Community Engagement Toolkit

Urban Development Institute of Australia
QUEENSLAND

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SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our deep thanks to our member Mosaic Property Group for their support in this research endeavour. They volunteered a development project and its associated designs and imagery for use within our focus groups and this guide. The collaboration of the industry is of the utmost importance in our journey to creating a better way for the entire industry to engage with their neighbours positively about development in their community.

INTRODUCTION

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) Queensland has explored issues relevant to the industry through its Research Foundation since 2014.

Our qualitative research program is guided by the Industry Leaders Research Group (ILRG) and thanks to their support we have innovated the community engagement process. We now have a strong understanding of how to effectively engage with locals on development in their neighbourhoods.

To help members consult locals impacted by their developments more effectively we released a community engagement guide, ***Being a good neighbour***, in 2018. The purpose of the guide was to share the insights from our research and give members solutions they could put into action.

One of the key issues identified by the research was that the community does not trust the current process or its stakeholders. They perceive it to be a "box ticking" exercise developers are forced to do. We also found that consultation is biased towards negative feedback because the process does not invite easy participation. The research also revealed that most people believe that consultation equates to objection and did not realise they could support a project through this process.

In the ***Being a good neighbour*** guide we provided an overview of strategies that help overcome the issues we identified. This was an important first step in innovating the process, but after releasing the guide we found there was a strong appetite for more detail. This toolkit builds on the guide and aims to further equip members with tried-and-tested tools they can use to engage more effectively. We strongly encourage all members to use this toolkit in conjunction with the ***Being a good neighbour*** guide.

We are pleased to provide members with more detail about the structure, order, and content that should form part of any community engagement kit. The tools have been rigorously tested in focus groups and by developers on real projects. The feedback from developers has been overwhelmingly positive. This approach successfully invites the community on the development journey and removes the angst from the process.

We cannot stress enough the importance of using the tools as directed and in the order outlined. The structure and order is important to engage successfully as they are part of a journey with a clear beginning, middle, and end. People have learned through stories for thousands of years. Narratives assist people to understand and connect with the world around them, stimulating their brain and processing new news more effectively.

The toolkit is divided into three stages: Introduce, Inform, and Invite. Corresponding templates or examples are provided for the reference and use of members. We hope they assist you to engage effectively with your neighbours.

The Institute is committed to innovating the community engagement process because it will pave the way for the creation of better communities for all Queenslanders to enjoy.

Kirsty Chessher-Brown
Chief Executive Officer
UDIA Queensland

"The **Institute's research has been a really valuable tool** to assist us in our own commitment to genuine customer and community engagement and importantly, **the findings have been practically applicable to our day-to-day business.**

In particular, the most recent research on Community Engagement has provided invaluable insight into aspects of the process that we have utilised to enhance the genuine discussions we have with members of the community in the areas we select to develop within. Our commitment to implementing the research findings, along with our own insights, contributed to us being named as a finalist in the Institute's Community Engagement Award for Excellence in 2018.

Beyond the tangible, our participation in the group has valuably expanded our industry and government network and the sense of community within the property sector, and for that we are really grateful."

mosaic
PROPERTY GROUP

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

To fully understand why you need to engage with locals effectively it is important to first read our *Being a good neighbour* guide.

The guide provides an overview of the important research insights we gained from conducting a deep dive into the community consultation process. It also provides critical context for development industry professionals planning community engagement. Members can obtain a copy of the ***Being a good neighbour*** guide by emailing membership@udiaqld.com.au.

In addition to the below rules, be sure to tailor the scale of your engagement process for each project based on its size, impact, and location. It is also important to remember that proactive engagement with the community is not a substitute for complying with statutory obligations.

SOME OF THE RULES CRITICAL TO EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT INCLUDE:

Engage early and often.

Offer two project contacts (one of each gender) for the life of the project.

Ensure they have an excellent understanding of the project as well as the development process and are staff, not external consultants.

Use images to communicate.

Less is more and ensure they reflect what will be delivered.

Genuinely value people and their input, lip service won't pass muster.

Segment your stakeholders.

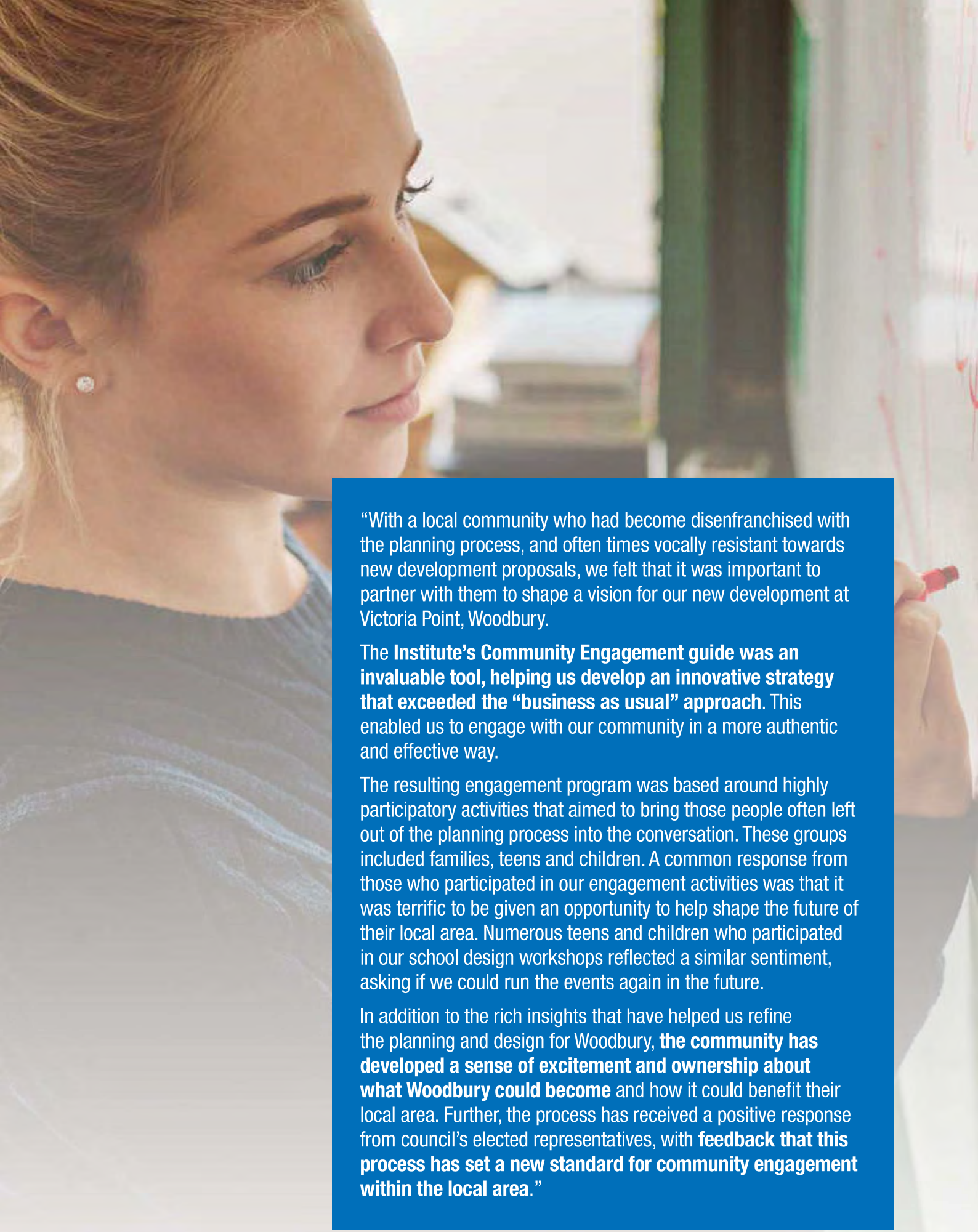
Adjacent neighbours are going to want more frequent updates than people living further from the site.

Ensure the render(s) matches the reality.

WHY ENGAGE EARLY?

The following quotes are from residents that participated in the focus groups and are representative of the sentiments this approach to community engagement evoked.

Being proactive is perceived positively.	*"I really like it because people have been not only consulted to begin with, but the developers have gone to them, rather than you being the one that's got to do all the research and all the work. And because the developer has been more upfront, people feel as though they're listened to, or that they're important."*
It delivers transparency.	*"To me, it's quite transparent about what's going on. I think the way the system is at the moment doesn't look very transparent. I honestly believe that's why people are skeptical. People go, 'What are you doing? What are you trying to pull over us?' Whereas this process looks much more transparent. It's much better."*
It removes the element of surprise.	*"But if you knew what was coming, how it's going to look, and the fact that the population's growing and there's all these people coming, well, you would feel better about it being there."*
It demystifies the process and builds trust.	*"I would say that this alternative process will probably keep the community as a whole more calm about what's going on in their neighbourhood. This kind of information makes the local community feel like they're involved in the process, and they're more involved in knowing what's going on."*
It demonstrates leadership.	*"It's a whole different approach to leadership, isn't it? It just puts us at ease."*
It shows that the industry values the community.	*"What I really like about it is that they've actually considered me as a human being and as a person in this neighbourhood because, now, you've made me a valued member of my community. And we're going to be neighbours."*
It provides an opportunity to educate the community on the planning process and set the context for development.	*"I think education is really important as well. I mean, even the process as it currently stands now is not ideal, and there's a lot of aspects of [it] that I wasn't aware of before [now]."*



"With a local community who had become disenfranchised with the planning process, and often times vocally resistant towards new development proposals, we felt that it was important to partner with them to shape a vision for our new development at Victoria Point, Woodbury.

The **Institute's Community Engagement guide was an invaluable tool, helping us develop an innovative strategy that exceeded the "business as usual" approach**. This enabled us to engage with our community in a more authentic and effective way.

The resulting engagement program was based around highly participatory activities that aimed to bring those people often left out of the planning process into the conversation. These groups included families, teens and children. A common response from those who participated in our engagement activities was that it was terrific to be given an opportunity to help shape the future of their local area. Numerous teens and children who participated in our school design workshops reflected a similar sentiment, asking if we could run the events again in the future.

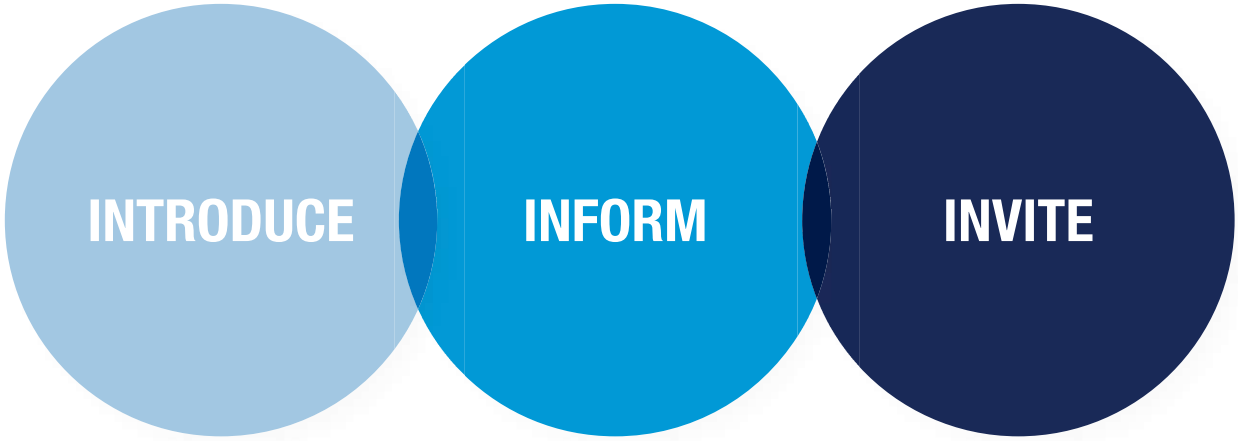
In addition to the rich insights that have helped us refine the planning and design for Woodbury, **the community has developed a sense of excitement and ownership about what Woodbury could become** and how it could benefit their local area. Further, the process has received a positive response from council's elected representatives, with **feedback that this process has set a new standard for community engagement within the local area**."

FITENI HOMES

THE STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT

THE STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT

The toolkit is divided into three stages as follows. Your engagement must follow this order to be effective. Similar to telling a story, if it is presented out of order it will not be effective.



INTRODUCE

This first stage sets the scene by introducing the context for the discussion.

It is critical to create context before moving into specifics. Just like the beginning of a narrative, you need to provide detail about the bigger picture. This stage is critical to bring people into the process.

INFORM

Provide the community with information that is new to them, which creates an opportunity for them to understand the process and terminology.

It also allows the conversation to shift to how individuals benefit from population growth.

INVITE

After introducing broader context regarding development, and informing them about the process, it is time to invite them to engage.

This stage involves showing them a sketch of the project and starting to communicate with them on a regular basis about the development as it progresses.

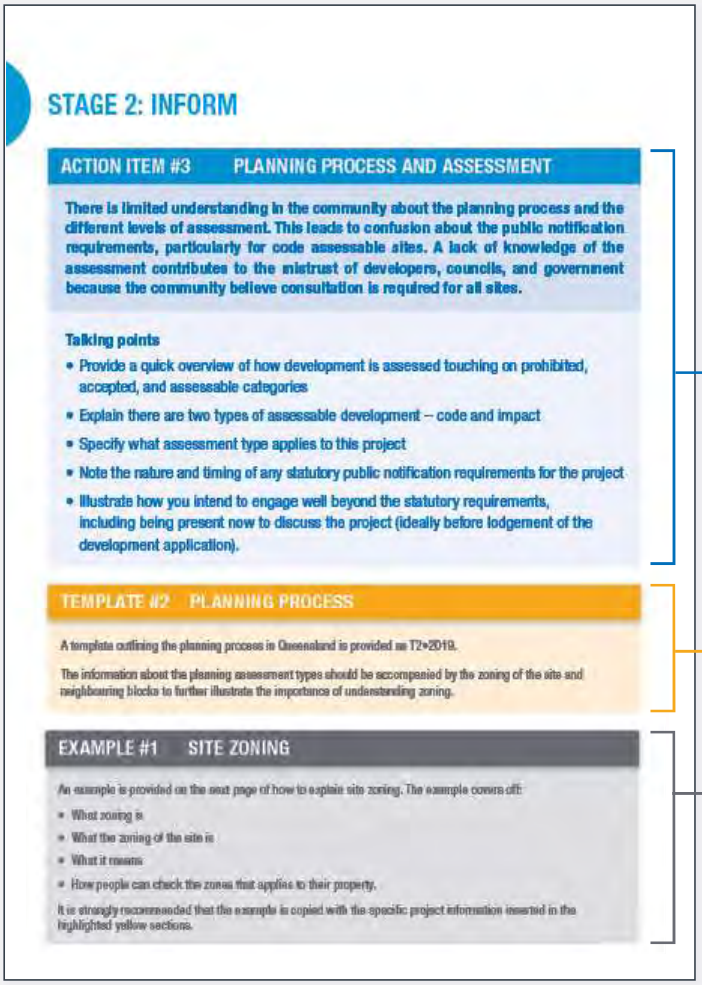
HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

The structure and order of the action items must be followed to engage successfully as they are part of a journey with a clear beginning, middle, and end. If the items are not presented in the order below, their effectiveness may be diluted.

	ACTION ITEMS BY STAGE		TEMPLATES AND EXAMPLES BY STAGE
INTRODUCE	ACTION ITEM #1	Population growth	Template #1 and #2
INFORM	ACTION ITEM #2	Zoning	Example #1
	ACTION ITEM #3	Planning process and assessment	Template #3
	ACTION ITEM #4	Infrastructure Charges	Example #2
	ACTION ITEM #5	Current community consultation process	Template #4 and #5
INVITE	ACTION ITEM #6	Initial project visual	Example #3
	ACTION ITEM #7	Site signage	Example #4
	ACTION ITEM #8	Update the project visual(s) with colour	Example #5
	ACTION ITEM #9	Community newsletter	Example #6
	ACTION ITEM #10	Initial project timeline	Example #7
	ACTION ITEM #11	Communicate the benefits of the project	Example #8
	ACTION ITEM #12	Development Application (DA) lodgement notification	Examples #9 and #10
	ACTION ITEM #13	Frequently Asked Questions	Example #11
	ACTION ITEM #14	Update after any Requests for Information (if applicable)	Example #12
	ACTION ITEM #15	Enhance public notification billboard	Example #13

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

Each stage includes action items that are accompanied by templates or examples. A breakdown is provided below explaining how the toolkit is intended to be used.



STAGE 2: INFORM

ACTION ITEM #3 PLANNING PROCESS AND ASSESSMENT

There is limited understanding in the community about the planning process and the different levels of assessment. This leads to confusion about the public notification requirements, particularly for code assessable sites. A lack of knowledge of the assessment contributes to the mistrust of developers, councils, and government because the community believe consultation is required for all sites.

Talking points

- Provide a quick overview of how development is assessed touching on prohibited, accepted, and assessable categories
- Explain there are two types of assessable development – code and impact
- Specify what assessment type applies to this project
- Note the nature and timing of any statutory public notification requirements for the project
- Illustrate how you intend to engage well beyond the statutory requirements, including being present now to discuss the project (ideally before lodgement of the development application).

TEMPLATE #2 PLANNING PROCESS

A template outlining the planning process in Queensland is provided as T2•2019.

The information about the planning assessment types should be accompanied by the zoning of the site and neighbouring blocks to further illustrate the importance of understanding zoning.

EXAMPLE #1 SITE ZONING

An example is provided on the next page of how to explain site zoning. The example covers off:

- What zoning is
- What the zoning of the site is
- What it means
- How people can check the zones that applies to their property.

It is strongly recommended that the example is copied with the specific project information inserted in the highlighted yellow sections.

ACTION ITEMS

Each stage of the guide has specific action items that must be completed in the order provided. Every action item is numbered and given a relevant name.

Under each action item heading is a description of the engagement activity that needs to be undertaken. Talking points or conversation tips are also provided for some action items as a guide for what to specifically discuss at this step.

TEMPLATES

Every action item is accompanied by either a template or an example.

The purpose of the templates is to provide members with tools they can use immediately to engage. Members can print or photocopy the templates for their use. For this reason page numbers have not been printed onto templates, however they are coded and these codes are noted in the relevant action item.

EXAMPLES

Examples are provided for action items where members are required to develop their own material specific to the project. The example should be copied closely. Content you need to replace with project specific information is highlighted in yellow.

WHEN TO USE THE TOOLKIT

The below timeline indicates how the three stages fit into the current consultation process mandated for impact assessable development in Queensland.