



Rural City of
Wangaratta

Major Council Policy Community Impact Statement

Community Engagement Policy

Council provides the following information to the community in respect of the proposed major council policy.

PART A – General

Background

Council is considering developing a revised major council policy, the Community Engagement Policy (the policy), that provides a policy framework to ensure transparency and the principles of good governance and accountability are practised by council staff in relation to community engagement practises. Community engagement helps to achieve better outcomes for both Council and community and should form an integral part of any significant project planning and decision making. However, it can also be used as an opportunity to build relationships and trust, to generate understanding and participation in an issue or cause, to establish common goals and direction, and to formally acknowledge what is possible, and also what is not.

Objectives

The Community Engagement Policy will provide consistency to the way in which we engage with our community, whilst recognising the need to be flexible in our approach. We will focus on ensuring that community engagement becomes usual practice for Council, rather than an exceptional exercise. The policy contains provisions that support achievement of the legislated objectives of Council.

PART B – Overall Impact Assessment

The revised policy will enable Council to continue to give consistency to the way in which we engage with our community, whilst recognising the need to be flexibility in our approach. We will focus on ensuring that community engagement becomes usual practice for Council, rather than an exceptional exercise.

The policy has been adapted from the approach recommended by the new Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) has the aim of ensuring all Victorians can engage with their council on local priorities and the future of their community. The Act does not define any type of community engagement that councils must use; however, it does ensure that at a

minimum, council uses deliberative engagement practices in developing certain documents and processes, including our strategic and financial plans.

The new policy is based on the following commitments:

1. Communication

- We will be transparent and forthcoming with information.
- We will make sense and communicate in a way that is clear and easy to understand.
- We will communicate in a way that suits you – not just us.
- We will be consistent – you will get the same message from us regardless of who tells it.

2. Inclusiveness and involvement

- We will be respectful of everyone – you all have the right to participate in conversations with us.
- We will encourage everyone to tell us their views – even if you don't agree with a decision we have made or a project we are delivering.
- We will give you a reason to involve yourself in our projects, discussions and plans – you will see how working with us can help benefit the way you live and how our community develops.

3. Honesty and respect

- We will tell you the truth even when we know it's not what you want to hear.
- We will be clear about what is possible and what is not – you will know the boundaries of what we do and what we can deliver

4. Accountability

- We will talk to you about the things that matter, decisions that will affect you and changes that may happen.
- We will learn from our mistakes – we will acknowledge and be accountable and seek ways to make sure they don't happen again.
- If you ask us a question, we will answer you – in a way that is clear, honest and thorough. You will walk away understanding what is said.

5. Decision making

- We will put people at the centre of how we make decisions and how we will deliver projects and services.
- We will be thorough and considerate in how we make decisions – we will look at all the information and make sure we understand the options, impacts and potential outcomes.
- We will tell you the reasons we have made the decisions and the information we have based them on – we won't have secrets. We know that we are here to make decisions that affect people's lives and the long term development of our community and we take that responsibility very seriously.

We are an organisation that undertakes regular and diverse engagement processes, and we often have several happening at once. To make sure we don't over consult our community, or miss out on opportunities to join up and simplify processes, there are some commitments we all need to make.

1. All engagement needs to be included into the Community Engagement calendar – which is kept on Sharepoint.
2. All engagement processes need to have a project plan completed – its quick and will help scope and deliver the process. This project plan needs to be sent through to the Community Engagement Working Group which meets fortnightly and helps to coordinate our organisational approach to community engagement.
3. All engagement reports (the consolidated information from large engagement processes) need to be made available for other Council teams. It should be collated and kept centrally in WIM.
4. Council needs to be made aware of what community engagement processes are happening.

Measures of success of the policy

The success of the policy will be best measured by the extent to which it improved transparency of community engagement practises and overall outcomes achieved.

Legislative context

As part of legislative requirements, Council is required to undertaken and implement Community Engagement. The Local Government Act (The Act) mandates the time and situations of when Council is required to invite the community to review documents and input into decision making processes. Whilst the act identifies the minimum requirements for each situation, often Council will expand this and develop engagement processes to reach the best outcomes for each individual situation.

The Act sets out the **requirements for the community engagement policy**, which must:

- be developed in consultation with the municipal community; and
- give effect to the community engagement principles; and
- be capable of being applied to the making of the Council's local laws; and
- be capable of being applied in relation to the Council's budget and policy development; and
- describe the type and form of community engagement proposed, having regard to the significance and complexity of the matter and the level of resourcing required; and
- specify a process for informing the municipal community of the outcome of the community engagement; and
- include deliberative engagement practices which must include and address any matters prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph and be capable of being applied to the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan and
- include any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

Risk assessment

The policy enhances the transparency and integrity of Council's processes in regards to community engagement.

Policy approach adopted

This approach is consistent with neighbouring and like Councils and operates in conjunction with relevant sections of the Local Government Act.

Least burden / greatest advantage test

The policy will not be a burden to the municipal community but result in an overall advantage where persons and groups affected by a matter will be able to have their say and be supported in that process.



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Major Council Policy Human Rights Charter Assessment

Community Engagement Policy

As from 1 January 2008 all public authorities (including Councils) are required to act in accordance with the Human Rights Charter, and to consider human rights when making a decision.

The Charter is a law that protects the rights of all people in Victoria. It introduces standards and a framework to assist public authorities to consider the rights of all interested parties, and to be better able to strike a balance between an individual's rights and those of competing public interests.

The rights in the Charter may be subject to reasonable limitations in order to achieve this balance. As with all discerning decision making, if limitations are applied, this must be documented.

There are twenty rights listed in the Charter that promote the principles of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. These are listed at the end of this document.

Issues and Purpose	Rights Impacted Positive	Rights impacted Negative	Justification and alternatives
OBJECTIVES	Nil	Nil	No impact as it sets out the purpose of the policy.
APPLICATION	Nil	Nil	No impact as it sets out who, what and when the policy applies.
POLICY	Nil	Nil	No impact as the policy sets put the provisions for community engagement. There are no restrictions for human rights.
DEFINITIONS	Nil	Nil	Provides relevant definitions to aid understanding of the policy provisions

Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities

The Charter sets out the rights, freedoms and responsibilities that are shared by all Victorians and protected by law.

The Charter protects the following rights in Victoria:

- Right to be recognised and treated equally before the law;

- Right to life and to not have your life taken without a lawful reason;
- Protection from cruel treatment or punishment, including torture and medical treatment without consent;
- Freedom from forced work or slavery;
- Right to move freely within Victoria, to come into and leave Victoria, and to choose where to live;
- Right to privacy and to protect your reputation;
- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief;
- Right to hold an opinion and freedom of expression;
- Right to gather together, take part in a peaceful demonstration or protest, and to join groups such as political, sport or union groups;
- Protection of families and children;
- Right to take part in public life, including the right to vote;
- Right to enjoy your culture, practise your religion, and speak your language;
- Right not to have your property taken away, unless the law says it can be taken;
- Right not to be arrested or detained unfairly, and right to the security of person, such as protection from harassment and threats in everyday life;
- Right to be treated humanely when arrested or detained ;
- Protection of children in the criminal process;
- Right to a fair hearing ;
- Rights in criminal proceedings including the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty; and
- Right not to be tried or punished more than once for the same crime.



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Major Council Policy National Competition Policy Assessment

Community Engagement Policy

Introduction

A policy must not restrict competition unless it can be demonstrated that:-

- The benefits of the restrictions to the community as a whole outweigh the costs; and
- The objectives of the policy can only be achieved by restricting competition.

This report applies the competition test to the Community Engagement Policy.

Introduction, Context, Scope, Purpose and Definition

These sections set out the introduction, context, scope, purpose and definitions elements of the policy.

It does not contain any restriction on competition.

Principles

This section sets out the complaints handling principles that will guide the conduct of staff and the content and approach used in related policies and procedures.

It does not contain any restriction on competition

Approach

This section sets out the approach to complaints handling.

It does not contain any restriction on competition