

# Community Engagement Policy

(A4400044)

## 1. Purpose and intent

Council is driven by the privilege of serving our community, and providing leadership and visionary thinking to ensure Frankston City is recognised as the Lifestyle Capital of Victoria.

This Policy is a formal expression of Council's commitment to engaging and collaborating with our diverse local communities, to understand and incorporate their different views, experiences and expertise.

The Policy sets the vision for a consistent and coordinated approach to Council's engagement with its community.

Council recognises that good community engagement is an essential foundation of an active and involved community. It promotes an exchange of information and ideas between Council and the community on issues and decisions that the community are affected by, and are interested in.

Council also recognises the importance of enabling a broad cross-section of the Frankston City community to be included in diverse and accessible engagement activities. Council is committed to genuinely listening, learning from and understanding community input, and enabling this input to directly influence Council's decisions and project outcomes.

Council understands that when the community are included in, and influence, decisions that affect them, Council's decisions can be better understood, mutually beneficial, more innovative, sustainable, and representative of the interests of the broader community.

Importantly, good community engagement also underpins strong governance. In particular the measurement, evaluation and reporting back on engagement activities ensures transparency, integrity and trust in Council decision-making and processes.

## 2. Scope

Council's approach to community engagement is consistent with the Act, and this Policy outlines Council's commitment, principles and values to ensuring community engagement is integrated into all Council activities.

This Policy applies to the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of community engagement activities as directed by Council, recommended by staff, or legislated by the Act.

The Policy also outlines the role that community members can reasonably expect to play in our planning and decision-making processes.

For the purpose of this Policy, Council identifies the community as anyone affected by Council's decisions. The Frankston community can be defined as individuals or groups who live, work, play, visit, study, invest in or pass through Frankston. They could share a geographical location; characteristic or interest. Each person within our community has the potential to be a stakeholder in Council's engagement activities.

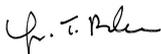
The Policy will be supported by a comprehensive Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit, designed to guide Council officers in the effective planning, implementation, reporting and evaluation of community engagement activities.

### 3. Definitions

<b>Community members</b>	means people who live in the municipal district of the Council; people and bodies who are ratepayers of the Council; traditional owners of land in the municipal district of the Council; and people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council.
<b>Council</b>	means Frankston City Council.
<b>Deliberative Engagement</b>	means the deliberative engagement practices included in this Policy.
<b>The Act</b>	means the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .

### 4. Authorisation

This Policy is governed by the Manager Community Relations and is approved by Frankston City's Council's Mayor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO):



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Mayor, Frankston City

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CEO, Frankston City Council

in accordance with Frankston City Council resolution at its Council Meeting of 1 March 2021.

## 5. Policy

### 5.1 Engagement principles:

- 5.1.1 Council's approach to community and stakeholder engagement is guided by the community engagement principles set out under Section 56 of the Act, as follows:
- A community engagement process must have a clearly defined purpose, objective and scope;
  - Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation;
  - Participants in community engagement must be diverse and representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement;
  - Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement;
  - Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process *will influence* Council decision making;
  - Participants in community engagement are informed of how their input *has influenced* Council decision making.

### 5.2 What is community engagement?

- 5.2.1 Community engagement:
- Offers opportunities for residents and key stakeholders to contribute to and influence decisions that directly affect their community;
  - Enables Council to strengthen relationships with our community;
  - Ensures that Council can make better, more informed decisions;
  - Builds greater trust and shared ownership between Council and the community for implementation of decisions;
  - Enhances accountability by creating direct links between Council, residents and key stakeholders;
  - Assists Council to deliver better services and deliver more value to the public; and
  - Helps form our advocacy agenda.
- 5.2.2 Community engagement can also involve Council learning more about issues that are important to groups within the community, so that Council can advocate to State and Federal governments and other bodies that have influence, and can apply funding, in our area.
- 5.2.3 It is essential that Council reports back to the community after engagement in a timely way, and continue to keep the community updated about its programs and services, to maintain transparency and an open dialogue.

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### 5.3 Why do we engage?

- 5.3.1 Community engagement provides decision makers with better opportunities to make informed decisions. By engaging with the community, Council is better able to understand local issues and needs.
- 5.3.2 Community engagement can help Council to:
- Gather information, meaningful feedback and diverse points of view prior to making decisions;
  - Foster community partnerships;
  - Increase trust and community confidence;
  - Gather inputs from stakeholders who are impacted by Council decisions;
  - Identify risks and gather workable ways to manage the risks;
  - Meet its legislative requirements, and ensure the community's right to assist with democratic processes;
  - Build understanding of, and commitment to, projects and strategic decisions;
  - Provide valuable input into Council's future planning and service delivery activities; and
  - Improve accountability and transparency through open and genuine feedback on public participation outcomes.
- 5.3.3 The community also benefit from participating in engagement activities. Participating in engagement can:
- Create a sense of belonging and connection;
  - Increase community involvement;
  - Unite and empower individuals and communities; and
  - Lead to a greater community ownership and resilience.

### 5.4 Who do we engage with?

- 5.4.1 Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people.
- 5.4.2 Council will engage with a broad range of people, all with differing interests, and inclusion and accessibility needs.
- 5.4.3 This includes individuals or groups identified but not limited to residents, ratepayers, business owners, customers, visitors, community groups, sporting

groups, youth, agencies, funding bodies, developers, internal stakeholders, and culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

- 5.4.4 When Council is planning an engagement process, Council will first identify the people and groups likely to be affected by the relevant decision, and we reach out to involve them in the process. Council recognises that some groups face barriers to engaging with us and Council commits to using methods that best enable and encourage their participation. Identifying who is impacted or interested in a decision, best methods of outreach and any barriers to participation will be guided by our internal stakeholder identification process.

## 5.5 When will we engage?

Council will:

- 5.5.1 Engage the community on most decisions that will impact and affect our community and other key stakeholders.
- 5.5.2 Commit to being transparent about the decisions that are negotiable, and to ensure the community has the opportunity to provide meaningful input on these decisions.
- 5.5.3 Commit to continue to undertake early consultation for strategic studies, which are required to underpin the development of policies and may become the basis of changes to the Frankston Planning Scheme, or alternatively, major strategies and masterplans that would also guide decisions for the future wellbeing of the community. The community will be included via various engagement methods, dependent on the subject matter and work being undertaken.

### **Circumstances that trigger engagement:**

- 5.5.4 Engagement will be undertaken to ensure we meet our statutory obligations, including the engagement requirements set out under the Act and other relevant Acts as listed in the supporting documents section of this policy.
- 5.5.5 Examples of the processes that Council will promote opportunities for the community to actively participate in include:
- Key issues of interest;
  - Proposed new or amendments to policy and strategy;
  - Planning scheme amendments;
  - Infrastructure and capital works projects;
  - Service delivery; and
  - Service delivery standards.

### **Circumstances when engagement will be limited:**

- 5.5.6 There are other mandated requirements that set out some specific consultations that must be undertaken for a range of other legislation. These include:
- The setting of Councillor and Mayoral Allowances;

- Making a local law;
- Declaring a special rate or special charge;
- Selling, exchanging or leasing land;
- Deviating or discontinuing a road;
- Making amendments to the planning scheme; and
- Deliberating on planning applications.

**Engagement timelines and processes:**

- 5.5.7 Where possible, Council is committed to engage the community and key stakeholders about proposed projects, which will allow for genuine opportunities for the community to influence decisions and enable Council to properly understand opportunities and constraints early in the planning process of projects.
- 5.5.8 At times where projects and scope are non-negotiable, Council is committed to informing the community and key stakeholders during the early stages of a project of the timeline and key steps. Information will also be provided about the engagement plan, so that the community can understand how they can be involved, what is negotiable, and what they can influence.
- 5.5.9 Engagement timelines and methods will be identified through the engagement planning process, and will be tailored to the needs of the relevant community, project and legislation or other timeline and process. The engagement design will be driven based on the complexity of the project, which will be detailed in the project’s Community Engagement Plan.

## 5.6 How will we engage?

**Engagement planning:**

- 5.6.1 When planning engagement methods, we will reference our internal Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit, and the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum that supports this Policy. Council are also careful to adhere to our engagement principles, set clear engagement objectives, and to consider statutory processes, community interest, political sensitivity, time, resources and budget constraints.
- 5.6.2 Successful community engagement is well planned, inclusive and accessible to those people that may be affected by the decision. Effective engagement relies on Council:
- defining the scope and objective of the engagement,
  - identifying stakeholders;
  - defining the level of influence over the key stages and timelines;
  - identifying how the stakeholders will be engaged including their respective roles and expectations throughout the engagement process; and

- reporting back on the outcomes

#### **Engagement evaluation and reporting:**

- 5.6.3 Council will undertake evaluation processes to continually improve our approach to community engagement. Evaluation of the engagement process is planned at the beginning of the project, so we are aware of what the outcome will be measured against.
- 5.6.4 The evaluation process will be tailored to the scale and complexity of the engagement and will consider a number of elements including:
- Engagement outcomes and objectives were met;
  - Participants were representative of the stakeholders identified based on impact/interest; and
  - Communications and engagement methods were appropriate.
- 5.6.5 Council will report back to participants and our community in a timely manner about how their input was considered and how it influenced the final outcome.
- 5.6.6 Where consent is provided, we will also use information provided by community engagement to advocate on behalf of our community to relevant parties.
- 5.6.7 Council will also report on the number of engagement activities undertaken by Council, and how effective they have been.

## **5.7 Types of community engagement**

- 5.7.1 Council commits to ensuring that those who are affected by a decision will be given the opportunity to inform that decision.
- 5.7.2 Council determines the level of involvement in the decision and the methods based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum.
- 5.7.3 The IAP2 Spectrum identifies and defines each of the five levels of engagement, from 'inform' to 'empower'. It details our promise to the public for each level of engagement ensuring that both Council and the community have shared expectations. Decisions on the level of engagement will be made according to the scale and importance of projects.
- 5.7.4 Many projects will involve more than one level of engagement. This is because the community can have different levels of influence at different stages of the project and different groups within the community may be more directly impacted than others. Table 1 below describes the five levels of the spectrum and the roles of Council and community.
- 5.7.5 Council will support Council officers in using the IAP2 spectrum and in making decisions on the level of engagement with our internal Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit.

Table 1: IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum  
(IAP2 International Association for Public Participation)

### Increasing level of public participation

	Inform 	Consult 	Involve 	Collaborate 	Empower 
<b>Goal</b>	To provide balanced and objective information to make our community aware of something that has happened or will happen.	To listen to our community's feedback on options or a potential decision and take their input into account.	To seek input to identify issues, concerns and aspirations to inform decision making and show how that input has informed the decision.	To work with our community to develop a detailed understanding of all the issues and opportunities and identify agreed solutions at every step of the process.	To build the capacity of our community to identify solutions and/or lead change.
<b>Commitment to community</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns.	We will work with you to exchange information, ideas and concerns.	We will seek advice and innovation from amongst the various stakeholder groups.	We will work with you to implement agreed decisions.
<b>Community role</b>	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Partner or Lead
<b>Example method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fact sheets</li> <li>- Websites</li> <li>- Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public comment</li> <li>- Focus groups</li> <li>- Surveys</li> <li>- Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshops</li> <li>- Deliberative polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community advisory committees</li> <li>- Consensus-building</li> <li>- Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community panels</li> <li>- Ballots</li> <li>- Delegated decision</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement Type</b>	Consultative		Deliberative		

#### Consultative engagement:

5.7.6 Occurs when views, opinions or ideas are invited on a particular project, draft policy, plan or document. Participation at this level can encompass a broad range of community members and stakeholders.

5.7.7 Examples of consultative engagement include:

- Community meetings and/or forums, including on-line;
- Community information meetings;
- Resident discussion meetings
- Submitter information sessions
- Face to face questionnaires
- Community panel (including deliberative engagement)
- Social media
- Showcase events
- Face to face workshops
- Public exhibitions of documentation

#### Deliberative engagement:

5.7.8 Council's approach to deliberative engagement is consistent with the Act.

5.7.9 Deliberative engagement is an approach which encourages community members to critically test, weigh up and consider a range of information,

perspectives, inputs and evidence to reach a consensus or make recommendations to Council.

5.7.10 Deliberation can be scaled to suit a project based on its scope, complexity or impact and may require independent facilitation to ensure a fair and equitable process.

5.7.11 Examples of deliberative engagement include:

- Workshops
- Deliberative polling
- Community advisory committees / groups
- Consensus building
- Participatory decision making
- Community panels
- Ballots
- Delegated decision
- Online forums
- Online mapping
- Citizen juries

5.7.12 Section 55 (2(g)) of the Act specifies that a Community Engagement Policy is required to give effect to deliberative engagement practices capable of being applied to the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan.

5.7.13 The key characteristics of deliberative engagement include:

- Authentic engagement with the community;
- Good representation of the community in engagement activities;
- Clear demonstration of how all views have been considered; and
- Accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community's level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

Community engagement is the responsibility of Councillors, Council officers, contractors and consultants undertaking work on behalf of Council.

## 7. Policy non-compliance

Failure to comply with this Policy could result in legislative non-compliance, adverse impacts on the reputation of Council, and poorer outcomes for the community.

## 8. Related documents

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Local Government Act 2020
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994
- Policy and Planning Framework
- Community Engagement Framework
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Planning and Environment Act 1987

## 9. Implementation of the Policy

Following adoption of this Policy (in conjunction with other Related Documents) it will be implemented and monitored, along with the subsequent adoption of the Community Engagement Framework and Toolkit.

## 10. Document History

<b>Date approved</b>	<b>Change Type</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>
1 March 2021	Revised	3	1 March 2025