

Community Participation Plan

February 2023

Acknowledgement of Country



The Greater Cities Commission proudly acknowledges Australia's First Peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of what we call the six cities.

We pay respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise and value the extraordinary and ongoing contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to Australian life, and how this enriches all Australians.

We embrace the spirit of recognition, working towards ensuring both an equal voice and equity in all aspects of our society.

Original Artwork by Zachary Bennett-Brook c.2022.

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Cabramatta,
Western Parkland City

Message from the Chief Commissioner



At the Greater Cities Commission, we're planning Australia's first global multi-city region. We are doing this to ensure the people who live and work in our six cities, now and in our future enjoy better opportunities, better lifestyles, better jobs and better housing.

Our vision is that in 2061, the combined and networked strengths of six great cities will have made Australia's largest multi-city region a global economic leader, a magnet for investment and talent, and one of the best places on earth to live for more than a quarter of the nation.

Four decades of national, state, and local government collaboration will have provided more access to opportunities, more jobs closer to where people live and more well-located housing choices, supported by coordinated delivery and efficient infrastructure investment.

Our First Peoples will be celebrated and their aspirations and wisdom integrated into the planning system. Our communities will be stronger and we will enjoy far greater social equity. We will be a global leader in climate resilience and adaptation, and carbon positive.

This kind of intentional strategic city planning at a multi-city region scale will transform the lives of everyone who lives in our six cities. Everyone will benefit from the global economic scale and local liveability this planning approach can offer.

Leading metropolitan planning across the multi-city region is a significant responsibility. It involves coordinating and guiding the development of our cities and the multi-city region to ensure sustainable and efficient growth, while taking into account the needs, aspirations and wellbeing of our communities and stakeholders.

The Commission's role in planning includes setting regional planning standards and policies, promoting inter-city collaboration and cooperation, and addressing regional issues such as housing, urbanisation, transportation, and environmental sustainability. By taking a coordinated and strategic approach to planning across the multi-city region, we can ensure our cities are vibrant, liveable, and attractive places to live, work and visit.

Community knowledge is critical when developing a strategic plan that delivers a shared vision. Community consultation, communication and collaboration were essential to the 2018 Greater Sydney Region Plan A *Metropolis of Three Cities*. As we deliver our new Region and City Plans, we build on this legacy, with local voices front and centre.

This Community Participation Plan sets out clearly when, where and how you can have a say in collectively shaping our multi-city region. Its guiding principles focus on meaningful engagement, accessibility and inclusion, and transparent decision making. It is our commitment to you that your voice will be heard and help shape both your city and our global multi-city region.

Geoff Roberts AM
Chief Commissioner

About the Greater Cities Commission

The Greater Cities Commission is driving the vision to deliver Australia's first global multi-city region.

Our mission is to deliver the benefits of global economic scale and local liveability for everyone who lives and works in our six cities.

We lead, coordinate and align the strategic planning that will shape the future of our cities, accelerate the delivery of key innovation districts, and lead discussion on major city-shaping issues.

The Commission is a statutory body and reports directly to the NSW Government. We are an independent agency within the Transport and Infrastructure cluster.

The Commission underwent a legislated change from the Greater Sydney Commission to the Greater Cities Commission on 1 April 2022. This included a change in our Act, which has been captured in the revised Community Participation Plan as our remit has been expanded to include new cities.



Newcastle,
Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City

The Community Participation Plan

This Community Participation Plan (CPP) is designed to clearly state how and when the community can participate when the Greater Cities Commission undertakes its planning functions.

This CPP includes community participation objectives and approaches to community engagement, including minimum and typical public exhibition timeframes.

This CPP has been prepared by the Commission to meet the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act 1979 Division 2.6.

The Commission's planning function is to prepare draft Region and City Plans (sections 3.3 and 3.4) and then make those plans and publish them.

The mandatory requirements for community participation with which the Commission must comply when exercising its functions are as follows:

- Prepare a community participation plan about how and when we will undertake community participation on the draft Region and City Plans (section 2.23)
- Publicly exhibit the community participation plan for a minimum of 28 days (clause 1, Division 1, Part 1 of Schedule 1)
- Publicly exhibit the draft Region or City Plans for a minimum of 45 days (clause 2, Division 1, Part 1 of Schedule 1)

This CPP is intended to be a reference tool for community members wanting to know how and when the Commission invites community participation in relation to its Region and City Plans.

This Plan describes community participation activities undertaken by the Commission under the Greater Cities Commission Act 2022 and the EP&A Act.

It does not apply to other NSW planning authorities, including local councils, who are required to prepare their own CPPs. This Plan will be reviewed periodically.

Our approach to preparing this Plan is informed by international best practice, including the International Association for Public Participation.

Our commitment to community participation

This Community Participation Plan builds on our strong engagement foundations, ensuring our stakeholders continue to play a significant role in planning for the future of the multi-city region.

Since its inception, community engagement has been vital to the Commission's work. Community input shaped the 2018 Greater Sydney Region Plan *A Metropolis of Three Cities* and the five District Plans. These Plans developed key performance indicators to measure progress and aimed to place housing, jobs, infrastructure, and services within a 30-minute reach of more people.

As we develop our Region and City Plans for exhibition in 2023 and 2024, we are committed to continuing this work through a collaborative approach, listening to the community and gaining insights from local councils, state government agencies and industry. We are also building on consultation previously undertaken by the Department of Planning and Environment that informed the three Region Plans of the Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City, Central Coast City and Illawarra-Shoalhaven City.



Avalon Beach,
Eastern Harbour City

Community participation in planning creates a shared sense of purpose and direction that manages growth while protecting the natural environment and promoting sustainable management of built and cultural heritage, including First Nations cultural heritage.

It can achieve this by:



Our community and stakeholders provide the Commission with access to important and valuable knowledge, ideas, and expertise. By listening to the community and stakeholders, we are collectively shaping the future to deliver quality outcomes now and for future generations.

Engagement objectives

Objectives	Actions
Locally connected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strong partnerships with local communities and promote local participation • Understand local demographics and the most appropriate ways of engaging • Facilitate ongoing discourse with local community networks
Inclusive and open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek community input and accurately capture community views • Incorporate culturally appropriate practices when engaging First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities • Enable participation for people with disabilities or hard to reach groups
Timely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start community participation as early as possible and ensure the community has reasonable time to provide input • Provide regular project updates • Consider holidays and other community events when setting dates for engagement initiatives
Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline in advance how and when the community can participate • Ensure as many community members as possible can participate • Use best practice community participation techniques • Make relevant information available in plain English and translate information when engaging linguistically diverse communities or people living with disabilities • Ensure information is accessible for groups who find it difficult to participate in usual community participation activities • Stage events at convenient times and locations
Responsive and meaningful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value, and give genuine and proper consideration to, community input • Recognise previous community input, including on similar issues • Be clear about what aspects of a plan the community can inform • Ensure responses to community input are relevant and proportionate • Recognise 'one size does not fit all' and be agile in approaches • Always explain at the end of projects how community views were considered when reaching decisions • Comply with statutory obligations, protect privacy and respect confidentiality



Toowoomba Bay,
Central Coast City

Who is our community?

Our community is anyone affected by, or interested in, planning for Australia’s first global multi-city region, including individuals, community groups and service providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, peak bodies, businesses, local government, and state and Commonwealth government agencies.

The 43 councils in our multi-city region provide a strong voice for their communities by representing the interests and concerns of their constituents. Our multi-region city councils also make decisions on behalf of their communities that impact their local area, making them key stakeholders at the Commission.

Our City Commissioners also play a crucial role in ensuring strong connectivity between state and local government, acting as a liaison between the two levels of government to ensure local concerns are heard and addressed and that state policies and decisions are effectively communicated and implemented at the local city level.

Additionally, our City Commissioners work to coordinate resources and services between the state and local government, promoting cooperation and collaboration between the two levels of government. This helps to ensure that state and local policies are aligned, and that the needs of the community are met in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The Commission acknowledges that our stakeholders are many and diverse, made up of many smaller communities or groups of individuals with shared qualities, ideas, characteristics, and interests. These groups might represent individuals from a diverse range of cultures, languages, religions, beliefs, geographic locations, or genders, as well as professions and certain interest groups. Individuals may associate with a number of groups or communities and may represent a variety of interests.

As a guiding principle for engagement undertaken by the Commission, including employees, volunteers and consultants, the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is used as reference for the following stakeholder influence/interest matrix, ensuring stakeholders and communities are appropriately engaged.

Table 1 - Stakeholder matrix description

Stakeholder matrix	Interest	Influence	IAP2 spectrum	Goal
Monitor	Low	Low	Inform	To provide information which is balanced and objective to assist the stakeholder in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Keep informed	High	Low	Consult	To obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions from the stakeholder.
Keep satisfied	Low	High	Involve	To work directly with the stakeholder throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
Key player	High	High	Collaborate	To partner with the stakeholder in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

How we engage

We use different engagement tools to ensure we capture as much feedback as possible from our many and diverse stakeholders. We use a range of engagement methods and communication channels to ensure our community is informed of the planning functions the Commission carries out and can have their say on planning matters that affect them.

We actively seek community views and tailor engagement programs to capture harder-to-reach audiences including younger people, people living with disabilities, elderly people, First Nations people and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Table 2 - Engagement tools

Engagement tools	How we will use them
Co-design	To collaborate with stakeholders and the community to design policies and relevant Commission work.
Community workshops	To present and explain complex information to stakeholders and the community so they can spend time deliberating on an issue.
Deliberative forums such as Citizens Panels, Citizens Juries, Youth Panels	To gather representation from, and deliberation by, a diverse range of people in the community who may not usually participate in engagement about strategic planning.
Mandatory exhibitions	To gain formal feedback required by legislation.
Non-mandatory exhibitions	To gather community input into non-statutory elements of Commission work.
Online engagement	To make it as easy as possible for stakeholders and community members to provide feedback at their convenience. This tool may also be used to reach many people.
Roundtables	To gather feedback and insights from a range of key stakeholders and community members.
Surveys	Where appropriate, we will gain insights from a broad range of citizens so that people who live, work, and play in the multi-city region are all included.
Community meetings	Where appropriate, we will attend existing community, peak, agency and industry meetings or forums to explain Commission proposals and gather feedback.
Briefings (face-to-face and webinars)	To provide clear information to key stakeholders for the purpose of information dissemination and gathering feedback.
Commission Advisory Panels – Youth Panel and First Nations	To provide advice and guidance on issues across the Commission with appointed external stakeholders in a structured and collaborative way.



Ways to participate

Some of the ways the community can participate in our work include:

- signing up for digital updates including the Commission’s regular newsletter
- following the Commission’s social media channels
- regularly checking the Commission’s website for updates
- attending Commission-hosted consultation events online or in person.

The community is generally notified:

- at the outset of strategic plan preparations
- of project plan updates and opportunities to participate, including when plans go on exhibition
- once a plan has been finalised with information on how community views were considered.

Once draft plans have been developed they are exhibited through public exhibition. At this point the community is invited to make a formal submission responding to the plans.

For the upcoming plans, the mandatory exhibition timeframes are as follows:

Planning instrument	Mandatory timeframes
Community participation plans	28 days
Regional or city strategic plans	45 days

Table 3- Mandatory timeframes for exhibition

All feedback and submissions received are considered in decision-making. The Commission commits to documenting and providing the community with reasons for those decisions, including how community views have been considered.

Access to engagement opportunities

We do all we can to make our engagement opportunities easy to access. However, we understand that there are barriers that could hinder people from participating in engagement activities. We have outlined these below, as well as how we will seek to address them.

Table 4 - Barriers to engagement

Barrier	How we will respond
Lack of time to participate in engagement activities	Where possible we will provide a range of engagement options for communities and stakeholders with differing time availability and locations.
Lack of awareness of opportunities to engage	<p>We will continue to use a wide range of communication tools to ensure communities and stakeholders are aware of opportunities to comment on, and have access to, information about the Commission and its ongoing projects. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Electronic newsletters • Social media • Newspaper, TV and radio news articles • Advertising including metropolitan, local, and ethnic newspapers.
Complexity of subject matter	We will help the community and stakeholders understand complex information by using direct and clear language that is free from jargon. Where relevant we will develop concise plain English summaries of the issues.
Literacy, language, and physical ability	<p>We will tailor our engagement to people's needs by providing a range of opportunities including channels that are widely used, face-to-face engagement and going to people in their communities. This will help to ensure that a diverse range of community members including young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, First Nations people and people with disability can engage with the Commission.</p> <p>We will always provide support to enable a wide range of people to be involved with our engagement activities. This may include ensuring our venues are accessible and translation services are provided, together with workshops and materials in other languages.</p>
Not enough information about what happens after the engagement or how the information will be used.	We will be upfront about how the information will be used as well as how community feedback helped shape our work. We will report back to the community and stakeholders about how we have taken their feedback into consideration.



Centenary Square, Parramatta
Central River city
Credit: Destination NSW

Statutory exhibition timeframes

The EP&A Act outlines the types of planning functions (referred to as ‘instruments’ in the Act) to which statutory exhibition timeframes relate.

For the Commission, this includes the exhibition of this Community Participation Plan and any future regional or city strategic plans.

Planning instrument	Mandatory timeframes
Community participation plans	28 days
Regional or city strategic plans	45 days

Table 5 - Statutory exhibition timeframes

Under the Greater Cities Commission Act 2022 No 8, the Premier may ask the Commission to undertake a range of other planning activities. As a minimum, the Commission will comply with statutory exhibition timeframes set out in Section 2.21(2) of the EP&A Act.

Planning or policy information	Non mandatory timeframes
Legislation, regulation, policies, and guidelines	Minimum 28 days whenever possible. The period may be shorter if there is an urgent need for the Commission to provide advice. We will be transparent about why timeframes are shorter than 28 days.

Table 6 - Non mandatory timeframes

These timeframes are in calendar days and include weekends. If the exhibition period is due to close on a weekend or a public holiday, we may extend the exhibition to finish on the first available work day.

As outlined in Schedule 1 to the EP&A Act, the period between 20 December and 10 January (inclusive) is excluded from a period of public exhibition.

Whenever possible the Commission will offer longer timeframes for community feedback.

When receiving submissions, the Commission will adhere to our privacy policies and ensure defamation and discrimination laws are not breached.

The Commission always considers the safety of community members, other stakeholders and our staff who have the right to participate in a respectful environment and are expected to behave in a manner supporting everyone’s right to present their point of view.

Where to go for more information

We value and encourage community feedback.

For more information, or to provide your feedback, please get in touch.

Visit us online: www.greatercities.au

Email us: engagement@gcc.nsw.gov.au

Write to us: Greater Cities Commission
 PO Box 257
 Parramatta NSW 2124

Call us: 1800 617 681

People with disabilities

The Commission aims to reach the widest possible audience with our content.

To strengthen our digital inclusion, we develop online information considering diverse needs such as ability, age, literacy and numeracy levels, device, and location. Our website is tested with assistive technologies including screen readers, voice recognition and text to speech.

We aim to meet the latest standard of the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) at an AA level. We will continue to improve our website to meet changing web accessibility standards.

Please contact us if you:

- are having trouble accessing any information
- need this information in an alternative format
- have suggestions on how we can improve the accessibility of this information.

Additionally, the Commission will ensure that our engagement strategies consider the individual and complex needs of people with disabilities. The principles of universal access and inclusion for people with disability are considered in the physical and digital environments.

People with restricted internet access

Where possible, we aim to keep the size of all PDF documents on our website below 10 megabytes.

If you have difficulties accessing our content, please email engagement@gcc.nsw.gov.au.

People who speak a language other than English

If you need an interpreter, please call the National Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450, and ask them to call us on (02) 8289 6200. The service provides immediate phone interpreting.

Greater Cities Commission

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