

Advocacy Policy

Date adopted	25 August 2025
Adopted by	Council
Review due	November 2027
Responsible officer	Chief Executive Officer
Records reference	9179599

1. Purpose

To outline Council's approach to advocacy in influencing public policy and resource allocation decisions and investment by other levels of Government, and/or other key stakeholders, to fulfil responsibilities in the delivery of services, assets and infrastructure which benefits the City of Melton.

2. Application And Scope

This policy applies to Council and its officers when defining, prioritising and implementing advocacy, and how Council resources its efforts to advocate on behalf of the community.

The policy outlines the role of the Mayor, Councillors, CEO and officers in developing and maintaining political and broader stakeholder relationships to deliver on Council's advocacy on behalf of the community.

3. General Provisions

Councillors will set advocacy priorities, supported by advice and recommendations from officers underpinned by a demonstrated evidence base and will be aligned to the Council and Wellbeing Plan approved by Council.

Advocacy priorities will be supported by an evidence base and will be reviewed annually following State and Federal budget cycles and following State and Federal elections.

Council's advocacy priorities will be underpinned by and supported by action plans.

Councillors will be engaged in campaigns for high priority advocacy initiatives and will support campaign advocacy under direction from the Mayor and/or agreed campaign structures.

The Mayor, supported by Councillors, the CEO and senior managers will lead advocacy priorities to local State and Federal Members and relevant State and Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament and through regional and national advocacy bodies.

The Mayor will be the primary spokesperson for advocacy priorities and the first to respond to announcements by other levels of government in relation to advocacy priorities in accordance with Council's Media Policy.

The CEO and senior managers will operationally implement advocacy priorities with relevant agencies and government departments.

Council will build and maintain relationships with all levels of Government, including parliamentarians, local members and government department bureaucrats, conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation, with recognition of each other's roles and responsibilities.

Engagement with elected State and Federal representatives will be guided by Council's Government Relations Procedure.

Council's advocacy will aim to have a focus on:

- A change in government legislation, policy or practices, to the overall benefit of residents, and the City of Melton.
- Committed investment / provision into local infrastructure and / or services by sources other than Melton City Council.
- Receipt of external funding to Melton City Council to implement services, projects and programs.
- Promotion of an issue or information to key stakeholder decision makers and other levels of government to influence positive change.
- Promotion of, or raised awareness of, an issue or information to facilitate positive change.
- Empowering community to become more involved in local issues and contribute to influencing decision making initiatives.

3.1. Advocacy Principles

The following principles will guide Council's advocacy:

- 3.1.1 **Evidence Based** – a robust evidence base will support each priority including alignment to Council & Wellbeing Plan and government policy.
- 3.1.2 **Collaborate** – We will work in collaboration with government, partners, our community and other stakeholders where there is alignment and capacity to support advocacy objectives, including regular catch ups with local members of parliament.
- 3.1.3 **Apolitical** – Advocacy activities will be apolitical to demonstrate impartiality and provide the ability to work with all political parties to achieve community outcomes.
- 3.1.4 **Community Need** – Advocacy priorities will represent the highest demonstrated need of our community.
- 3.1.5 **Transparency** – We will be open and transparent in our advocacy objectives, strategic directions and priorities.

- 3.1.6 **Outcome Focused** – We will seek to focus on solutions to problems, issues or concerns through the development of options that are proactive, practical, and achievable.

3.2. Advocacy Framework

Council will plan and deliver its advocacy through an operational Advocacy Framework to support delivery of this policy. The Framework includes:

- Advocacy Objectives
- How advocacy is planned and prioritized
- How advocacy is delivered
- Roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Councillors, Executive Leadership Team, Managers and all staff in planning and delivering advocacy in accordance with this policy
- Advocacy Partners and Alliances

3.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Council will review and confirm advocacy themes and priorities through:

- Quarterly and annual reviews of the Council and Wellbeing Plan;
- Ongoing community engagement;
- Review and evaluation of annual State and Federal budget cycles;
- Review and evaluation of State and Federal election commitments;
- Formal evaluations at key stages of advocacy campaigns;
- Continuing work of the development of new, and review of existing, policy and strategy that guides service delivery.

Changes and amendments as an outcome of evaluations and reviews will be aligned to Council's annual budget process, to ensure campaigns are appropriately resourced to meet advocacy strategy objectives for the forthcoming years. This will involve review and public reporting on the performance of advocacy strategies and associated campaigns.

The above approach will ensure that Council is agile in advocacy and continually improves its policy, procedure and services in response to advocacy efforts.

4. Responsibility/ Accountability

4.1	Councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set advocacy priorities informed by recommendations from Officers. Advocate in accordance with Council policy, under guidance from the Mayor and/or agreed campaign structures. Develop and maintain relationships to support Council's advocacy. Delegate to nominated advocacy/regional bodies.
4.2	Mayor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary spokesperson for Council and representative on advocacy matters. Primary responsibility for meeting with State and Federal elected representatives on advocacy related matters. Primary responsibility to respond first to announcements by other levels of government in relation to advocacy priorities in accordance with Council's media policy.
4.3	Chief Executive Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationally implement the advocacy priorities and strategies of Council. Meet with State and Federal elected representatives as required. Primary spokesperson or representative to senior public servants and agencies.
4.4	Managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to implementation of advocacy priorities and strategies of Council. Primary spokesperson or representative to public servant peers relating to their work areas or where delegated by their Director.
4.5	All Council Officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to implementation of advocacy priorities and strategies of Council.
4.6	Advocacy and Government Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary spokesperson or representative to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial staff Electorate office staff MPs or Ministers on issues relating to general business where deemed appropriate by the CEO. Primary responsibility for developing advocacy priorities and campaigns for consideration. Responsible for preparing materials and briefing papers for representations to government on advocacy priorities to support Mayor and CEO. Support Mayor and CEO in representations to elected representatives as required. Primary operational representative to advocacy bodies. Monitor and report progress of advocacy priorities. Facilitate Council's government relations.

5. Definitions

Term	Definition
The Act	means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i>
Advocacy	An action intended to influence those who hold governmental, political or economic authority and or influence to implement public policies, resource and projects to the benefit of any specific affected or interest populations.
Advocacy Framework	A high-level operational framework for the planning and prioritizing of Council's advocacy priorities and how the priorities are acted upon.
Advocacy Strategy	Individual strategies that assist the formation of actions and engagement to further the advocacy agenda.
Advocacy Campaigns	Individual campaigns that establish a program of activity to influence a target audience/s to achieve a specific strategic goal.
Advocacy techniques	Variety of practices including but not limited to submissions, direct engagement, regular catch ups with local members and relationship development, inviting decision-makers to site visits, public speeches, reports, delegations to parliament, media and communication strategies, and advertising.

6. Related Documents

Name	Location
<i>Local Government Act 2020</i>	https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020
Council and Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025	www.melton.vic.gov.au