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WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is a planned process of interaction between Council and the community where we ask the community for input into Council decisions and actions.

Community engagement is based on the belief that the people affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. It is the conversations we have with people about plans and decisions that may affect them. Community engagement is a purposeful process and Melton City Council recognises that community engagement and participation processes are a vital part of local democracy and civic participation.

Community engagement in this instance refers to the types or levels of interaction and participation between the City of Melton community, Council and other stakeholders. This includes how Council connects with the community regarding the development and implementation of policies, programs, services and community infrastructure.



INTRODUCTION

Melton City Council's commitment to community engagement

Melton City Council (Council) is committed to achieving the best outcomes for the community by effective governance and informed leadership, guided by engagement with the communities that make up the City of Melton. Council's engagement strengthens planning and decision-making and the sustainable future of the municipality.

Council's commitment is for employees to work together to create strong and productive relationships with citizens of the municipality.

In addition to this, Council is also required to comply with the community engagement principles set out in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

The Community Engagement Framework

Melton City Council has created a Community Engagement Framework, consisting of:

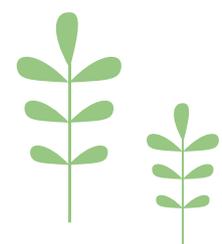
- **Community Engagement Policy**
- **Community Engagement Guidelines (this document)**
- **Community Engagement Toolkit**

The aim of the Melton Community Engagement Framework (the Framework) is to ensure Melton City Council as an organisation that is engagement focused and able to work skilfully and effectively with the community. The Council Community Engagement Framework supports Council staff to undertake engagement with its community in a meaningful manner. It outlines Council's commitment to the community with genuine opportunities to inform projects and decisions that affect them. The Framework also provides tools to assist in the delivery of engagement projects.

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.

This Framework provides guidance to employees, Councillors and communities on how 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
- Providing opportunities to increase the participation of the community.



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
POLICY**

Establishes the public commitment of Council's position, its legislative obligations, its investment in and direction with meaningful community engagement

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
GUIDELINES**

Provides the context of Council's engagement, its governance, and guidance on delivering successful engagement processes

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
TOOLKIT**

Step by step tools that provide instructional guidance for engagement planning, delivery and evaluation

Definitions

When planning and delivering community engagement, it is important that a common language is understood. For this Framework, the following definitions apply.

Engagement	Engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in a project. Engagement refers to a range of opportunities open to stakeholders and the community to participate in a project. The word implies a level of connection suggesting that all levels of engagement involve commitment to the relationships between stakeholders.
Community	Community is a term that is used to define groups of connected individuals. A community is a group of people who have a relationship or a shared interest. Their connection may be based on a shared location, interests, culture, work or places they visit.
Stakeholder	An individual or group with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes.
Public Participation	Public participation encompasses a range of public involvement, from simply informing people about what government is doing, delegating decisions to the public and community activity addressing the common good.
Council	Melton City Council, being a municipal Council as defined under the <i>Local Government Act 1989</i> .
Councillors	Individuals holding the office of a member of Melton City Council.
Council Officer	Staff of Melton City Council.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT

The Framework reflects best practice community engagement and utilises both the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation and the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) recommendations for good practice in community engagement.

Legislative Context

Consultation and engagement requirements for Local Government are outlined within a number of legislative acts in Victoria.

Community engagement is required under the following relevant legislation:

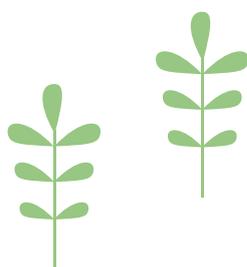
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Planning and Environment Act 2007*
- *Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards*

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 provides further requirements that relate to community engagement by stating that 'every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives'.

The *Local Government Act 2020* outlines Council's role to:

- engage with the community to consider their needs
- advocate local community interests to other communities and governments
- be a responsible partner in government, taking the needs of other communities into account
- foster community cohesion and encourage participation

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires Councils to engage with its community in relation to the services it provides. Council must be responsive to the needs of its community identified through the engagement process.



The Local Government Act 2020 also outlines Council's obligation to develop the following strategic documents in consultation with the community:

- A long term Community Vision
- The four-year Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan
- Revenue and rating planning
- Planning and financial management

The Act also specifies that community engagement for the Community Vision, Financial Plan, Asset Plan, and Council Plan must take the form of deliberative engagement.

Deliberative engagement is a form of community engagement that invites participants to critically consider arguments and weigh-up competing demands to determine preferences for resolving public policy questions. It takes place at the highest three levels of influence on the IAP2 spectrum, 'Involve', 'Collaborate' or 'Empower' and engages a group of people who are representative of those affected by the matter under discussion. It requires a level of engagement that is measured, considered, and has the involvement of others. Deliberation can be scaled to fit the size and impact of the project.



Melton City Council Context

The Framework defines the objectives for community engagement practice at Melton City Council. These objectives are aligned with the *Community Vision 2041 – The City We Create*. In the broader engagement landscape, this Framework is a part of a suite of documents that enables and supports engagement across Council.

Delivery of community engagement beyond legislated levels will depend on the following:

- The decision to be made
- The project or service to be delivered
- The opportunity for the community to influence the decision
- The need to understand the views of the community
- The community's interest in participating.



COUNCIL'S ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

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

Principle	What the community can expect
<p>The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a clear outline of the scope of the engagement, and determine how the community's input will be utilised • Outline the reasons for engagement, and provide objectives for the community's participation
<p>Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information in a timely way, prior to engagement • Ensure information is objective, and relevant to the scope of the engagement • Share formats that are accessible and easy to understand
<p>Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stakeholders, people and groups who are impacted by, or interested in the project • Endeavour to develop a variety of engagement activities, providing flexible opportunities for participant involvement
<p>Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in the needs and perspectives of all groups that may want to engage with us • Endeavour to reduce barriers to participation, including physical, social or cultural • Provide adequate time to review information and participate in varied engagement activities • Provide information and activities that are accessible and easy to understand



Principle	What the community can expect
<p>Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clarity to participants about the level of influence they will have • Provide feedback on the engagement process and the findings, including how community feedback was used • Communicate with participants and stakeholders about the engagement process, findings, outcomes and how any decisions were made • Ensure we are consistent in the way we approach our decision making
<p>Be inclusive, listen and create partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive a culture within Council where engagement is seen as important, is done well, and adds value to the project • Listen to and understand different needs and respect differences of opinion • Provide opportunities for diverse members of the community to participate • Provide local opportunities to participate and be visible in local communities • Make sure information is straightforward and available in a variety of ways • Work in partnership across Council and with the community
<p>Be purposeful and authentic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent about why we are engaging the community • Create meaningful opportunities for engagement • Be clear about what we want from the engagement and how the community can influence the decision • Be honest about what we can and cannot do
<p>Be innovative and continuously improve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek new ways to engage the community and improve engagement practice • Use resources effectively and creatively • Review the way we engage regularly



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT MELTON CITY COUNCIL

Melton is a growing and changing municipality. This means more people who need more Council services and have increasingly complex issues to work through. We want our community to be part of the journey, actively working with Council to help shape better services that are inclusive, sustainable and efficient. The community are our partners in shaping the city, and engagement defines the way we work together.

Why we engage

Council conducts community engagement activities to better understand the perspectives and experiences of our residents. We gather their feedback to help inform decision making and achieve better outcomes for their communities. Community engagement helps bring differing views together to work towards the best decision for the community. It also enables the community to discuss their concerns or aspirations with Council so that we can better understand what role we may have in resolving the issues.

Other reasons we engage with the community include:

- better informed Council decision making
- increased community involvement
- community input can improve the policy or plan being developed, making it more relevant and practical to the community being engaged
- increased transparency and trust in Council processes and decisions
- a better-informed community
- improved satisfaction with Council decisions and processes
- community engagement can build stronger community advocacy or support for a project or community issue

When we engage

Council will engage with the community and key stakeholders during the planning stages of policy, projects or initiatives, when a change in service, activity or infrastructure is considered, when an issue is raised and requires a decision or when more information or evidence is required. Engagement may be required at multiple stages and levels within any initiative.

Council will engage with the community when:

- There is a legislative requirement to do so
- A decision or plan will substantially impact the community
- The community can have influence about the decision (or a part of it)
- Community input is sought to enhance a decision



Who we engage

We engage with a range of stakeholders. These include any individual or group with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and who are impacted by their outcomes. This could include people who live, work, study, recreate or otherwise have a connection with Melton.

It is important we engage with the right people at the right time, not necessarily all people all of the time. Not all stakeholders have equal interest or will be equally impacted. Mapping these stakeholders will help determine the strategy for engaging them. The Engagement Toolkit provides assessment tools for determining who is impacted, who has an interest in, and who may have influence in the decision or activity.

Community-based stakeholders usually fall under one of two categories:

- **Place Based Groups:** These relate to a defined geographical area, such as Municipal wide, a suburb/s, wards, or a small local neighbourhood.
- **Special Interest/Thematic Groups:** These relate to a community that share a particular characteristic (such as young people, seniors, people with a disability, migrant groups, faith groups, LGBTIQ+ communities or people with a shared activity) or community members who share a particular issue, experience, or interest.

We endeavour to engage with a diverse range of people from our community. We will work to ensure our engagement includes participants who are broadly representative of the community being affected. This may include making additional efforts to ensure people from different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and abilities are able to participate.

Decisions with a whole of municipality community impact or interest should consult residents in each of the following geographic areas to ensure adequate representation:

- Melton Township
- Eastern Corridor
- Diggers Rest
- Eynesbury/Exford
- Rockbank/Aintree
- Toolern Vale.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT MELTON CITY COUNCIL CONTINUED...

Several additional special interest groups have been identified due to the specific needs, perspectives and insights they may contribute. These groups should also be consulted in 'whole of community' decision-making:

- Young people (12 to 25 years)
- Seniors (those aged 65 years+)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- People with a disability and their carers
- Families.

How we engage

Council has adopted the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum as the foundation for its Policy and approach to engagement. The Spectrum outlines five levels of community engagement, from 'Inform' through to 'Empower' – each level indicating the level of influence community input will have on the decision to be made. The Spectrum assists in correlating your desired outcome with appropriate levels of engagement. The higher the level of community ownership you seek to create, the higher the level of community input must be accommodated, and the 'deeper' the level of engagement that must take place. See the adapted IAP2 Spectrum below.



Level of community engagement	1	2	3	4	5
IAP2 Spectrum engagement activities	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Engagement Goal	Provide the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	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.
Community Commitment	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example suitable consultation techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact sheets • Web site/s • In Person Meeting • Written Letters • Flyer / Newsletter • Notice in Local Paper • Media Release • Displays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings • Suggestion Boxes • Interviews • Focus Group Session • Stakeholder Meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Deliberative Polling • Community Workshops / Forums • Community Debates • Site Tour / Meeting • Open Days • Ward Meetings • Community Reference Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Advisory Committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making • Taskforce or Working Party • Consensus conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen judging panels • Ballots • Delegated decisions • Citizens' Juries • Joint Ventures

Table adapted from The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum.

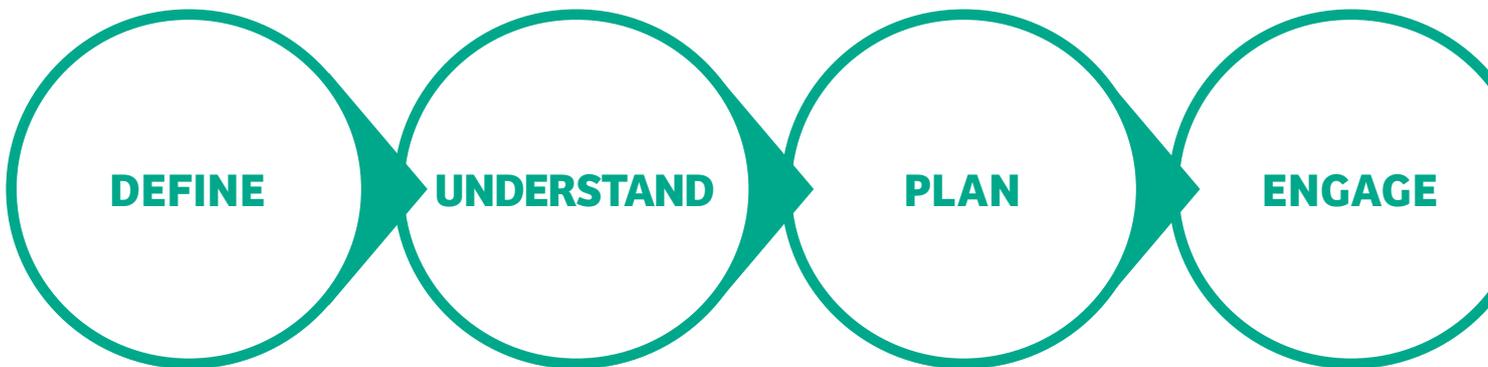
THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees, and is now legislated under the 2020 Act. The Community Engagement Framework has been established to provide clear and practical guidance to shared processes for staff, Councillors, and community to understand.

This process can be integrated into any Council initiative. It guides users to define if and how engagement can take place. It sits within and alongside planning processes and is scalable to a program of any scope; simple to complex.

The following pages describe each step in the process.

Any engagement project should undertake the following seven steps in the process:



1 Define

The initial part of the process confirms the purpose and scope of the project. This should include details about the intent of the project and the extent to which the community should be involved. It will outline the context, any known parameters around the project and what aspects the community can influence. This will determine the level of influence and type of feedback sought.

The roles and responsibilities of the project group should be assigned at this stage.

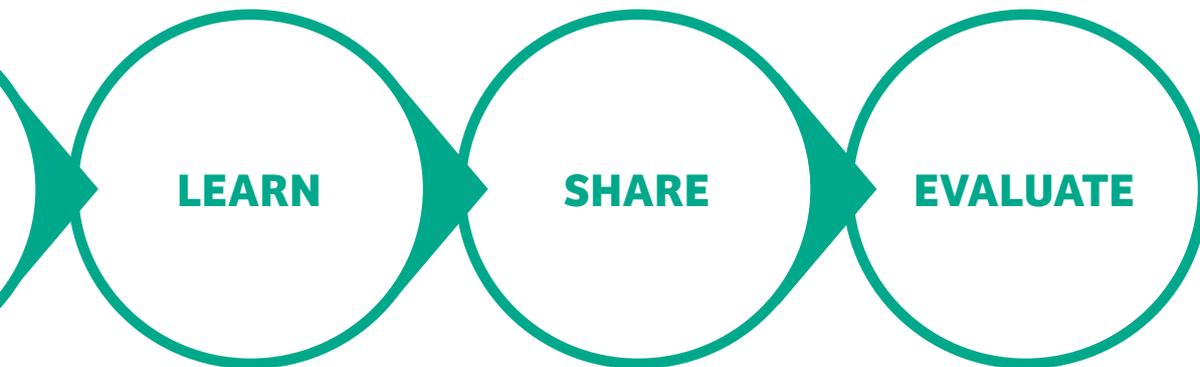
The evaluation criteria for the project are determined.

2 Understand

This stage seeks to determine who needs to be involved, and how they will be involved. What is their level of interest?

Be mindful that different stakeholders may want different levels of input or information and therefore not all engagement methods will suit all relevant stakeholders. Consider which hard-to-reach groups need to be engaged and how their needs should be accommodated. Gain an understanding of who has previously been engaged in previous projects, and who has not.

Gather information about other community projects or issues that may impact on the project.



3 Plan

This stage defines all the stages of engagement, with the appropriate methods assigned to each stakeholder group. If practicable, ask the community how they want to be engaged.

As far as possible, provide a range of different engagement methods that will enable a range of accessible options for people to participate. Understand how the feedback from methods chosen can be used to provide relevant data to be included in the decision-making process. Consider supporting any face-to-face opportunities with online options to encourage participation.

As far as possible, coordinate with complementary Council engagement activities. Plan to promote the engagement well before the engagement starts to ensure relevant stakeholders are aware of the project and how to get involved if they choose to.

4 Engage

This stage delivers the engagement process. It is possible that there may be more than one round of engagement that you need to deliver. If the process is iterative, you may analyse your data (step 5) and use it to develop your next round of engagement.

Ensure the community understands the project and how their feedback will influence the decision-making at the beginning of the engagement process. Be sure to provide them with a timeframe of when and how they can expect feedback about the outcome of the decision under discussion.

Plan to deliver the engagement activities at a variety of locations, days, and times that meet the needs of the community. This should also include providing online opportunities.

Provide a space for differing opinions and interests to express their views safely. This may include making accommodations for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THE PROCESS CONTINUED...

5 Learn

This stage is where we evaluate the feedback and data obtained from the engagement process.

Analyse your sample and consider whether it is representative of the community being engaged. This does not mean it has to be representative of the entire community, rather, broadly representative of the community affected by the project.

Consolidate the data and information collected during each engagement activity. If different data collection processes have been used, treat each data set separately. Analyse common data sets or information to identify community preferences, priorities and themes.

Consider any gaps in the data or participants and outline how these will be addressed.

6 Share

This stage is where we communicate the community's feedback to decision-makers for their consideration, and to the project team involved.

Once a decision has been made, communicate details about the engagement process, its findings and any decisions made to participants and relevant stakeholders. It is particularly important to provide detail about how any decisions were made and how community feedback has been used. These outcomes should also be shared with Council colleagues and additional key stakeholders.

The final outcomes of the engagement process should be made available via a range of communication methods to those engaged and the wider public.

7 Evaluate

The final stage involves evaluating the process undertaken to identify any key learnings and understand the effectiveness of the process.

Evaluation criteria will ideally be identified at the start of the project. Evaluation should consider not only the effectiveness of the process but also analysis of who was involved and how effective the methods used were in capturing a representative sample of the identified community.

Evaluations should summarise the key learnings and be shared with the project team and Council colleagues. These learnings should be considered before planning new engagement processes and used to further improve our engagement practice.



ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MELTON MUNICIPALITY

Melton specific challenges

Melton City Council has several challenges that must be considered when engaging its community. These include specific demographic and geographic challenges, along with the rapid nature of the growth occurring. Any engagement process will need to consider how to address some of these challenges to ensure that the engagement is broadly representative of the community it serves.

A young population

Nearly two-thirds of the City of Melton (61.6 per cent) are aged under 40 years. Melton remains a destination for young families; however, this group can be hard to engage, especially when using traditional face to face methods. Data from previous community engagement shows poor attendance from those under 40 years when considering activities such as community forums and focus groups. Future engagement will need to find new ways of engaging with young people, especially those who spend increasing amounts of time online.

A rapidly growing population

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria and Australia. The municipality is expected to attain a population figure of 448,053 by 2051 (or growth of 142%). The current average annual growth rate is more than 7,000 people per year. One of the engagement challenges is engaging with new communities about their needs. Many of these people may not yet reside in the municipality; however, their input is vital to ensuring we provide appropriate services and infrastructure. In addition to rapid growth, the population is increasingly diverse in its composition. In order to ensure Council stays in touch with the needs of this changing community, it must commit to regular engagement to ensure its services remain relevant to the new communities.

A large geographical area that is a mix of urban and rural

The City of Melton comprises a huge geographical area of 527.3 square kilometres, ranging from the townships of Caroline Springs in the east, Eynesbury in the south, Diggers Rest in the north, and Melton in the west. Consequently, creating community cohesion can be problematic. Each local area has a distinct character and sense of identity; therefore, these need to be acknowledged and celebrated, while striving to create a sense of inclusion within the wider municipality. Furthermore, the mix of rural and urban areas necessitates different methods of engaging these communities. While rural areas increasingly have improved access to digital technology, it is still necessary to maintain personal, face to face opportunities when engaging with rural communities, especially providing a presence at local events. This helps build trust and rapport with the smaller, local communities.

Large proportion of commuters in the working age population

Nearly three out of four residents (73 per cent) are employed work outside the municipality. An additional 5.2 per cent have no fixed place of work. Workplace destination data shows that both groups regularly travel long distances to their workplaces. Having such a large proportion of commuters means engagement must be easy and efficient. They are less likely to commit to processes that require a large time commitment or having to attend in person, especially during weekdays. This means Council needs to incorporate engagement methods that offer flexibility and are easy to access.



MELTON CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE

Community engagement practice at Melton is developed in line with our engagement principles. The following outline Melton City Council's commitments to ensuring the delivery of best practice community engagement.

The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope

- Develop an engagement plan that clearly identifies the purpose for engaging, and the scope for feedback
- Understand the level of influence that participants can have on the project
- Communicate the parameters clearly to participants – be honest about what we will do with their feedback, and how much we will change as a result of it
- Provide a plan for closing the loop with participants about how feedback is used

Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation

- Prepare all relevant background, documents, links and information in an accessible format to share with participants
- Provide access to information through a variety of platforms
- Share information prior to participation, allowing participants adequate time to absorb it before commencing with engagement

Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter

- Complete a thorough stakeholder analysis to identify relevant people and groups early in the process
- Provide multiple platforms for engagement, where practicable, to allow for a broad audience to participate
- Encourage differing viewpoints, and provide a safe space to hear these
- Where practicable, prepare targeted activities for harder-to-reach people or groups who may be impacted by the project

Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement

- Ensure engagement activities are easy to understand, and attainable for a diverse audience
- Investigate spaces and activities that are accessible for a broad range of abilities
- Consider any physical, social, and cultural barriers to participation, and explore activities that can be flexible and inclusive to these needs



Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making

Reporting and Feedback

- Communicate with participants about the engagement process, findings, and outcomes, including how any decisions were made.
- Respond to the engagement and input of the community in a timely and constructive manner.
- Provide opportunities for feedback from participants about the engagement process.
- Publish updates to the project and the final outcomes of community engagement via appropriate communication channels.
- Share the engagement findings and outcomes with key stakeholders.



Be inclusive, listen and create partnerships

Representative participation

Ensure engagement projects strive to collect feedback from a representative sample of the community affected.

Provide opportunities for a diverse range of people to be part of engagement processes, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and of different age groups.

Maintain a database of community groups so that a greater diversity of residents, particularly special interest groups, can be included in engagement projects.

Provide tailored opportunities for special interest groups to participate where necessary.

Use Council's Advisory Committees to reach special interest groups.

Local opportunities

- Provide the opportunity to participate within the local community affected by the decision/project.
- Maintain regular engagement opportunities at a local level through the My City, My Say listening posts.
- Maintain an engagement presence at family-friendly events such as Harmony Day.



MELTON CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE CONTINUED...

Accessible opportunities

- Provide opportunities for a broad range of people to be involved through multiple methods. This includes face-to-face and online engagement.
- Provide engagement opportunities that deliver equitable access to participation.
- Provide an online engagement platform that utilises a range of engagement tools for the different needs of users.

Capacity development:

- Build relationships between Melton City Council to encourage the community to participate more readily.
- Foster relationships within the community to help allow the community to engage autonomously.
- Provide information about how to become involved in community engagement opportunities across multiple communication channels and to different audiences.
- Raise awareness and build interest in community engagement by promoting the benefits of engagement to the community.

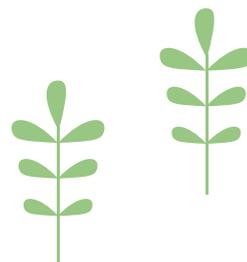
Be purposeful and authentic

- Provide opportunities that allow people have a say in the decisions that affect their lives.
- Provide meaningful participation opportunities when community feedback can make a difference to the outcome/decision.
- Build engagement into projects and programs from the inception so the community are provided information early enough to facilitate participation. Identify key stakeholders at the start of the project.

- Identify stakeholders at the beginning of the process. Be clear to stakeholders about the scope of the pending decision, the decision-making process, the potential for influence and any limitations on this process.
- Provide direction about the roles people are taking and the tasks and responsibilities required.
- Ensure a culture of quality and purposeful engagement is embedded in practice across the organisation of Melton City Council.

Be innovative and continuously improve

- Use the project evaluations to shape future engagement.
- Share learnings from previous engagement processes across the organisation.
- Regularly explore new technologies and methods for engagement.
- Maintain networks with external engagement practitioners to share and learn about innovations in the field.
- Showcase new techniques and tools through engagement expos within the organisation. These allow opportunities to improve engagement practice and allow for greater collaboration on projects.
- Measure the effectiveness of the engagement process using formal monitoring and evaluation processes established at the start of the project.
- Maintain a database of engagement and research findings from engagement processes.



MELTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Community Engagement practice at Melton City Council is supported by several formal structures and processes designed to deliver best practice community engagement.

Governance

Community Engagement Policy

Council maintains a Community Engagement Policy which governs Council's commitment to best practice community engagement and outlines its obligations under the Local Government Act 2020. The policy defines the principles underpinning Council's engagement activities, the role of Councillors, Council staff and consultants responsible for engaging with the community on behalf of Melton City Council, and the mechanisms which Council will use to engage the community.

Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee develops Council's community engagement Framework and processes. The Committee helps facilitate a whole of Council approach towards the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of effective community engagement activities.

The role of the Committee includes the following:

- Promoting the Community Engagement Framework and Policy through their involvement with their respective service teams and directorates.
- Encourage discussion about community engagement among Executive, the leadership forum, directorates and service teams.
- Review, update and endorse changes to community engagement policy, practice or other significant developments.
- Review, update and endorse the Annual Engagement Plan and associated documents.
- Help or support teams in how to understand and use the Framework and engagement planning tools, including the sharing of learning and development experiences to improve knowledge, understanding and practice across the organisation.

Staff support and development

Community Engagement Guidelines (this document)

The Guidelines provide direction on when to engage and the appropriate level of engagement. It provides instructions on how to engage and the planning of engagement activities, as well as how to evaluate engagement activities.

Community Engagement Toolkit

The toolkit provides templates, sample questions and models, and other tools to assist in community engagement. The toolkit is available on Council's intranet.

Community Engagement Champions Group

The Community Engagement champions are a group of experienced community engagement practitioners from across Council. They act as engagement champions within their own work areas, provide practical support with engagement projects and help build engagement culture across Council. As a group they come together to explore ideas about new and innovative engagement or discuss various engagement projects or issues.

A list of the Community Engagement Champions group is available on the intranet.

MELTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT STRUCTURES CONTINUED...

Community Engagement Training

Council will continue to build the capacity of the organisation to deliver community engagement, by providing staff with the appropriate skills and information to plan for, manage and facilitate engagement activities.

Council offers regular training opportunities for community engagement through its annual corporate training calendar. The training comprises two different levels for staff:

Community Engagement Basics training: This training is designed for staff who are new to community engagement, with little or no experience in the practice.

Community Engagement Advanced training: The Community Engagement Basics training (or equivalent) is a pre-requisite for this course. It expands on the skills developed in the Basics training and the individual's engagement experience. This training will offer new tools, techniques or methods each year with the aim to further develop engagement practice at Melton.

Beyond the formal training offered, one-on-one training in a variety of engagement techniques, design, analysis or evaluation can be accessed by contacting the Senior Community Engagement Officer.

Council will maintain IAP2 membership and provide access to IAP2 training where appropriate.

Staff roles and responsibilities

All services across Council are expected to support the delivery of the Community Engagement Framework. Leaders will contribute to staff induction, guidance and approvals of community engagement in accordance with the Framework.

Leaders are required to, where appropriate, seek advice from line management or the Community Capacity Team. In particular:

- Seeking advice and guidance regarding appropriate community engagement methodologies before the inception of any project or review.
- Ensuring that the planning, development and implementation of all organisational surveys is coordinated through the Senior Community Engagement Officer.

Community engagement is the responsibility of all employees as appropriate to their role and function. This applies to engagement with the community or within the organisation to support collaborative and richer outcomes.

Each Community Engagement project should have a community engagement plan. This needs to have the approval of your line manager prior to implementation.



Community Engagement Collaboration

Opportunities for cross-Council collaboration on engagement projects should be sought through a member of the Community Engagement Champions group, the Senior Community Engagement Officer or Coordinator, Community Capacity.

Internal Community Engagement Expo

Melton City Council holds an annual Community Engagement Expo where staff from any department can participate to increase the organisation's awareness of their current or future projects, seek staff feedback about the project, or trial engagement methods before taking them to the community. This allows opportunities to improve engagement practice and allow for greater collaboration on projects.

Annual Community Engagement Calendar

The Community Engagement Advisory Committee coordinates an Annual Community Engagement Program, which is provided to Council's Executive Team and Councillors, to increase awareness of all engagements for each calendar year.

The calendar assists Council officers by promoting upcoming activities and opportunities which could potentially have synergies to other projects. It also assists with forward planning for community engagement projects and enables collective evaluation and reporting of Council's engagement activities and outcomes to the community.

Reporting and Feedback

Reporting the outcomes of your community engagement is extremely important in maintaining Council's relationship with the community. Closing the loop on the engagement process is vital in making participants feel that their feedback is valued. It is also now a requirement under the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*. The level and complexity of reporting will be determined by the complexity of the project and the nature of the feedback obtained. Advice on closing the loop requirements can be sought from the Senior Community Engagement Officer.

Reporting of engagement findings

Feedback from engagement processes should be treated like other research data and formally analysed and reported. If the feedback is going to be influential in the decision-making process, it is important that the data is handled in a way that produces robust and reliable results.

The report should include:

- The context for the engagement, including details about how community input will influence the decision
- The engagement methods used
- Demographic data, including analysis of how representative the sample captured is of the community of interest
- Quantitative results of any closed questions from surveys or voting processes
- Qualitative feedback coded into themes, including a description of how the data was analysed
- Commentary on any results that show significant variation between demographic groups
- A summary of the decisions made and how the feedback from the engagement was used.

This report should form the basis of the feedback you provide to participants and the community.



MELTON CITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT STRUCTURES CONTINUED...

Feedback to participants

The level of feedback about an engagement project and its outcomes will vary depending upon the level of involvement of participants. Those participants who have devoted any significant time or effort to a consultation or engagement process (attending a community forum or focus group, for example) should be informed of the outcomes of the project, the decision that was made and how their feedback was used.

Council reports

Formal reporting to Council on the issue that sought the engagement needs to include a relevant level of detail in the 'Consultation/Public Submissions' Section of Council's standard Agenda Reports.

Feedback to the community

It may be appropriate that information about the engagement and its findings are shared beyond those who participated. Others in the community may also be interested in the findings, and you can provide snapshots of the data or summaries of the community engagement project that can be made available through various communication channels.



Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Melton City Council values and supports innovation and creativity in driving continuous improvement. We constantly review what we do and strive to deliver the best possible outcomes. As such, we are committed to:

- Transparent processes of reporting outcomes of engagement back to our community
- Learning from each engagement experience to improve our approach to engagement.

Individual engagement projects

It is expected that all engagements undertake a formal evaluation process. The evaluation criteria should be determined at the start of the engagement project. At a minimum, the evaluation plan should set out to assess the following:

- The sample of participants captured.
- The effectiveness of the engagement methods used.
- How the engagement process contributed to the project.
- How the feedback influenced the final decision.

Evaluation may not always happen at the end of an engagement project. If there is more than one stage of an engagement process, it may be useful to evaluate during the project. That way, adjustments can be made if necessary. This is particularly important when evaluating whether the sample of participants is representative of the community of interest. If anomalies are found, additional efforts should be made to capture demographics that are under-represented.

It is also important to share key learnings with the project team, and other Council colleagues where appropriate.

Council engagement overall

Council commits to establishing an annual monitoring, evaluation and review process to measure the level of success of Council's engagement overall. This process will include monitoring, evaluation and review of:

- The effectiveness of engagement for specific projects or programs.
- Individual engagement approaches across all levels of engagement.
- The overall level of reach achieved by community engagement across the community, particularly focussing the demographic reach of methods employed

Council also commits to using evaluation metrics to develop continuous improvement processes to ensure community engagement practice is continually evolving.

Continuous Improvement

Evaluation processes should not only be used to assess individual engagement projects but should help guide how practice is improved and developed. The findings from the engagement process evaluation should shape future engagement projects. Where there are learnings that are applicable across the organisation, these should be shared via the Engagement Champions group or the Community Engagement Committee.

Council will continue to encourage its officers to apply innovation and creativity to engagement methodologies, to ensure broad and accessible community access to influencing Council decision making, particularly with use of interactive web-based technologies. Council will develop the online engagement platform to accommodate new digital technologies and engagement tools.

Council will continue to showcase and trial new engagement techniques and methods at its annual Internal Engagement Expo.

Council will foster and maintain networks with external engagement practitioners to share and learn about innovations in the field.



REFERENCES

Name	Location
Annual Consultation Program and Consultation Register	Community Planning
Code of Conduct for staff	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Community Engagement Guidelines	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Community Engagement Toolkit	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Council Plan	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Engaging Children in Decision Making: A Guide for Consulting Children	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
International Association of Public Participation	www.iap2.org.au
Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Local Government Performance Reporting Framework	http://www.dtpli.vic.gov.au/local-government
Customer Service Charter	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Online Engagement Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Melton City Council Privacy Policy	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Planning and Environment Act 1987	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)	www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act
Records and Document Management Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Road Management Act 2004	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Victorian Disability Act 2006	www.legislation.vic.gov.au



Melton Civic Centre

232 High Street, Melton

T 9747 7200

Melton Library and Learning Hub

31 McKenzie Street, Melton

T 9747 7200

**Caroline Springs Library
and Learning Hub**

193 Caroline Springs Boulevard

Caroline Springs

T 9747 7200

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