that meaningful participation takes time. Unless otherwise required by legislation, community engagement activities, including public exhibitions, will be open for **a minimum of 28 days**.

To support fair, inclusive and consistent engagement practices, the following periods are not included when calculating engagement and exhibition timeframes:

- 20 December to 10 January (inclusive)
- New South Wales public holidays that fall on a weekday
- any other periods prescribed by relevant legislation.

Longer engagement periods may also be provided when taking into account factors such as the complexity or significance of the proposal, level of potential impacts on the community, and any legislative or funding requirements.

Engagement does not occur for internal operational matters, confidential or commercial-in-confidence issues, or where urgent action is required to respond to emergencies or safety matters.

The following table explains how Council engages with the community on key priorities, plans and strategies.

Project type	Level of engagement	What our community can expect
Council key long-term plans: • Community Plan • Resourcing Strategy • Other key Council Strategies • Master Plans	Involve	• early and ongoing involvement to help shape priorities and direction • clear opportunities to share views and local knowledge • community priorities, concerns and aspirations considered and/or reflected in the final plan
Council's Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan and budget	Involve	• opportunities to help inform priorities for services and projects • accessible information about Council's plans and constraints • community input considered and/or reflected in the final Operational Plan and budget
Council's key policies	Consult	• clear information about the policy and options being considered • opportunities to provide feedback on proposed approaches • feedback on what we heard and how community input informed the decision
New capital work and placemaking projects	Involve	• early engagement to understand local needs, values and priorities • opportunities to provide input on designs and options • community feedback considered and reflected in the final design where possible
Maintenance and renewal capital work where there is an identified or known impact	Inform	• clear, timely information about upcoming works and impacts • updates as works progress or change • advance notice so people can plan around the works
Planning proposals	Planning-related engagement is guided by the NSW Community Participation Plan (CPP), which sets mandatory community participation requirements for planning functions across the state. This Strategy should be read alongside the CPP and any associated legislative requirements. Council will continue to review and adapt its approach to community participation in response to changes in legislation, State Government guidance and community expectations.	

Opportunities to engage with Council

Our community is diverse and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to engagement. There are many ways to be involved in Council decision-making and we use a range of engagement methods and communication channels to support meaningful participation.

Council plans, policies, projects and initiatives

The appropriate mix of engagement activities varies for each project, depending on its purpose, scale and potential impact. Approaches are tailored to the decision being made and the people affected.

For formal engagement opportunities, we publish key information on our Join the Conversation (JTC) website and provide a range of ways for people to access information and share feedback, recognising different needs and preferences.

Not every project will use all methods. Engagement activities are selected to be proportionate to the project's scale, risk and impact, and deliverable within available resources.

Common methods for engaging with our community may include:

- surveys and questionnaires
- written submissions
- drop-in information sessions
- workshops
- online engagement platform tools, including interactive mapping, idea boards and visual feedback tools
- exhibition of draft plans, policies, strategies and proposals
- events and pop-up displays
- focus groups
- reference and advisory groups
- working parties
- meetings and forums
- webinars
- co-design activities
- site visits
- community panels or deliberative forums
- targeted stakeholder interviews or briefings
- story-based engagement
- stakeholder-specific or culturally-specific engagement sessions.



Ways we promote community engagement opportunities

We use a variety of communication channels to raise awareness of engagement opportunities and encourage participation.

We recognise that no single communication channel will reach everyone. To maximise awareness and participation, a combination of methods may be used, depending on the nature of the project, who is affected, available resources and any identified barriers to participation.

Promotion and notification methods may include:

- email updates and electronic direct mail (EDM) campaigns
- Council websites and engagement platform
- social media channels
- digital advertising and sponsored online content
- digital screens and public display networks
- printed flyers, brochures and information sheets
- direct mail and letters to affected residents, businesses or stakeholders
- posters and notices displayed in community facilities and public spaces
- on-site signage and project notices
- local newspapers and print publications
- radio, media interviews and community announcements
- community newsletters and partner communication channels
- community events, pop-ups and face-to-face outreach activities
- stakeholder networks, advisory groups and community organisations
- other communication and engagement methods appropriate to the audience and project.

Public exhibition

Public exhibition plays an important role in community participation, particularly in the planning process. It is the formal period when draft documents or development applications are made available for public comment.

Public exhibition must be endorsed by Council before it begins. Documents are available online via the Join the Conversation website and in hard copy through Council's Customer Service team at the administration building. Planning-related public exhibition requirements are guided by the [NSW Community Participation Plan \(CPP\)](#), which sets state-wide requirements for community participation in planning matters.

Other ways to engage with Council

In addition to project-based engagement, there are many other ways to be involved in Council decision-making and share feedback, including:

- speaking at a Council meeting
- contacting Councillors
- participating in a Council reference or advisory group
- providing feedback or enquiries through Council's website, customer service channels or direct correspondence
- engaging with Council through community events, briefings and forums
- participating in Council research programs

These pathways provide flexible opportunities to engage with Council in ways that suit people's interests, lifestyles and preferences.

We use a range of engagement methods and communication channels to encourage and support meaningful participation.

Engagement or research?

Community engagement and community research are both important tools that can provide valuable insights and help inform Council decisions. While community engagement and research may use similar methods, such as surveys or workshops, they serve different purposes in the decision-making process.

Community engagement creates opportunities for *participation* by people who are interested in or affected by a decision. It helps Council gather community perspectives, experiences, ideas and feedback on specific projects, plans, policies, services or proposals before a decision is made.

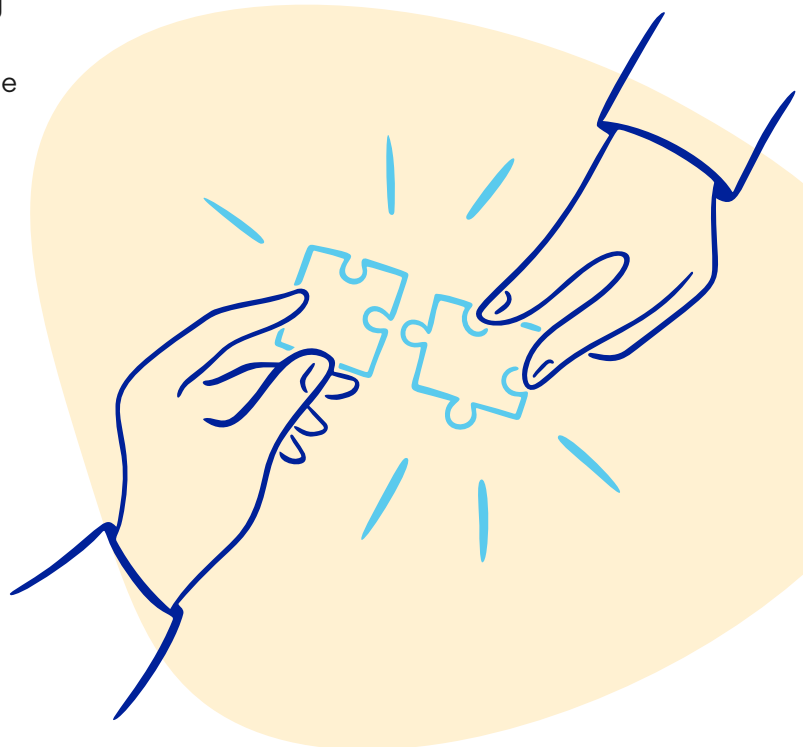
Community research provides *evidence* about the views, experiences, needs or priorities of the whole, or a section of, the community. Participants may be selected to reflect the characteristics of the population being studied, helping to ensure the findings provide reliable and representative insights for planning and decision-making.

For both engagement and research, feedback, perspectives and evidence gathered are carefully considered alongside other factors, including legislative requirements, technical advice, available resources, strategic priorities and the broader public interest.

Community Satisfaction Survey

Approximately every two years, we undertake an independent Community Satisfaction Survey, with results [published on our website](#).

The Community Satisfaction Survey is one example of community research. The survey is designed to provide a representative picture of community views across a broad range of Council services and themes. The survey helps us to understand community priorities, perceptions and satisfaction levels, track changes over time, and identify emerging trends. These insights provide important context for Council's planning, service delivery and future decision-making.



How we consider and respond to feedback

Meaningful engagement means listening to feedback, considering diverse perspectives, and being transparent about how decisions are made.

We will be clear upfront about the purpose of engagement, the aspects of a project or decision that can and cannot be influenced, and any factors that may limit available options.

How feedback informs decisions

Once the engagement period has closed, Council reviews and analyses the feedback received to identify key themes, perspectives, opportunities and concerns. Community feedback provides valuable local knowledge and insight, helping us understand the priorities, needs and experiences of those affected by, or interested in, a project or decision.

These insights are carefully considered alongside other relevant information, including technical advice, legislative requirements, budget considerations and broader community interests. Depending on the project or decision, factors such as safety, feasibility, environmental impacts, cost and strategic priorities may also influence the final outcome.

Responsible use of feedback

All feedback is treated respectfully and in accordance with privacy, information management and record-keeping policies and requirements.

Keeping the community informed

We are committed to sharing the outcomes of engagement and explaining how feedback has been considered. After engagement activities close, we will provide updates on what we heard, key findings and next steps. We will also communicate final decisions where they can be shared, taking into account privacy, confidentiality and governance requirements

To help keep participants informed, we will use one or more of the following methods:

- update the relevant Join the Conversation project page with a summary of what we heard, key outcomes and next steps
- email people who provided feedback with the consultation results and links to further information
- provide updates through our monthly Join the Conversation e-newsletter
- notify participants once a Council resolution or final decision has been made.

The timing of updates may vary depending on the nature of the project, as well as Council's governance schedules and decision-making processes.

You can access further information about Council's governance and decision making, including details of the meeting cycle, [on our website](#) or by contacting our Customer Service team.

How we measure engagement

We evaluate our engagement activities to understand how well they worked, what value they delivered, and how they can be improved in the future. Evaluation helps us understand whether engagement reached the right people, provided meaningful opportunities to participate, informed decision-making and made effective use of resources.

The way engagement is measured will vary depending on the purpose, scale and complexity of the project, plan or decision. This helps ensure evaluation is practical, proportionate and focused on what matters most.

Reach and participation

We assess whether engagement reached the people, groups and stakeholders who were affected by, interested in, or able to contribute to the decision.

Measures may include:

- participation numbers and response rates
- stakeholder and community representation
- participation across different engagement methods and channels
- demographic information, where collected
- awareness of the engagement opportunity.



Quality of participation

We assess whether people had the information, opportunity and support needed to participate effectively.

Measures may include:

- participant feedback and satisfaction
- understanding of the project or decision
- accessibility and inclusion outcomes
- barriers to participation identified during the engagement process
- the quality and relevance of feedback received.

Contribution to decision-making

We assess how engagement contributed to the project, plan or decision and whether it generated useful insights.

Measures may include:

- key themes, ideas and issues identified through engagement
- how community input informed recommendations, options or outcomes
- whether engagement helped identify opportunities, risks or local impacts
- how feedback contributed to Council's understanding of community needs, interests and perspectives.

Efficiency and value

We assess whether the engagement approach was proportionate to the project and made effective use of Council resources.

Measures may include:

- delivery against project timeframes and objectives
- effectiveness of different engagement methods
- participation outcomes relative to project scale and complexity
- resource requirements and outcomes achieved
- lessons learned and opportunities for improvement.



Image: community members at a workshop

Working together

Effective community engagement relies on Councillors, Council staff and the community working together. By understanding our respective roles and responsibilities, we can support meaningful participation, informed decision-making and transparent outcomes that reflect the diverse needs, experiences and aspirations of the Sutherland Shire community.

The role of Councillors

Councillors are the elected representatives of the community and play an important role in understanding the views, concerns and aspirations of their constituents. They engage with the community in a range of ways, including through community events and meetings, engagement activities, reference and advisory groups, at Council and Committee meetings, and individual contact with constituents.

Councillors may participate in planned engagement activities related to specific topics or decisions. Their role is to listen, clarify and discuss community feedback and consider it alongside other relevant factors to support informed decision-making.

The role of Council staff

Council staff are responsible for planning, delivering and evaluating engagement activities in line with this Strategy. This includes providing clear, accurate and balanced information in a timely way to help the community understand a project or decision, how they can participate, and how feedback will be used and reported.

Staff engage with the community in a respectful and genuine way and follow agreed processes and protocols to ensure engagement is inclusive, consistent and appropriate to the decision being made.

The role of the community

Community members play an important role by sharing their views, experiences, knowledge and ideas to help inform Council's planning and decision-making.

Community participation can take many forms, from staying informed and providing feedback on proposals, through to working alongside Council on projects and initiatives. Meaningful participation is strengthened when people contribute constructively, respect different perspectives and engage in good faith.

Planning exhibition and notification follow the [NSW Community Participation Plan \(CPP\) 2026](#).

Council's local engagement methods for planning and all other matters are those set out in this Community Engagement Strategy 2026–30.

Ready to have your say?



Join our online community to stay informed and take part in shaping Sutherland Shire's future.

sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/jtc

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