



Operational Community Communication Strategy

Richard Gill School

Client: Stanton Dahl Architects

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1 Introduction

Elton Consulting has been engaged by Stanton Dahl Architects on behalf of the Richard Gill Music Academy Ltd to prepare an Operational Community Communication Strategy for the Richard Gill School (RGS). The strategy has been prepared to satisfy condition E3 of the State Significant Development conditions for the project (SSD 10380) and outlines the communication procedures and mechanisms to support operations at the RGS and manage relations with site neighbours.

For the purposes of this strategy, 'the community' means adjoining affected landowners and businesses, and others directly impacted by the school's operations. This strategy does not cover operational communications aimed at students, parents or guardians.

1.1 About the Richard Gill School

The Richard Gill School is a comprehensive, secular, independent primary school with a musical focus, tailored around the educational philosophy of Richard Gill AO. With music and physical education as cornerstones of the curriculum, the school will provide a first of its kind opportunity for regional students to engage in a unique education where creativity plays a central role in all key learning areas, including English and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) with a specialised teacher.

The School is located at 157 Maitland Street, Muswellbrook and is opening in January 2021. The RGS will initially deliver a unique learning experience for children from Kindergarten through to Year 2, with plans to incorporate up to Year 6 in the future.

1.2 State Significant Development Conditions

This Community Communication Strategy has been prepared to address condition E3 of SSD 10380, which requires the following:

E3. Prior to the commencement of operation, an Operational Community Communication Strategy must be submitted to the Planning Secretary. The Community Communication Strategy must provide mechanisms to facilitate communication between the Applicant, the relevant Council and the community (including adjoining affected landowners and businesses, and others directly impacted by the development), during the operation of the development. The Operational Community Communication Strategy must:

- a. set out procedures and mechanisms for ongoing engagement with the community;*
- b. set out procedures and mechanisms:*
 - i. through which the community can discuss or provide feedback to the Applicant, including the details of the relevant contacts;*
 - ii. through which the Applicant will respond to enquiries or feedback from the community;*
 - iii. to resolve any issues and mediate any disputes that may arise in relation to operation of the development, including disputes regarding rectification or compensation.*
- c. identify how complaints will be considered, managed and escalated; and*
- d. include any specific requirements around traffic, noise and amenity.*

2 Being a considerate neighbour

2.1 Community communication approach and objectives

The RGS will be guided by an approach to community communication which is centred on being a considerate neighbour. The community will be treated with respect and thoughtfulness at all times.

Community communication will be undertaken in accordance with the following objectives:

- » Build the RGS' profile as a considerate neighbour and maintain positive relations with the community
- » Provide tailored and timely communications to the community regarding operational matters, particularly for any extraordinary activities which may be of impact
- » Ensure clear and consistent messaging to the community
- » Manage any operational issues, questions or concerns from the community as they arise in a timely fashion
- » Address community concerns in a thorough way
- » Maximise and leverage opportunities for the community to get involved in school life.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

This section provides an outline of the roles and responsibilities required for the successful delivery of this strategy.

Table 1 Roles and responsibilities

Staff member	Role/responsibility
Principal	Responding to general enquiries and resolving complaints; coordinating the School Executive's response to complaints
Administration Support	Maintaining the enquiries and complaints register (i.e. ensuring information is up-to-date, and thorough), and providing weekly updates to the School Executive
Marketing Manager/Principal	Drafting and coordinating content for proactive community communication, such as notifications
All staff	Understanding and applying the protocols and processes outlined in this strategy, as required

2.3 Who is our community?

For the purposes of this strategy, 'the community' means adjoining affected landowners and businesses, and others directly impacted by the school's operations.

Figure 1 shows adjacent landowners, which includes under 50 lots of residential land and one short-term accommodation motel site. Figure 2 shows the broader local community, which includes under 220 lots of mainly residential land and some commercial premises. The distinction between adjacent landowners and the broader local community is relevant to proactive communication activities, where some communications may only need to be targeted at adjacent landowners.

Figure 1: Adjacent landowners



Figure 2: Broader local community



2.4 Communication tools and techniques

This section describes tools and techniques to support ongoing engagement with the community, and channels for feedback and complaints to be lodged.

Website

What / why	<p>The RGS website (www.richardgillschool.nsw.edu.au) provides a comprehensive source of information for all stakeholders. It provides static content about the school, staff and scholarships, as well as information regarding news and events. The website can also be a place for stakeholders to find contact details, links to the schools’ social media accounts and sign up for general email updates.</p> <p>The website has a broad audience and purpose, extending further than this strategy. It is a one-stop-shop for all information, including neighbour updates, and will be updated regularly to ensure the community can feel assured they are always reading the most current information.</p>
Who	All
When	Ongoing

Letterbox and email notifications

What / why	<p>Letterbox and email notifications will be used as the main channel for the RGS to push out messages to the community regarding potential operational impacts. These will be sent at least five working days ahead of the relevant event/activity and clearly detail key information (what, who, when) and where to go for further information.</p>
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	Email notifications will only be sent to those who opt in for the service. The RGS could also consider an SMS notification function via a paid bulk messaging platform.
Who	Adjacent landowners; and broader local community (depending on content / potential impacts)
When	As required, five working days prior to event of potential impact

Site signage

What / why	Site signage will be used to provide specific (and brief – what and when) information to adjacent landowners and other local community members who may be impacted by the school operations as they travel through the area. It is intended that this will complement letterbox and email notifications.
Who	Adjacent landowners
When	As required, five working days prior to event of potential impact

Start of school year reminder (letterbox drop and email)

What / why	<p>Annually, a letterbox and email reminder will be sent to the community to alert them of the return to school date and contact information for enquiries and feedback.</p> <p>Example content for 2021 (different to future reminders, given this is the first one and includes an invitation to the opening celebration):</p> <p>**</p> <p><i>Dear Neighbour,</i></p> <p><i>We are pleased to notify you that school will commence for the year on Monday February 1.</i></p> <p><i>We value your contribution to our community at the Richard Gill School. Please do not hesitate to contact us on (02) 65 431 900 or admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au, if you have any queries or feedback throughout the year.</i></p> <p><i>If you would like to opt in for future neighbour email notifications, please send us an email stating as such.</i></p> <p><i>You're invited: Saturday 20 March, [9am – 1pm]</i></p> <p><i>To celebrate the official opening of Richard Gill School we invite you to a special community event on the school grounds. We will have several complimentary family-friendly attractions to be enjoyed throughout the day. Entrance via [insert street]. Visit the News and Events page at www.richardgillschool.nsw.edu.au for more detail.</i></p> <p><i>Yours sincerely,</i></p> <p><i>Richard Gill School</i></p>
Who	Adjacent neighbours; broader local community
When	Annually; the week before classes commence

Office phone and email

What / why	<p>The office phone and email address are key access points for the community to receive information and provide feedback, and details will be provided in all correspondence to promote contact.</p> <p>A database of any complaints received will be kept to record the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » date and time of initial contact » contact details of community member or, if no such details were provided, a note to that effect » method by which initial contact was made
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » key topics » copy/paste of email content / summary of phone conversation » copy/paste of school response
Who	All
When	Ongoing

Other online channels (Principal’s Blog, general email updates, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram)

What / why	<p>Other online channels, including Principal’s Blog, general email updates (to those who have subscribed via the website), Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, are used as out-reach tools by the RGS. These channels will be used for broader purposes, but, in relation to this strategy, to complement letterbox and email notifications.</p> <p>Social media will not be used for responding to complaints; rather, complainants will be redirected to the school email address for resolution of such matters.</p> <p>It is recommended a separate strategy is developed to guide the school’s use of digital engagement tools.</p>
Who	All
When	Ongoing

3 Managing community enquiries, feedback and complaints

This section describes the channels through which the community can lodge a query, feedback or complaint to the RGS, as well as protocols for responding to such correspondence. Further information is provided for the process to resolve issues and mediate any disputes that may arise in relation to operation of the RGS.

3.1 Channels

All community communication material will promote the following two channels for enquiries, feedback and complaints:

- » Phone: (02) 65 431 900
- » Email: admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au

Any enquiries/feedback/complaints provided via other channels will be redirected to the above channels for response to ensure a streamlined approach.

3.2 Response timeframes

The RGS manages community correspondence in a timely and thorough manner. If correspondence is received from the community, it must be recorded, actively managed, closed out and resolved by the RGS within the timeframes outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Response timeframes

Channel	Acknowledgement times	Response times
Enquiries and general feedback		
Phone call during business hours	At time of call	Interaction to be logged and closed out within seven school days
Phone call after hours	Within two hours of receiving message, upon returning to office	
Email during business hours	At time of email (automatic response)	
Email outside of business hours		
Letter	N/A	Interaction to be logged and closed out within 10 school days following receipt
Complaints		
Phone call during business hours	At time of call	Level one: within five school days (does not apply to letters)
Phone call after hours	Within two hours of receiving message upon returning to office	Level two: within 10 school days
Email during business hours	At time of email (automatic response)	Level three (external): a longer timeframe will be applied and communicated to the complainant
Email outside of business hours		
Letter	N/A	<i>NOTE: refer to Section 3.4 for further detail</i>

3.3 Complaints handling

This strategy classifies a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with an aspect of school operations, which requires resolution or response. Complaints are welcomed as an opportunity to improve and enhance the RGS' position as a considerate neighbour.

Office staff will keep a record of any complaints made to the school (i.e. general enquiries will not be recorded).

Records will include details of the following:

- » date and time of initial contact
- » contact details of community member or, if no such details were provided, a note to that effect
- » method by which initial contact was made
- » key topic/s
- » copy/paste of email content / summary of phone conversation
- » copy/paste of school response.

The following table outlines a three-tiered approach for a rapid and empathic response to complaints. The aim is to resolve the majority of complaints at the first escalation level, but to have systems in place for matters to be escalated where necessary. Complainants will be kept updated throughout the process via the School Executive, as appropriate.

Table 3 Three levels of complaints handling

	Action	Response
Level one (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Email forwarded to the School Executive from Office Staff immediately after receipt » Review and response by the School Executive 	Within five days of receipt of initial correspondence
Level two (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Further assessment and investigation by the School Executive » Include as an item for discussion at weekly meeting to consider the nature of the complaint, the complainant's desired outcome, and the options available for resolution 	Within ten days of receipt of initial correspondence
Level three: sustained complaints and disputes (external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Investigation from external consultants will be undertaken in the following instances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > if an issue cannot be directly addressed by the school itself > sustained complaints from a single property > if the initial response is disputed and relates to requests for rectification or compensation 	To be determined in response to each case

3.3.1 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

Unreasonable complainant conduct (UCC) is any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the school or the complainant him/herself.

UCC can be divided into five categories of conduct:

- » Unreasonable persistence
- » Unreasonable demands
- » Unreasonable lack of cooperation
- » Unreasonable arguments
- » Unreasonable behaviours.

In the case of UCC, the following steps will be undertaken:

1. Details of the alleged Unreasonable Complainant Conduct are documented and provided to the School Executive for review and investigation.
2. A determination will be made regarding how the complainant should be managed, for example whether restriction of access to communications channels should be applied, if contact should be managed through a single channel or if all contact should be ceased. Council will be notified, if applicable (i.e. if it is likely the complainant will turn to Council as a next step). The RGS Principal will write to the complainant informing them of the decision.

3.4 Response templates and examples

Enquiries, feedback and complaints received from the community regarding operations will be varied and specific in nature. To assist with response compilation, this section provides the following content:

- » an automatic response / acknowledgement email to apply to the admin email account
- » a template for approaching written responses
- » three examples responses. using the template as a base.

Automatic response / acknowledgement email

Thank you for your email. We will be in touch with a response as soon as possible. In the meantime, please contact our office on (02) 65 431 900, if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely

Richard Gill School

Template for final response

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for your [insert reference to the topic of the original correspondence].

[insert response to specific enquiry/feedback/complaint].

Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything further on (02) 65 431 900 or admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

[insert name and email signature]

Example responses

Example 1: Students riding bicycles with no helmets

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for alerting us to your sighting of RGS students riding bicycles with no helmets on [insert date].

Safety is of the utmost importance at the Richard Gill School and we appreciate your feedback on the matter. We will include a reminder of the importance of wearing bicycle helmets at our next assembly, as well as in our next newsletter.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything further on (02) 65 431 900 or admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

[insert name and email signature]

Example 2: Non-authorised people on school grounds out-of-hours

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for alerting us to your sighting of non-authorised people on the school grounds at [insert time] on [insert date].

We have notified Muswellbrook Police, and will continue to monitor the situation.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything further on (02) 65 431 900 or admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

[insert name and email signature]

Example 3: Illegal parking during pick-up

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for notifying us of the incident of illegal parking you witnessed during school pick-up on [insert date].

We have notified the Muswellbrook Shire Council Rangers, and will include a note on the matter in our next newsletter. We also encourage you to contact Muswellbrook Shire Council Rangers directly on (02) 65 431 900, if future incidents occur.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything further on (02) 65 431 900 or admin@rgs.nsw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

[insert name and email signature]

elton
consulting
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