Integrated Communications Strategy

Introduction

This strategy aims to provide a framework for improvements to internal and external communications for Leichhardt Municipal Council.

Leichhardt Council needs to raise its image to the community and other key stakeholders. Many achievements are made across the organisation, but these need to be communicated more efficiently.

Media protocol is well respected within the organisation. There are quite strong relationships established with local and metropolitan journalists, which continue to improve.

The corporate image and branding is widely divergent, with many Divisions coordinating their own publication. With no official style guide or corporate branding in current use there is very little control as to the branding of Council as an organisational whole.

Leichhardt Council web site is outdated, with little capacity for emerging technologies such as Blogs, twitter feeds, RSS feeds or other social media.

Council must embrace emerging technologies as valuable communications tools, with the percentage of our population accessing this technologies increasing steadily.

To resolve these issues, target markets have been identified, and goals and objectives are outlined focusing on both internal and external communication and processes.

A range of internal procedures and strategies are suggested to improve communications across the organisation and externally.

An action plan lists specific actions to be undertaken and evaluation measures are identified to monitor the communications activities/outcomes.

Resources are outlined and the budget highlights issues/needs for a coordinated approach to communications.

The Integrated Communications Strategy sits alongside and is complementary to Council's Community Engagement Framework

http://www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/DownloadDocument.ashx?DocumentID=8565

and expands on the Framework methods of engaging and communicating with the community

Local Government Industry Characteristics

The following characteristics make local government 'council' organisations different from other industries:

- Councils provide many intangible services.

- Councils are not profit-oriented / public sector organisations

- The nature of competition is different

- Councils provide services to stakeholders in the municipal area (geographic boundaries)

- Payment for council services is compulsory (ie, through rates).

The organisation structure of a council is:

Community > Councillors > General Manager > Directors > Management > Staff.

Councils have elected representatives who make decisions about strategies, development and community issues.

Local Government has the challenge of raising its image in the community and changing negative perceptions about Council and service delivery.

Councils are complex organisations. They provide a range of services in the one organisation, from Child Care to Economic Development, Events to Roads and Footpath Maintenance and there are a range of diverse customer groups/communities with diverse issues.

There is a great need for effective 2-way community consultation or, more accurately, interaction.

Issues currently relevant to Leichhardt Council and within the Leichhardt Council's scope of influence, are diverse and include (but are not limited to):

- constitutional recognition

- waste and recycling;

- population density in metropolitan Sydney;

- planning system reform;

- harbour foreshore development

- heritage protection;

- sustainability;

- environmental protection and control;

- public transport; and

- raising the image of Local Government.

Business Definition and Scope

Leichhardt Municipal Council was incorporated as a local government area in 1871. There have been a number of boundary realignments, the most recent of which was in 2003.

The Local Government Area now includes the suburbs of Annandale, Balmain, Birchgrove, Leichhardt, Lilyfield, Rozelle and a section of Camperdown.

Neighbouring Councils include the City of Sydney, Ashfield, Marrickville and Canada Bay.

The municipality of Leichhardt has an estimated resident population of 56,303 within an area of 1,003 hectares. There are 77 parks, gardens or reserves covering 84 hectares providing both active and passive recreation.

The municipality also has a 17km frontage to Sydney harbour and Parramatta River.

The population has a strong history of social community values, with influences from the original inhabitants of the area, the Gadigal and Wangal people, its history as a working harbour and a series of waves of immigration from varying ethnic groups.
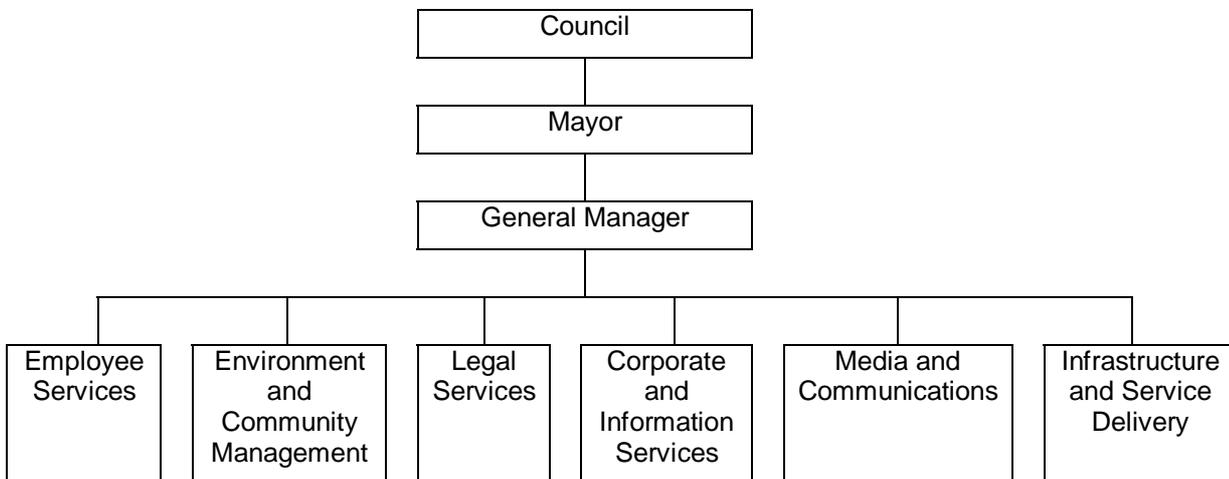
Internal Environment

Internally, Leichhardt Council has many employees and managers who are long term employees of the organisation. The culture and identity of the organisation provides a valuable accumulation of organisational knowledge.

Offices of the Leichhardt Council are located in a number of buildings located in the Civic Centre on Marion Street, the Depot on Catherine Street, and various work sites across the Municipality.

Adequate resources are essential to the successful implementation of the Integrated Communications Strategy and to leading communications improvements across the organisation.

This Strategy utilises the services of two new positions – a Communications Officer and a Web Coordinator. .

The Organisation structure

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │   Council    │
                    └──────┬───────┘
                    ┌──────┴───────┐
                    │    Mayor     │
                    └──────┬───────┘
                    ┌──────┴───────┐
                    │General Manager│
                    └──────┬───────┘
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Employee Services	Environment and Community Management	Legal Services	Corporate and Information Services	Media and Communications	Infrastructure and Service Delivery

Vision

Community and Council will work together to promote and develop Leichhardt as a sustainable and liveable community

Our Values

Our Local Community – making it the place where we want to live, work, play and visit.

Provides a picture of what we want for the community to guide our thinking, and strengthens the way Council focuses its work on service to the community.

Democratic Responsible Government – open, participative and proactive Council leading the community.

Defines how councillors and staff work with the community – the roles, practices and processes that improve Council's open, participatory and transparent governance to form the foundations for democratic responsible government.

Sustainability – shared passion and commitment to consistently do all the things required to enhance and preserve the social, environmental and economic factors that are important to the lives of future generations and life on our planet.

Develops the commitment, systems and practices for Leichhardt to be a role model in social, environmental and economic sustainability.
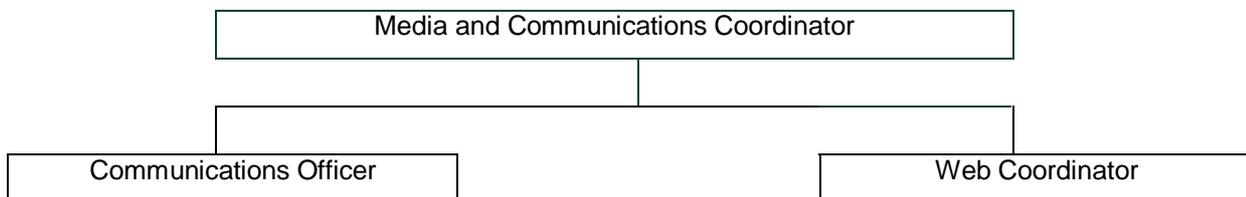
Previous Research

- Community Perception Survey
- Conducted by Piazza Research on behalf of Leichhardt Council

The Communications Unit

The Communications Unit coordinates the organisation's communications and public relations activities.

Structure

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          Media and Communications Coordinator
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            ┌──────────────┴──────────────┐
     Communications Officer          Web Coordinator
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Staff roles

Media and Communications Coordinator

- Coordinate integrated communication strategy development and implementation with media unit.
- Leads media unit strategies and actions across Council and with key external stakeholders to promote a positive image and perception of Council within the community.
- Day-to-day media liaison, response and advice.
- Daily mayoral public communications, including speeches and columns.
- Coordinates appropriate branding and corporate style with media unit.
- Publications coordination, including Quarterly Newsletters, monthly newsletters and weekly newspaper inserts, weekly electronic newsletter and additional community information as required.
- Strategic advice on media, communications and public relations issues to Mayor, councillors, Senior and general staff.
- Council public interest topics campaign coordination
- Customer perception survey
- Coordinate website management with media unit
- Community engagement advice
- Coordinate social media management with media unit (Facebook/ Twitter)

Communications Officer

- Helping to manage Council's interaction with the media by assisting with appropriate enquiries effectively and efficiently
- Issuing and writing approved press releases
- Monitoring media issues
- Monitoring council media appearances and compiling monthly media report
- Researching media issues
- Assisting to prepare and write speeches as required
- Writing content for media unit regular publications (IWI insert and Resident News)
- Organising/ hosting social outreach opportunities at community and council events
- Social media updates and monitoring (Facebook/ Twitter)
- Photography where required at community and council events

Web Coordinator

- Website content coordination - development and maintenance, sourcing content, editing.
- Project/contractor coordination
- First line technical support and assessment for escalation to specialist contractors.
- Primary liaison point between Council staff and external contractors.
- Monitoring and administration of project budgets.
- Providing advice and guidance to staff on the use of website technologies.
- Preparing staff training sessions in website authoring software.
- Coordinating DNS managements.
- Providing design for publications as required.
- Providing print/design/ branding advice on publications produced out of house.
- Social media updates (Facebook/ Twitter)

Communication Types

Internal communications within the organisation

- Vertical (management/staff)
- Horizontal (across the organisation between departments)
- Informal (social club/grapevine)

External Communications

- Between the organisation and its stakeholders

Communications Functions/Tools

External		Internal	
Medium	**Currency**	**Medium**	**Currency**
Web site	Daily	Intranet	Daily
Media	Daily-Weekly	Staff Newsletter	Proposed
Leichhardt ENews	Weekly		monthly
Residents News	Quarterly	Divisional Meetings	Various
Publications	Various	Twitter/ Facebook	Weekly
On-hold messages	Daily		
Display/s	Various		
Signage	Various		
Banners	Various		
Speech notes	Various		
Consultation	Various		
Events	Various		
Precincts	Monthly		
Design Services Development Services Writing/Editing Services Photo Library / photography Corporate Gifts			

NOTE:

The Integrated Communications Strategy sits alongside and is complementary to Council's Community Engagement Framework

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and expands on the Framework methods of engaging and communicating with the community

Monitoring

The Communications Unit's operations and services are monitored and measured through the following:

- Community Perceptions Survey

Target Markets

External

- Media
- State MPs
- Federal MPs
- Ratepayers
- Community Groups
- Businesses / trader groups

Internal

- Management
- Staff
- Mayor and Councillors

Communication Goals and Objectives

External Communication

1. Build positive image of the Leichhardt Council through the media
2. Develop an Issues Management Strategy and Procedures
3. Review and implement Corporate Branding Strategy
4. Improve quality, consistency and management of publications
5. Develop a suite of visual communications to promote Leichhardt Council services, projects and events
6. Improve the Leichhardt Council's electronic communications
7. Redesign and provide a new Leichhardt Council web site
8. Allocate resources to establishing and maintaining a proactive social media presence.
9. Utilise social media to communicate clearly and consistently to each of our audiences
10. Increase positive perception of Council via social media engagement.
11. Strengthen partnership with the community
12. Establish process for a public outreach program through digital engagement and outreach sessions
13. Ensure that relevant decision making takes account of outcomes acquired from such processes.

Internal Communication

1. Improve the coordination of communication across the organisation.
2. Improve internal communication channels for staff and management.
3. Review communications procedures to assist in the provision of proactive, planned, coordinated communications.
4. Consolidate and build upon the Leichhardt Council's corporate identity
5. Raise awareness of the role of the Communications Unit across the organisation.
6. Improve Communication Skills of Employees
7. Improved teamwork and further breakdown of 'silos'

Communications Action Plan

Abbreviations

MCC: Media and Communications Coordinator
CO: Communications Officer
WC: Web Coordinator
CT: Communications Team

Priority

1: Highest Priority
5: Lowest Priority

External Communication

Key Aim: Raise Leichhardt Council's image and communicate projects, events and activities to stakeholders

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
1. Build positive image of the Leichhardt Council through the media	1.1 Generate media releases from departments and produce 1-2 media releases a week promoting 'good news stories'	1	Weekly-	CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.2 Generate media releases proactively or in response to arising Council issues.	1	Weekly	MCC / CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.3 Review Media List for distribution of weekly media releases targeted to appropriate journalists/media channels (electronic media, newspapers, magazines, radio stations).	1	Six monthly – Jun 2012	MCC / CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.4 Coordinate media briefings with Mayor and appropriate policy staff.	1	Weekly	MCC / CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.5 Consult regularly with journalists and editors to establish and maintain relationships with local publications The Inner West Courier, the Inner West Independent, Ciao, and where required with major metropolitan and Local Government publications such as The Age, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Daily Telegraph, Local Government News, Local Government Focus.	2	Weekly/ monthly depending on publication	MCC / CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.6 Establish contacts with specialist magazines to promote relevant projects	3	Jun 12	MCC / CO	$0	Ongoing
	1.7 Conduct monthly media analysis (record number of	2	May 12	CO	$0	Ongoing

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
	media releases/enquiries/strike rate – who publishes media releases/what goes where).					
	1.8 Develop media strategies for major projects.	1	July 12	MCC		Ongoing
2. Review and implement Corporate Branding Strategy	1.9 Review Corporate Branding Strategy – commence with Councillor consultation	1	Oct 12	MCC / CO/ WC		
	1.10 Create a publications briefing document for use by external contractors.	2	Oct 12	WC		
	1.11 Create a list of preferred suppliers for external design and production work (High quality standards/environmentally friendly/competitively priced).	3	Oct 12	WC	TBA	
3. Improve quality, consistency and management of publications	1.12 Conduct a publications audit and prepare a publication register.	3	Sept 12	WC		
	1.13 Develop a Publication Procedure and Publication Checklist to improve timely planning and appropriate format choice and specifications for publications.	3	Dec 12	WC		
	1.14 Develop a suite of publications in line with Leichhardt Council's corporate image.	4	Jan 13	MCC / WC	TBA	
	1.15 Coordinate production of major publications on time and on budget.	1	Weekly/ monthly	MCC / WC		Ongoing
	Residents Newsletter					
	Review readership and content	4	July 13	MCC/CO		
	Inner West Independent Insert					
	Review readership and content .	4	July 13	MCC / CO		
4. Develop a suite of visual communications to promote Leichhardt Council services, projects and events	Centralise photos in G Drive so all in the organisation can store and access pictures in one system and communicate this to staff	1	June 12	MCC / WC		Complete d, ongoing

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
5. Improve Leichhardt Council's electronic communications	Review all of the Leichhardt Council's electronic communications, including: • Leichhardt Council website • E Newsletters • Current Social Media sites	1	May 12	MCC / WC		Complete
	Development of additional technologies / communications opportunities such as: Twitter Facebook	2	April 12	MCC / WC	TBA	Complete
	Development of additional technologies / communications opportunities such as: Blogs Wikis RSS Feeds Viral marketing e-zines SMS	5	2013	MCC / WC	TBA	
	Develop a Council social networking policy and protocol	1	May 12	MCC/ WC		
6. Redesign and provide a new Leichhardt Council web site	6.1 Conduct a review of the current Leichhardt Council Web Site.	1	Apr/May 12	MCC / WC		Complete
	6.2 Develop guidelines to manage the existing and future Council websites i.e. LPAC, Library and DCP consultation to ensure consistency in look and messaging.	2	June 12	MCC/WC		
	6.3 Develop a web strategy, policy and procedures addressing the development and maintenance of all site links and functions.	2	Oct 12	MCC / WC		
	6.4 Establish web committee and commence content work.	2	May 12	WC		Complete
	6.5 Carry out navigational hierarchy research.	2	May 12	WC		
	6.6. Engage content management providers and designers	2	May 12	MCC / WC		
	6.7 Redesign Leichhardt Council web site, providing a new look and feel for the site using the Leichhardt Council's strong corporate identity.	2	Sept 12	MCC / WC	$7,000 TBC	

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
	6.8 Detailed content review.					
	6.9 Website build (Phase 1) General	3	Oct 12	WC	$40,000 TBC	
	Website build - News feed function	3	Oct 12	WC	$5000	
	Web site build – Calendar templates	3	Oct 12	WC	$5000	
	Website build – Image galleries	3	Oct 12	WC	$5000	
	Website build - Interactive form provision	3	Oct 12	WC	$2000	
	Website build – survey function	3	Oct 12	WC	$2000	
	Website build – portable rendering	3	Dec 12	WC	$20,000	
	6.10 Migrate the site to a new hosting provider (if required) Including LPAC	3	Aug / Sep 12	WC		
	6.11 Create guidelines and clarify responsibilities for updating website.	4	Sept 12	MCC / WC		
	6.12 Implement a training program for web content managers.	4	Oct 12	MCC / WC		
	6.13 Instigate a regular update appointment with key web content managers to identify and carry out improvements on their areas of the site.	2	Nov 12	MCC / CO/ WC		
7. Establish and maintain a proactive social media presence.	7.1. Scope options	3	May 12	MCC & WC		Complete
	7.2. Report to Council	3	May 12	MCC & WC		
	7.3. Initiate social media presence with Facebook and Twitter page	3	Apr 12	WC		Complete
	7.4. Develop strategies to increase newsletter subscriptions to promote social media sites incorporating LPAC free giveaways as promotional material.	3	June 12	MCC & WC		
8. Utilise social media to communicate clearly and consistently to each of our audiences	8.1. Promote Social media through existing communications channels and via cross promotion	3	Jun 12 and onwards	MCC & WC		
	8.2. Incorporate a Social Media component into Communications Plan procedure.	2	June 12	MCC & WC		

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
9.	9.1. Develop guidelines for consistent social media outlets already existing within Council. i.e. Twitter accounts for Road safety, Sustainability.	2	June 12	MCC & WC		
	9.2. Develop guidelines for the creation of new social media sites such as blogs to ensure consistency of messaging.	2	June 12	MCC & WC		
10. Increase positive perception of Council	10.1. Allocate and train staff responsible for maintaining and responding to various social media channels.	3/4	Jan 13	MCC & WC		
	10.2. Incorporate social media responsibility into job descriptions	4	Jan 13	MCC/HR/ WC		
	10.3. Communicate a range of information in a timely manner	3	Ongoing	WC & MCC & CO		
	10.4. Ensure timely response to enquiries posed via social media	4	Ongoing	WC & MCC & CO		
11. Strengthen partnership with the community	11.1. Engage social media avenues to encourage two way dialogue with the community.	4	July 12	WC & MCC & CO		
12. Establish an appropriate format for a public outreach program	Conduct investigations into various presentation options and budgetary requirements	1	Dec 11	MCC & CO		Ongoing
	Present options to Ordinary meeting of Council with budgetary implications for 2012/13 financial year	1	June 12	MCC	$5,500	
13. Establish standard process for a public outreach program	Formulate program for standard Outreach sessions and identify opportunities including Council and community events	2	July 12	MCC & CO		
	Create protocol for identifying objectives of community outreach session and information / staff to be made available to reach those objectives	2	July 12	MCC & CO		
14. Ensure processes are followed by Council staff and where relevant external consultants employed by Council.	Create booking protocol for staff to use when requiring outreach material for events or consultation sessions	3	July 12	CO		
	Create checklist for staff when operating public outreach session	3	July 12	CO		
	Create reporting protocol for staff conducting public outreach sessions	3	July 12	CO		

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Responsibility	Budget	Status
15. Ensure that relevant decision making takes account of outcomes acquired from such processes.	Incorporate Public Outreach strategy into community engagement strategy and associated reporting structure	4	July 12	MCC		
16. Build positive image of Leichhardt Council through outreach program with mobile stall.	Purchase display infrastructure for simple mobile stall (primarily brochure holders)	2	July 12	CO		
	Begin bi-monthly outreach sessions at locations (to be agreed upon) around LGA	4	Aug/ Sept 12	CO		
17. Ensure where appropriate that the community is kept informed of decisions emanating from the Public Outreach program.	Monitor Council decisions for appropriate communications opportunities	4	July 12 onwards	MCC & CO		
18. Investigate further options for implementing strategy	Conduct further investigations into alternate presentation options and budgetary requirements –	5	Nov 12	MCC & CO		
	Present options to Ordinary meeting of Council with full budgetary implications	5	Dec 12	MCC		

Internal Communication

Key aim: Lead communications improvements across the organisation.

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Respon-sibility	Budget	Status
1 Improve the coordination of communication across the organisation.	Maintain agenda item during team meetings of each strategy area in which Communications will be discussed, including highlighting current projects and activities.	1	June 12	MCC / CO		Ongoing
2 Improve internal communication channels for staff and	2.1 Review options for an employee newsletter, to communicate staff news and achievements, and encourage contributions from people across the	5	Feb 13	MCC & CO		

Target	Means	Priority	Timeline	Respon-sibility	Budget	Status
management.	organisation.					
	2.2 Design and introduce a weekly staff news e-Bulletin via the Intranet, which links to media releases for the week, key consultations, advertisements and other timely/relevant employee news. Send staff.	1	Dec 11	MCC / CO		Complete
3 Review communications procedures to assist in the provision of proactive, planned, coordinated communications.	3.1 Develop Communications Plan procedure.	1	Jul 11	MCC		Complete
	3.2 Develop Speech procedures/protocols.	1	Aug 11	MCC		Complete
	3.3 Review Media Policy and enhance media procedures.	1	Nov 11	MCC		Complete
	3.4 Develop a comprehensive Procedures Manual including all of The Leichhardt Council's communications *(and events)* procedures/policies.	5	Feb 13	MCC		
4 Consolidate and build upon the Leichhardt Council's corporate identity	4.1 Review and update the Leichhardt Council corporate image, including logo and template usage for print and electronic publications.	5	Feb 13	MCC & CO & WC		
	4.2 Review and update the Leichhardt Council style guide.	5	Feb 13	MCC & WC		
	4.3 Produce summary document for most frequently used and misused style issues and online guide.	5	Feb 13	CO & WC		
	4.4 Educate staff across the organisation on the corporate style and the importance of branding.	5	Feb 13	MCC & WC		
5 Improve Communication Skills of Employees	5.1 Develop a Staff Training Program for communications skills including: • web site content management, writing and editing; • professional writing; and • issues management.	5	Feb 13	MCC & WC		

Budget and Resources

Resources

Communications Unit Staff

Consultants/Service Providers (media/web/publications)

Budget

Media	
Media monitoring:	
Publications	
Residents News	
Inner West Courier	
Inner West Independent	
Village Voice	
Ciao Other **Web** Maintenance Helpdesk support Hosting Domain	

Measures and Evaluation

Internal Communications Survey (all staff, managers, member councils)

Monthly Report

Media Analysis

Target Reporting

Achievement of Actions on deadline according to Implementation Plan.