

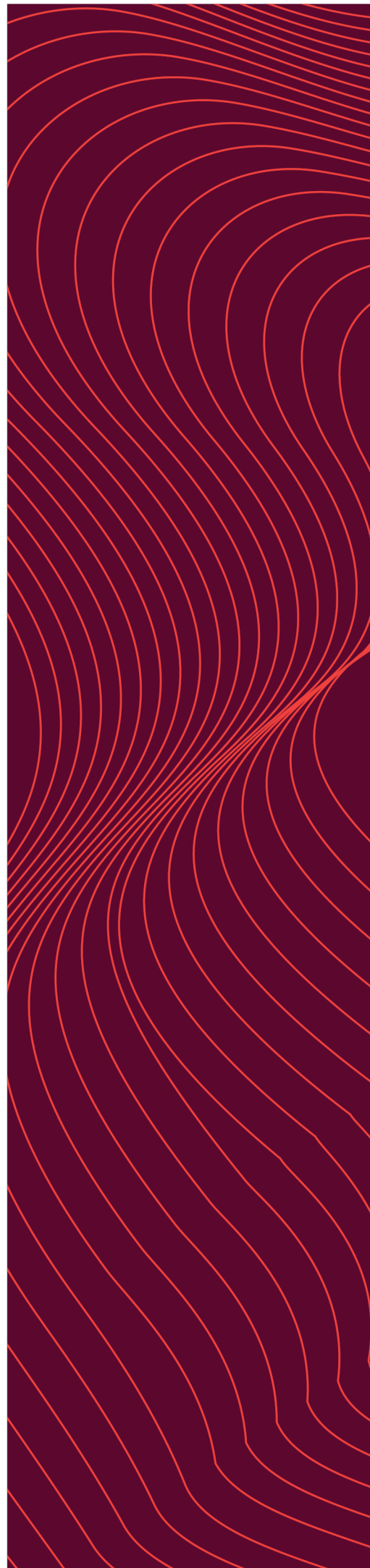
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# Community Engagement Policy

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## Document control

<b>Responsible GM</b>	Tim Ellis	
<b>Division</b>	Regional City Strategy & Transition	
<b>Last updated (who and when)</b>	Manager Engagement and Customer Focus, Lauren Carey	2025

Document history		
Authority	Date	Description of change
Council	12, April 2021	Adopted
Council	30, June 2025	Adopted
<b>References</b>	Refer to section 8 and 9 of this policy	
<b>Next review date</b>	April 2025	
<b>Published on website</b>	Yes	
<b>Document reference no.</b>		

## 1. Background

This Policy meets the requirement for Council to have a Community Engagement Policy under section 55 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) and outlines the Community Engagement Principles noted in section 56 of the Act.

## 2. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Outline the Community Engagement Principles;
- Outline Council's community engagement processes;
- Support community understanding of how Council will involve individuals and stakeholders in decision- making and development of Latrobe City.

The Policy is an important part of how Council will meet the Overarching Governance Principles in section 9 of the Act.

## 3. Scope

- This Policy applies to all Councillors and employees of Latrobe City Council, as well as all contractors engaged by Latrobe City Council.
- This Policy applies to all community engagement to be undertaken by Council, excluding where Victorian legislation mandates a differently

## 4. Principles of management

### 4.1 Introduction

Latrobe City Council is committed to ongoing conversation with our community through providing genuine, consistent, inclusive and effective community engagement processes.

Successful community engagement allows Council to benefit from the knowledge and experience of the Latrobe City community, and enables community members to influence, and see their influence on the decisions and actions that impact their daily lives.

Council's community engagement values are:

- **Respect:** is shown to all members of the community. The views, concerns and experiences of community members are listened to, and each person's point of view is valued;
- **Inclusiveness and accessibility:** we will make every effort to provide opportunities for all members of the community to participate in community engagement activities. All members of the community are supported to actively contribute, regardless of age, gender, sexuality, income, education, cultural background, language skills or disability.
- **Integrity and honesty:** we will ensure a trustworthy and honest manner is used in all levels of community engagement and decision-making, through processes being open and transparent. The community are provided with a clear understanding of how their input has been considered as part of the final decision-making process.
- **Accountability and ownership:** responsibility is taken by Council for decisions and actions relating to community engagement activities.
- **Communication:** we will communicate throughout the community engagement process when receiving and providing feedback, making decisions and taking action. This includes follow up with participants by clearly demonstrating how their input was considered in the final decision.
- **Innovation:** we will continue to find new ways to listen to and engage with members of the community.

## 4.2 Latrobe City Council's approach

Three key documents and a toolkit guide Council's Community Engagement.

### Community Engagement Policy

Overarching document that sets the standards, principles, values and legislated environment

### Community Engagement Framework

Sets out in detail Council's objectives for community engagement and the guidelines for successful engagement

#### Community Engagement Toolkit

The Community Engagement Toolkit provides tools and templates to ensure a consistent approach

#### Community Engagement Action Plan

The Community Engagement Action Plan outlines Council's key commitments and actions to improve community engagement

#### Community Engagement Plan

For every community engagement activity, a plan will be developed, guided by the IAP2 Spectrum

### 4.3 Principles

Latrobe City Council's Community Engagement Policy is required to outline the five Community Engagement Principles set out at section 56 of the Act. The statements below outlines our commitment to deliver each principle.

Principle	Council's Commitment
<b>1. The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope.</b>	<p>Before engagement we will publish an Engagement Plan Overview.. This will explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why the project is needed;</li><li>• What the community can influence and what they can't;</li><li>• What information we need from the community</li><li>• How we will gather feedback from the community; and</li><li>• The timeline to provide feedback and when the matter is expected to be decided.</li></ul> <p>If the project or matter has several stages of engagement, we will define the objective and scope for each stage.</p> <p>We will allocate resources depending on the complexity of the project or matter.</p>
<b>2. Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.</b>	<p>We will provide access to factual and transparent information on the project or matter, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A summary of known impacts, risks and benefits including social, environmental, physical, and financial; and</li><li>• Relevant background information, technical and research reports, related policies, budget estimate and funding source.</li></ul> <p>This information will be provided through a range of communications.</p> <p>We will provide information in accessible formats, such as large print, translated materials, Easy English, or digital alternatives alongside plain language summaries and provide opportunities to ask questions and receive responses.</p>

<p><b>3. Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter.</b></p>	<p>We will identify community members community that have a connection to the project or matter, and will publish an assessment of the level of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact: what level of change will the community member experience as a result of the project/matter; and</li> <li>• Interest: what level of interest has been expressed or is anticipated.</li> </ul> <p>This information is used to work out how best to engage and communicate.</p> <p>Community members who are likely to be more affected, may be offered more opportunities to engage on the decision than others.</p>
<p><b>4. Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.</b></p>	<p>We will design engagement activities and schedule to meet the needs of community members.</p> <p>This will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple ways to participate, including written, visual, online and verbal;</li> <li>• The time participants will require to provide a response; and</li> <li>• The resourcing available for engagement needs depending on the complexity and scale of the project.</li> </ul> <p>For community members who may experience barriers to participation, additional resources may be considered such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and feedback processes in formats to meet their needs; and</li> <li>• Support to participate, including personal care and/or support for transport and after-hours options.</li> </ul>

<b>6. A community engagement process must be designed to promote fairness and equity</b>	<p>We will design engagement programs to encourage fairness, equity and the participation of p community through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One- to-one and small group discussion;</li><li>• Ability to participate in a private or closed forum and/or anonymously;</li><li>• Monitor participation to ensure all are involved and adapt activities to promote increased participation if required; and</li><li>• Moderation and management of public forums to enable respectful and equal sharing of ideas.</li></ul>
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#### **4.4 What is community engagement and why it is important**

Community engagement means listening to the community. It gives people a chance to share their ideas and be part of Council decisions. It helps everyone feel included and shows that their feedback is heard and matters.

When people can be involved and share their thoughts on things that matter to them, it helps make decisions fairer. It also helps people feel included, builds trust in the process, and shows that their opinions are respected.

Community engagement is an important part of how Council works. It helps Council understand different ideas, opinions, and issues from people in our region.

#### **4.5 Who we engage with**

Latrobe City is a diverse community with a broad range of views and interests.

While many people in the community care about decisions, it isn't practical for Latrobe City Council to talk to everyone about every issue. Some decisions also have a bigger impact on certain people than others.

We decide who is affected by looking at how a project, plan or idea might change things for people like where they live, how they work, or their community. This might include individuals, neighbours, or people in local groups and town associations.

#### **4.6 When we will engage**

Making sure the community has a say is an important part of how Latrobe City Council does its work. The Act sets out a number of matters where community engagement is compulsory.

Deliberative engagement is required for:

- Community Vision;
- Council Plan;



- Financial Plan;
- Asset Plan.

Consultative engagement is required for:

- Budget (or any revised Budget);
- Adopting Local Laws;
- Governance Rules;
- Acquiring or disposing of land;
- Leasing of Council land (in some circumstances).

In addition to the above, where appropriate Latrobe City Council will engage the community under a range of other scenarios, such as:

- Other Policy, Strategy and Plan development;
- Service planning, including development, amendment or improvement of a service provided by Council;
- Area improvement, for example major projects and infrastructure, and upgrades to recreational areas, community assets and Council buildings and facilities; Site specific, being any changes to an area, and including matters affecting an individual property;
- Additional legislative requirements under this Act including related regulations, or as required by any other Act, for example:
  - Road Management Act 2004;
  - Planning and Environment Act 2007;
  - Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008;
  - Issues affecting the:
    - o Cultural and social liveability of the community;
    - o Local economy and labour market; or
    - o Natural environment.

Community engagement will occur in the earlier stages of a project/initiative, providing an opportunity for the public to influence the development process.

Depending on the circumstances, community engagement may be undertaken in more than one stage.

Council will give the community and stakeholders enough time to get involved and have their say. Sometimes, the amount of time we have to ask the community for feedback is set by law and can't be changed.

Not all decisions of Latrobe City Council will provide an opportunity for broad community consultation or participation. Sometimes, a decision has already been made by Council or is required by law, which means we can't talk about it or change it any further.

Some areas where community engagement activities may not occur include:

- Where a situation poses an immediate threat or risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of the community to which Council is required to respond quickly, including emergency events;
  - A consultation process involving Council that is being conducted by another level of government (such as Federal or State government);
  - If the matter involves confidential information;
- When the law says it must happen.



#### 4.7 How we will engage

The table below shows a model that helps make sure we follow the same steps for community engagement each time. The model provides:

- Our role in the engagement;
- Our commitment to the community; and
- Examples of some of the methods we may use in our engagement activities.

All levels of engagement can be supported by methods from the previous level.

The engagement level selected will be influenced by the project's scope, impact and available resources.

## Community participation and engagement levels

Activity category	Category 1: Matters which require deliberative engagement under the <i>Local Government Act</i> .				
	Category 2: Matters which are of higher or long-term impact and significant interest to the community.				
	Category 3: Matters which are of lower impact or interest to the community, or where the community's ability to influence is limited.				
Levels of community participation					
Our role	<b>Inform</b> Provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them to understand the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	<b>Consult</b> Obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	<b>Involve</b> Work directly with the community to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	<b>Collaborate</b> Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	<b>Empower</b> To place final decision making in the hands of the community.
Our commitment	We promise to keep you informed.	We promise to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• keep you informed</li><li>• listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations</li><li>• provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</li></ul>	We promise to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed</li><li>• provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</li></ul>	We promise to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• work together with you to formulate solutions</li><li>• incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</li></ul>	We promise to implement your decision.
Engagement type	<b>Consultative</b> The community provide feedback on alternatives, draft documents or decisions.		<b>Deliberative</b> The community are provided with sufficient time and information to consider and prioritise options, as a part of the decision making process.		
Examples of tools and techniques	Website Social media Newsletters and other mail outs Media releases Letters Flyers and posters Signage	Submissions Public comments Surveys Public meetings Polls Drop-in/ pop-up Listening posts	Workshops Stakeholder networks Focus/working groups Interviews Site visit Focus groups	Advisory committees Working group Participant led workshops Co-design Deliberative poll	Delegated committees and community asset committees Citizen juries Democratic voting Practical skills workshops Training events

## **4.8 Deliberative engagement**

The Act requires that the development of Council's Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan involve deliberative engagement practices. Deliberative engagement is an important approach that will also be used in other non-legislated situations as it is required. What do we mean by 'deliberative engagement'?

Deliberative engagement is a form of community engagement that places people closer to the decision-making of a democratic society, without taking away from the decision-making powers of the elected Council. Deliberative engagement happens when a group of people from the community are given the time, facts, and support they need to work together and agree on a solution or idea. The time we have, how complex the topic is, how big the impact is, and the resources we have all help decide how we involve people in deeper community discussions. Local Government Victoria has identified the key characteristics of deliberative engagement as:

- 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.

## **4.9 Latrobe City Council's approach**

For every community engagement activity, Council officers will create a clear and timely plan. This plan will focus on the right people and the best ways to involve them, so everyone has a fair chance to take part.

Council uses the following steps to guide community engagement:

1. Clearly define the purpose and scope of the community engagement
2. Understand stakeholder and community interests
3. Design an appropriate community engagement process
4. Deliver genuine and respectful engagement
5. Review and interpret the engagement data
6. Apply the outcomes of the engagement to inform the decision-making process
7. Evaluate the community engagement process for improvement
8. Close the loop on the community engagement - advise the community of the final outcome and how their feedback was considered in the final decision.

## **4.10 Evaluation**

Feedback will be provided acknowledging and respecting the valuable contributions of community members and stakeholders, as well as the time they dedicate to participating. Outcomes and updates will be reported online via Council's Have Your Say platform and in other ways the community asks for such as print, radio or social media. Updates will also be sent directly to those who have requested to stay informed and have provided their contact details.

## **4.11 Privacy**

Being honest and open is a big part of community engagement. When a person participates at workshops or events or in forums, contributions and identity are considered public. The same rules apply for submissions, unless someone asks to stay anonymous. Responses to surveys,

questionnaires and feedback forms may be published but identities, if known, will remain anonymous.

Contact information will be kept secure and separate from any other data provided.

Council will only collect what personal information it requires to carry out its statutory and legal responsibilities and to deliver its services. Council complies with the requirements of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 in carrying out these responsibilities.

## **5. Accountability and responsibility**

Accountability and responsibility for this policy is outlined below.

### **5.1 Council**

- Responsibility to ensure this Policy is consistent with Latrobe City Council Strategic Direction and other Latrobe City Council Policy
- Responsibility for the decision to approve this Policy by Council Resolution

### **5.2 Chief Executive Officer**

- Overall responsibility for compliance with this policy
- Overall responsibility for enforcing accountability
- Overall responsibility for providing resources
- Overall responsibility for performance monitoring

### **5.3 General Manager**

- Responsibility for compliance with this policy
- Responsibility for enforcing accountability
- Responsibility for providing resources
- Responsibility for performance monitoring

### **5.4 Manager**

- Develop frameworks and procedures in compliance with this policy
- Enforce responsibilities to achieve compliance with frameworks and procedures
- Provide appropriate resources for the execution of the frameworks and procedures

### **5.5 Employees, Contractors and Volunteers**

- Participate where required in the development of frameworks and procedures in compliance with this policy.
- Comply with frameworks and procedures developed to achieve compliance with this policy.

## **6. Evaluation and Review**

This policy will be reviewed on request of Council, in the event of significant change in the Executive team, significant changes to legislation applicable to the subject matter of the policy or, in any other case, during each Council term (generally four years).

## **7. Definitions**

Include definitions of any words which are critical to the interpretation of the policy or whose meaning is distinguishable from common use/understanding.

## **8. Related Documents**

List all related Latrobe City Council Policies, Frameworks and Procedures.

## **9. Reference Documents**

List any external reference materials, such as Acts, Regulations, Guidance, Industrial Instruments, Planning Instruments, etc.

## **10. Appendices**