

	<h2>Community Engagement Policy</h2>
<b>Version No.</b>	Draft 0.1, 11 April 2019
<b>Endorsement</b>	Executive, 16 May 2019
<b>Authorisation</b>	Council, 24 June 2019
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<b>Responsible officer</b>	Manager Community Planning
<b>Policy owner</b>	Coordinator Community Capacity

**1. Purpose**

To provide direction and principles for Council's whole-of-organisational commitment to high-quality, rigorous, consistent and well evaluated community engagement and community participation processes that contribute to Council decision making.

This document forms part of Melton City Council's Community Engagement Framework, which consists of:

- Community Engagement Policy (this document)
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Community Engagement Toolkit

The aim of the Framework is to increase the ability of employees, Councillors and communities to reach higher levels of productive engagement by:

- Realising Council's commitment to inclusive and respectful engagement and decision-making processes in the organisation and the community;
- Establishing consistent, coordinated and transparent processes for Council's community engagement activity
- Understanding the principles and practices that underpin and support good engagement
- Providing a framework for understanding and planning engagement; and
- Increasing the participation of the community.

**2. Scope**

This policy applies to all facets of Council operations, as well as day-to-day business activities.

Further, it defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Council staff and consultants responsible for engaging with the community on behalf of the City of Melton, and the mechanisms which Council will use to engage the community.

**3. Definitions**

Word/Term	Definition
Collaborate	Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Community	All residents, interest groups, community organisations, business persons and those who have a vested interest in the future direction of the Melton City municipality.
Community Engagement	For the purposes of this document: all primary data collection occurring within, or in relation to, the City of Melton community.
Community Engagement Committee	This committee develops, monitors, reviews and supports Council's Community Engagement Framework internally. The committee is made up of Council officers and is chaired by the CEO.
Consult	Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.
Council	Melton City Council, including the Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive and staff.
Empower	Providing opportunities and resources for communities to contribute to solutions by valuing local talents and skills and acknowledging their capacity to be decision makers in their own lives.
Engagement	The process by which we seek to involve the community in decision making processes.
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation Website – <a href="http://www.iap2.org.au">www.iap2.org.au</a>
Inform	Provide the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.
Involve	Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
Public Participation	Seeking and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected by, or interested in, a decision, including policy, program and service provision.
Stakeholder	Someone who may be affected by or have a specific interest in the decision or issue under consideration.
Submission	A written response to a document made available for feedback during a public exhibition or consultation period.

**4. Policy**

**4.1 Policy Statement**

Council exists to provide essential services to the city and its communities. Delivering appropriate services requires a range of engagement with the community. Engagement is a two-way relationship between Council and community. Council conducts community engagement activities to access the diverse knowledge of our community to better understand their perspectives, needs and aspirations and in order to inform decision

making and achieve better outcomes. This knowledge improves Council's strategic planning, service delivery, and decision making.

#### 4.2 Policy Rationale

The Framework outlines Council's approach to community engagement. It provides structure and guidance for Council's whole-of-organisational commitment to high quality, consistent and well evaluated community engagement processes that contribute to Council decision making, in order to:

- Gain a better understanding of our communities' perspective on emerging and existing issues that affect them currently and in the future;
- Consider the different needs and appropriate forms of engagement for different groups within our community;
- Enhance civic engagement through assisting Council and its officers to understand, and be informed by, the views of City of Melton communities when making decisions on their behalf;
- Improve the policy or plan being developed, making it more relevant and practical to those affected by the decision;
- Increase the level of community ownership and acceptance of decisions affecting the Local Government Area (LGA);
- Build stronger community advocacy or support for a project or community issue;
- Ensure feedback is provided to the community regarding the impacts of their input on Council decision-making.

Community engagement is linked to the goals and objectives of the Council and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21. Council gathers community feedback to help inform decision-making and achieve better outcomes for the community. Community engagement helps bring differing views together to work towards the best decision for the community. Effective community engagement seeks to ensure that the City of Melton community is well-informed about issues, strategies and/or plans that may directly or indirectly affect them. It also ensures that Council meets its legislative requirements regarding community engagement in all areas of its service delivery.

Council may not be in a position to undertake community engagement activities in situations where:

- A decision needs to be made quickly, for example, any issues relating to community safety or health; or
- A legal, commercial or legislative restriction makes consultation impossible.

Through provision of this Community Engagement Policy, Council aims to deliver effective and consistent community engagement that appropriately informs decision making. This policy covers all engagement processes, including those delivered through its Annual Community Engagement Program.

#### 4.3 Policy Principles

Melton City Council's approach to community engagement is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of engagement activities: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower.

The following principles underpin Melton City Council's approach to community engagement:

- Be inclusive, listen and create partnerships: Council will drive a culture where engagement is seen as important, is done well and adds value to the project. Council will provide opportunities for diverse members of the community to participate and will listen to and respect differences of opinion.

- Be purposeful and authentic: Council will seek purposeful engagement and regularly involve the community in ways that are timely, open and easily understood as genuine opportunities for the community to influence a decision.
- Be accountable: Council will inform communities about issues and provide feedback as to how input has been used to inform Council decisions.
- Be innovative and continuously improve: Council is committed to learning from each engagement experience to improve its approach and to seek new ways to engage the community.

#### 4.4 Application of Policy

The process of community engagement strengthens local democracy by providing opportunity for the community to have their voices heard. Community engagement does not necessarily mean achieving consensus, however it does involve seeking broad input from a representative sample to inform the best possible solution for Council and the community.

Council will apply community engagement methodologies appropriate to the circumstances and desired outcomes of any specific engagement, as per the Community Engagement Guidelines. Council will measure the effectiveness of Council's engagement activities and processes and maintain a record of Council's community engagement.

#### 4.5 Policy Commitment

The following initiatives will enable Council to undertake effective community engagement and align with Council's community engagement principles:

Be inclusive, listen and create partnerships:

- Provide Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit
  - The Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit are available in soft and hard copy format for all Council staff, Councillors and consultants to use when planning community engagement projects. The Guidelines and Toolkit provide specific information, advice and tools for different types of engagement with the community.
- Be purposeful and authentic:
  - Build community engagement into our work practices
  - Council will drive community engagement as an integral part of Council's operations.
- Be accountable
  - Internal Community Engagement Committee
  - The Community Engagement Committee, or a subset thereof, will provide internal advice and governance of community engagement projects.
- Be innovative and continuously improve:

#### Training, Resources and Capacity Building

Internal training and information-sharing opportunities are provided for staff and Councillors involved in community engagement. Practical resources are available and will be reviewed, improved and expanded to provide the tools necessary for staff to develop and maintain best practice in community engagement.

### 5. Responsibility /Accountability

5.1	<b>General Manager</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owner of this document</li> </ul>
5.2	<b>Executive and Managers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of implementation and adherence of this policy</li> </ul>
5.3	<b>Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to and implement the policy</li> </ul>
5.4	<b>Consultants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to the policy</li> </ul>
5.5	<b>Community Engagement Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal consultancy and advisory role, including policy review</li> </ul>

**6. References and links to legislation and other documents**

Name	Location
Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)	<a href="http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au">www.legislation.vic.gov.au</a>