



CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2021-2023



OUR *Mission*

To provide leadership in making locally responsive and informed decisions, delivering quality services and facilities to the Hinchinbrook community.

OUR *Vision*

To strengthen our vibrant regional lifestyle and prosperous economy by growing the population of and opportunities for the Hinchinbrook Shire.

OUR *Values*

INTEGRITY – We will lead our community with integrity and vision. We will embrace change, foster innovation, and be honest and transparent at all times.

PEOPLE FOCUSED – We value our community, our stakeholders and our employees. We will treat all persons with fairness and respect. Council will implement services from a customer perspective.

EXCELLENCE – We will always strive to do our best, to be industry leaders and to look for opportunities in pursuit of continuous improvement.

SUSTAINABILITY – We will be practical, focused, and effective in our delivery of services and programs for the community.

INTRODUCTION

Hinchinbrook Shire Council takes pride in recognising that strong and effective communication with our community can deliver a range of benefits, including strengthening relationships, generating support and participation as well as improving community awareness of our programs, activities and services.

Council actively seeks to communicate honestly with the community in the ways and places they most respond to.

Council seeks not just to inform, but to support the building of community capacity by increasing our community's knowledge on the themes and issues affecting them in their daily lives.

With over 200 employees, we are a strong and committed part of the community and have a vested interest in its success and future. We want our community to understand what we do for them on a daily basis, and help them be informed enough to meaningfully work with us to shape that future.

All Council staff and Councillors have roles to play in communicating effectively internally and externally. The support provided by Council's Communications Team can strengthen Council's communication methods, but does not replace the need for an organisation-wide commitment to effective communication.

Effective ongoing stakeholder engagement and communication will be essential to:

- help achieve our overall organisational objectives;
- engage effectively with stakeholders;
- ensure that people understand what we do;
- change behaviour and perceptions where necessary; and
- demonstrate our achievements.

We also want our community to know we are here for them, we are making decisions and putting in place plans that impact on the future of our community and we take this seriously.

GOALS

Inviting Accessible

We have an easy to use, interactive, and informative agile website. We have a strong social media presence across multiple platforms. We invite community input.

Informed Skilled

We have skilled, motivated and creative people with a passion to deliver for their community. Our staff are advocates in the community because they are well informed of our projects, services, activities and decision making.

Flexible Diverse Appropriate

We recognise our community includes unique and diverse communities. We are flexible and deliver our messages appropriately for each audience. We value direct communication along with broadcast activities.

Positive Effective

Our corporate brand is strengthened by positive promotion of the activities and services we provide to the community.

O p e n Considerate Consistent

We consider our community before we do anything. We let community know what we are doing and most importantly, why we are doing it.

Clear Timely

We tell people what they need to know to live, work and play in the Hinchinbrook Shire region. We add value to the lives of our community by ensuring they are always clearly informed.

Honest Inclusive Trustworthy

Our community understands how decisions are made and how they can participate in decision making processes. We explain our challenges, so they can understand and trust what we tell them.

Cooperative Supportive

We are an active part of the community. Together we celebrate community wins and work with them to achieve things that most matter to our community.

OUR PRINCIPLES

OUR FOUNDATION

HONESTY	Transparency and accuracy
TIMELY	Planned proactive and responsive
CLEAR	Concise and easily understood
CONSISTENT	Uniform in tone and message meaning to address all audiences
PURPOSEFUL	Relevant and useful to the community
ACCESSIBLE	Delivered across a variety of communication channels

OBJECTIVES

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Increase Community Awareness	To increase community awareness and understanding of what we do, the services, activities, projects, planning and decision making processes we administer and demonstrate our achievements.
Proactively Deliver Information	To proactively deliver clear, accessible, timely, relevant and targeted information in ways that best meet the local interests and needs of our community.
Provide Accessible Communication	To provide informative, accessible, interactive, and agile communication with digital services that meet the needs of our community.
Strengthen Relationships	To strengthen relationships within our community, through communication activities, to increase confidence, change behaviour and perception where necessary, and support the development of trust through a whole Council approach to engagement.
Build Our Identity	To build our reputation and identity through consistent messaging and an engaging visual presence. Present a clearly identifiable and approachable corporate brand that reflects our identity.

KEY STRATEGIES

HOW ARE WE GOING TO ACHIEVE IT?

Digital Media Strategy

Continuously develop Council's website and strong social media presence across a range of platforms with the end-user the primary focus to deliver an engaging, informative, trusted, interactive and agile website.

Explore options to make it easy to do business with Council online and encourage the website to become the hub for community information. This strategy will also look at other digital opportunities including the development of apps.

Brand Management

To promote consistent delivery of the Corporate Brands. This will include a planned, proactive marketing campaign to build community awareness and exposure to Council services, activities and projects.

Communications

Support delivery of targeted communications and prioritising direct communications. Establish an approach to guide effective communication choices taking into account where and how individuals best receive their information.

Community Education

Support community understanding of who we are, what we do, where ratepayer money goes, how we make decisions and how we plan for the future. This includes ensuring we continue to develop strong relationships with traditional media to help our community understand our challenges and decision making.

Staff Communications

To increase staff knowledge and understanding of our services, activities, projects, decision making and planning processes to increase internal morale and allow staff to be advocates in the community both through their professional and personal interactions with the community.

Staff Culture

Development and implementation of processes to deliver a coordinated and proactive approach to inform the community of Council's role, and drive a proactive communication culture across Council, by putting tools in place to assist staff identify when there is a need to communicate in their operational activities.

Measurement and Evaluation

Consistent reporting and measurement of communication activities, outputs and impacts. Regular analysis will be used to improve practices and constantly refine our approach. A dashboard of metrics will be investigated to allow for regular reporting of communication activities.

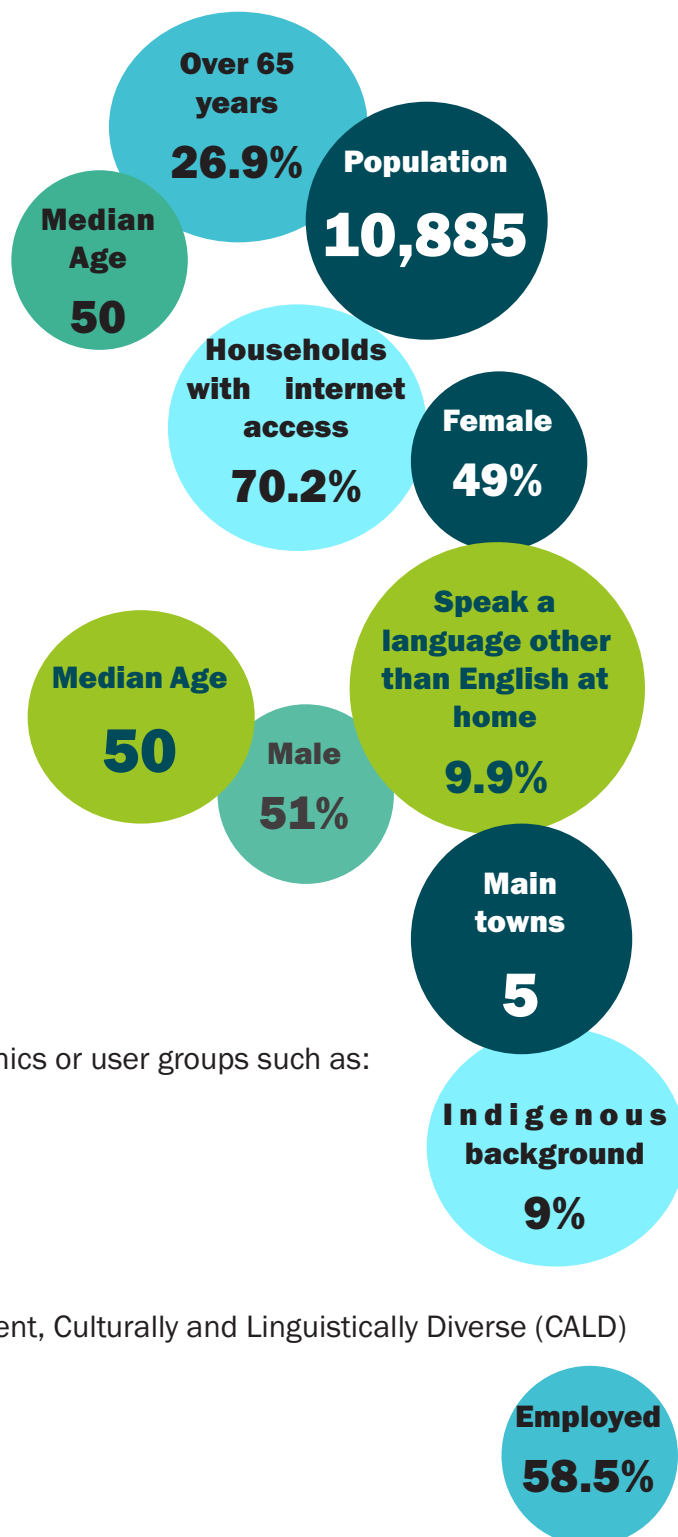
WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

OUR COMMUNITY, COUNCIL, STAFF AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

We are responsible for delivering a wide range of services to communities across the Shire. Our message and approach to individuals, groups and organisations will vary depending on the purpose of the communication.

Our key audiences include:

- Ratepayers;
- Residents ;
- Customers;
- Volunteers ;
- Project partners ;
- Progress Associations;
- Community clubs, groups and organisations;
- Media;
- Businesses, workers, industries and investors ;
- Tourists;
- Federal, State and Local Government Agencies;
- Regulatory or statutory authorities;
- Funding bodies;
- Suppliers;
- Mayor and Councillors;
- Staff; and
- Potential employees.



We consider tailored approaches for specific demographics or user groups such as:

- Youth;
- Older people;
- Parents and their children;
- People with limited literacy;
- People with a disability, vision or hearing impairment, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community members; and
- Other minority groups.

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

NEWS, DECISIONS, PROJECTS, AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Council aims to provide the latest information on project, services, activities and decision making processes.

This will be done in line with our principles and objectives by building on relationships that are critical for trust and positive support across the community.

WHEN ARE WE TALKING TO OUR COMMUNITY?

REGULAR, RELEVANT AND CURRENT COMMUNICATION

The opportunity to communicate with the community will be taken at every available opportunity, and recognise that repetition is key to successful message delivery.

WHY ARE WE TALKING TO OUR COMMUNITY?

WE ARE ONE REGION, ONE COMMUNITY

By learning what Council is doing, why we do it and how we support the community that we all live and work in, creates an open environment for two way conversations.

Communicating openly and honestly will help, over time to build trust in our community.

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

ADVERTISING

Newspaper - Council Connections full page weekly regional section

Engages with members of the community who may not engage regularly with Council via Social Media or via Council's website.

Weekly *Council Connections* full page comprises of half page editorial of Council news articles, and project progress updates including community activities. Advertising of Council business opportunities, position vacancies, upcoming social events, disaster preparedness and public consultations.

Council advertising and editorial is distributed by media release, posted on Council's website, *News and Announcements* page and shared via social media after publication.

Newspaper - Classifieds

Council advertises in the appropriate news publication where applicable and in cases where legislative requirements demand.

Types of classified advertisements include Tender and Procurement Advertising and Positions Vacant Advertisements.

Radio

A variety of radio stations, including main stream to promote communication of Council activities, attractions and events to reach a larger audience and community members that do not have internet access.

Television

Cost effective access to local television news stations that target the Hinchinbrook Shire Region is another alternative to increase audience reach to the community.

Social Media Advertising

Council conducts paid advertising via Facebook to promote important Council issues, events or news. Past examples include disaster messaging, public consultations, Council events and public notices of significance.

Costs for Social Media advertising vary depending on length and breadth of engagement.

Online Advertising – Recruitment

- Seek;
- LG Assist;
- Local Government Job Directory; and
- Profession specific websites, such as NRMjobs.com.au which specifically engages with Natural Resource Management positions.

Ongoing investigation into viable methods of recruitment to attract the best and most suitable applications for the vast spectrum of Local Government positions .

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

PUBLICATIONS

Corporate Plan

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council Corporate Plan 2021-2025 is a strategic document that sets the direction for Council for this four year period. The Corporate Plan is one of Council's most significant planning documents and is the means by which Council delivers on its mission to provide leadership in making locally responsive and informed decisions, delivering quality services and facilities to the Hinchinbrook community.

Operational Plan

The Operational Plan identifies priority programs or actions to achieve corporate strategies. The Operational Plan links Council's long-term strategic direction set out in the 2021-2025 Corporate Plan and other strategic documents that Hinchinbrook Shire Council plan to deliver each year, which is funded through the Budget.

At the end of each financial year Council's overall performance against the Operational Plan and its success in addressing the outcomes of the Corporate Plan are reported to the community via the Annual Report.

Budget

Council's Budget document is adopted annually in June. Information is supplied by staff for development of the Budget document.

Annual Report

The Annual Report is a comprehensive report on Council's activities throughout the preceding year and mandatory reporting from the Operational and Corporate Plans. The Hinchinbrook Shire Council Annual Report must be adopted 30 days after the financial statements have been approved.



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

NEWSLETTERS

Internal Newsletter

The **Grapevine** is Council's employee newsletter and communicates updates from Council, messages from the CEO, staff news, changes to policy, operational information, safety information and community events.

The Grapevine is distributed fortnightly via Mailchimp incorporating content from all areas of Council.

External Newsletter

Community newsletters are published annually. These are as follows:

- **The Hinchinbrook Report** - The Hinchinbrook Report is developed and distributed annually which is a wrap up of Council's key priorities and objectives, upcoming projects, opportunities and information about how to connect with Council.
- **Budget Summary** - Council's Budget Summary is an abridged version of the Budget and includes information that is relevant to the Hinchinbrook Shire ratepayer which is published and distributed annually.
- **Disaster Ready Resource** - The Hinchinbrook Disaster Ready Resource is published annually and includes essential information for residents including Local Area Warden contact details, message from the Mayor, key emergency contact details and flood height comparison charts. This newsletter is designed to provide the latest up to date key information to help prepare the community should an event occur.
- **Weekly Newsletter** - The Council Connections is a weekly Newsletter that includes news and announcements, current vacancies, procurement and tender opportunities, works and disaster information. While published in newspaper format, the newsletter is also distributed to a large media network including a variety of local contacts such as staff, progress associations and Chamber of Commerce. The newsletter is also available on the website and is promoted by Facebook posts.



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

WEB/ONLINE

External

Hinchinbrook Shire Council Website

Website content is driven by events, projects and updates to decision making processes as well as general news including road closures or important information to ensure the community is well informed.

Further functionality continues to be developed to increase accessibility to the community.

Since its relaunch in July 2017 the website has seen 190,000 unique users and 275,000 sessions, with a spike in engagement seen during disaster or emergency events.

Usual engagement for the Council's website averages at 250 per day on weekdays and 100 users per day for weekends.

Hinchinbrook Way

The Hinchinbrook Way website is a tourism based website that specialises in promotion of the many wonders and benefits of our region to the community locally, regionally and aims to market the district globally.

Disaster Dashboard

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council Disaster Dashboard was launched in 2017 and serves as the main web portal for Council during a disaster or emergency situation. The Dashboard is managed in Guardian and is hosted by QIT+.

The Dashboard is continually reviewed and updated to increase usability and access to relevant information for users of the site.

The Dashboard now has the ability for residents to "opt-in" to a service, allowing the user to receive important and relevant email notifications.

Users can tailor notifications to provide information for individual flood gauges at different alert levels.

Electronic Communication Noticeboards - Non Disaster Content

Encourage local groups and organisations to utilise the Electronic Communication Noticeboards for promotion of public events and activities (non disaster content).

Content distributed during non-disaster periods is primarily disaster related, some community, Council or tourism related information is played during May to November.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

WEB/ONLINE

Internal

Hinchinbrook Shire Council Intranet - Staff

The Hinchinbrook Shire Council Intranet is the web portal where employees can access policies, procedures, forms, Workplace Health and Safety information, Council news, positions vacant, links to operational apps, relevant department and workplace information.

The Intranet was white listed in May 2018, and is the primary site which staff are linked to when opening the Internet via Google Chrome from all workplace computers.

Staff can access the Intranet via a log in page on Council's website when not using a workplace computer.

Intranet content is continually reviewed and updated to ensure the latest information is available to staff.

Hinchinbrook Shire Council Intranet - Elected Members

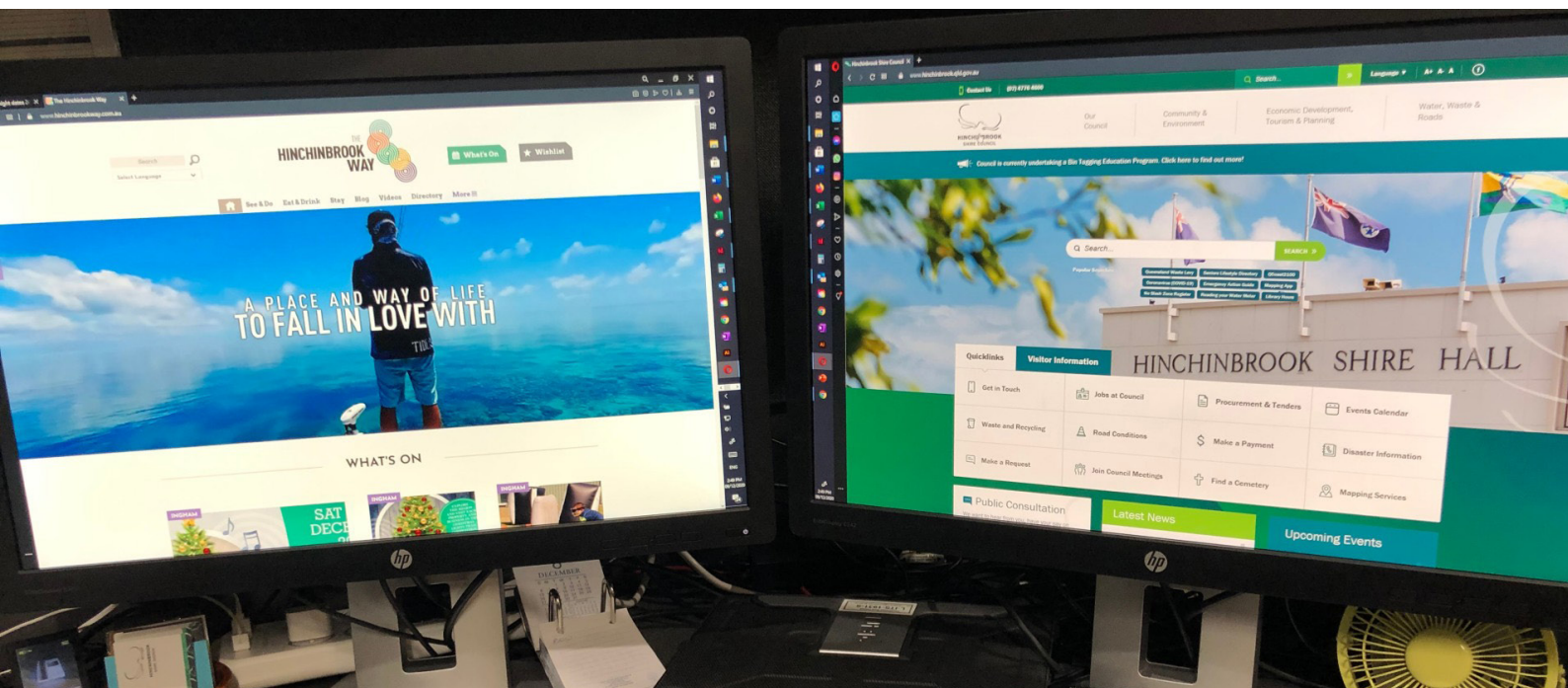
The Councillor website portal is an Intranet that is specifically created for Councillors to securely access Local Government reference material and confidential reports.

Annual Staff Satisfaction Survey

Council will undertake an Annual Staff Satisfaction Survey and communicate action plans arising from the results.

Skytrust

Skytrust is a dedicated cloud based Safety Management System allowing for short message service (sms) and email advice to employees and contractors. Skytrust is used to deliver, retain and communicate all necessary information and documentation to staff.



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

SOCIAL MEDIA

Hinchinbrook Shire Council Facebook Page

Council's corporate Facebook page communicates a range of Council's core business messages, events and information to the community.

To improve timely and accurate communication to the public, champions from all areas within Council are being trained and encouraged to post specialist content.

Hinchinbrook Disaster Information Facebook Page

The Hinchinbrook Disaster Information Facebook Page is used by Council to communicate important information to residents and members of the community before, during and after a disaster or emergency situation.

Throughout the year this page shares important information about disaster and emergency situations, key tips on how to be prepared, local resources such as Local Area Warden Information, and links to the Hinchinbrook Shire Council Disaster Dashboard and website.

Hinchinbrook Way Facebook Page and Instagram

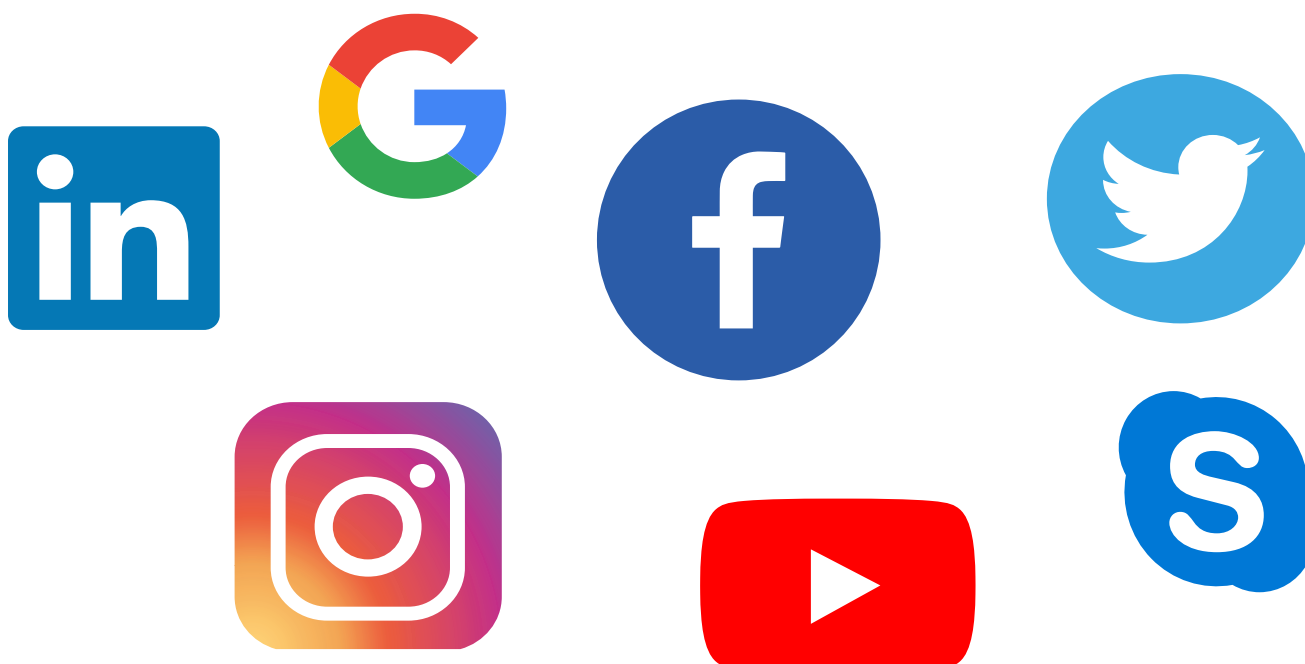
The Hinchinbrook Way Facebook and Instagram pages are tourism focused pages that share content marketing the district.

LinkedIn

Council has an organisational LinkedIn profile. Council's LinkedIn profile is an important tool in managing Council's brand profile amongst peer audiences and is used as a professional network to reach market and recruit professionals for specialist positions as they become available.

Social Media Applications

Other social media applications will continue to be monitored for public popularity and utilised accordingly.



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

OPINION SURVEYS/POLLS/FACE TO FACE

Surveys

The frequency of public consultation activity within Council is increasing with a number of public surveys having taken place in the last 12 months.

Surveys are conducted both online and via hard copy forms, which are available online on Council's website and corporate Facebook page, and at Council locations such as the main office Lannercost Street and Hinchinbrook Shire Library.

Council will undertake an Annual Community Satisfaction Survey and communicate action plans arising from the results.

Online surveys are developed through Survey Monkey and are distributed via Council's media channels.

Polls

Facebook online polling is proving to be a popular medium with the public which allows very quick results in gauging reaction to a particular subject.

Face to Face

Continued face to face attendance at public meetings with groups and organisations allows a platform for open discussion on topical issues concerning residents of particular areas within the Shire.



METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

DISASTER EVENTS

Communications during disaster periods are managed and monitored for relevance and are given top priority during any type of disaster event.

Regular, up to date and accurate information is supplied during a disaster via media releases and media alerts, social media and web.

Recovery media utilises the above with the addition of traditional advertising where applicable.

Before

Disaster communications before an event include 'how to be prepared' information for residents, including cleaning up around the home, emergency supply lists and critical contact information.

During

Residents are advised of weather updates, critical safety information and important contacts.

After

Communications after an event include information about cleaning and salvage, public health, community support and Council activities.

Further information can be found in the following documents:

- Hinchinbrook LDMG Communication Sub Plan; and
- Hinchinbrook LDMG Community Information and Warning Sub Plan.

Electronic Communication Noticeboards

The Electronic Communication Noticeboards (ECN) are utilised in the communication of critical disaster or emergency information during a disaster or emergency situation.

EVALUATION

REVIEW AND MONITORING

This Strategy will be reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the principles and objectives of Hinchinbrook Shire Council and deliver on the communication needs of our community.

The Strategy will also be monitored in line with the satisfaction surveys and specific market research may also be undertaken as part of developing various elements of the action and development plans.





HINCHINBROOK
SHIRE COUNCIL