

# Community Engagement Policy 2024 - 2028 Draft v1

February 2024

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Cardinia Shire Council (Council) recognises and values the Bunurong and Wurundjeri tribes as the original inhabitants of the land that makes up Cardinia Shire.

Council's name is derived from the Kulin nation word 'Kar-din-yarr', meaning 'look to the rising sun' or 'close to the sunrise'. Council's logo, which includes a motif of the rising sun, reflects this meaning.

Council is committed to developing and strengthening relationships through reconciliation. Council supports the reconciliation process, which promotes mutual respect and understanding of the Aboriginal peoples and of all ethnic groups and their history and culture in our community.

## Purpose and Objective

This policy supports Council in its ongoing drive to continually improve community engagement and applies this to its decision making where appropriate. It provides guidance, structure, and accountability to Council's community engagement practices.

Council must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy under section 56 of the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act). This policy gives effect to the delivery of Council's community engagement in line with the principles of the Act.

## Scope

This policy applies to all community engagement activities undertaken by councillors, council officers, volunteers or contractors acting as representatives of Council.

## Guiding principles and frameworks

Council's model of engagement gives effect to the:

- guiding principles of Section 56 of the Local Government Act, 2020
- Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) public participation principles
- International Association of Public Participation Australasia (IAP2) Core Values and Public Participation Spectrum.

Guiding Principles in Section 56 of the Local Government Act, 2020.	VAGO Public Participation Principles	IAP2 Core Values
A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.	Accountability	Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
Participants must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.	Awareness  Openness	Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

Participants must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.	Responsiveness	Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
Participants are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.	Inclusiveness	Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
Participants are informed of the ways in which the process will influence Council decision making.	Transparency Integrity	Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Council uses the International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate or Empower) as the core model for its community engagement activities. The spectrum can be found [here](#) on the IAP2 website.

Council recognises that community engagement can occur at any or all the levels contained in the spectrum. Council will determine the most appropriate level of engagement required as outlined in this policy and having regards to resourcing available.

In line with the Local Government Act, 2020, Council will undertake a deliberative engagement process to inform the following strategic documents:

- Community Vision
- Council Plan
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan.

### **When community engagement is required**

To ensure Council uses a consistent approach, the following circumstances will determine when community engagement should occur.

When the proposed change:

- will significantly affect the community
- is likely to generate community concern
- requires additional information for Council to make a decision
- is subject to legislative requirements that set out specific community engagement processes.

The community engagement policy must be capable of being applied to:

- the making of Councils local laws
- the Council's budget and policy development.

Council will not undertake community engagement in the following circumstances:

- an emergency or situation which impacts public safety, where an immediate resolution is required
- situations which are strictly confidential in nature
- when there is a ministerial exemption
- day-to-day operational decisions which have minimal to no impact on the community.

## **Who we will engage with**

Council will identify who it will engage with having regards to:

- who is directly or indirectly impacted by the subject matter
- who has a vested interest or concern
- who would provide valuable insight and input
- who is the initiative, project or decision affecting.

Council must take steps to consider engagement methods that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally safe for key groups including but not limited to:

- First Nations communities
- people with a disability
- multicultural/faith communities
- newly arrived communities, refugees, or asylum seekers
- young people
- people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- carers
- older adults
- families and children.

Engagement practices must consider people who experience:

- social, economic, digital disadvantage
- geographic isolation.

Guidelines to assist staff are found in Annexure 1.

## **When Council will engage**

Community engagement timeframes must allow sufficient opportunity for the community to participate. A minimum of 3 weeks must be allowed to enable participation unless there is a genuine reason to reduce this timeframe.

Community engagement must not occur over public holidays or during the Christmas period unless the engagement period starts and ends outside of these times providing the community an opportunity to meaningfully participate in the engagement.

## **How Council will engage**

The process must consider appropriate engagement methods to meet the diverse needs of the community. Consideration must be given to:

- face to face engagement opportunities
- online engagement methods
- accessible locations for engagement activities
- times and dates of engagement activities
- alternative formats i.e. via Bilingual or auslan interpreters, audio, Easy read.

## **Reporting outcomes of community engagement**

The outcome of all community engagement must be reported to the community to demonstrate how community feedback has influenced the decisions, plans or activities, and shows participants that their views have been accurately represented.

## **Monitoring, evaluation and review**

All community engagement activities must be evaluated to understand the level of success of its engagement activities, monitor Council's processes and support continuous improvement.

## Definitions

Community	<p>The Local Government Act, 2020 defines community as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people who live in the municipal district of the Council</li> <li>• ratepayers of the Council</li> <li>• Traditional Owners of the land in the municipal district of the Council</li> <li>• people and bodes who conduct activities in the municipal district of the Council.</li> </ul>
Community engagement	Community engagement is the process Council undergoes using a variety of mediums to exchange information with the community with the aim of gathering data and ideas to make decisions or take action.
Engagement Plan (EP)	The Engagement Plan documents the process of community engagement and its outcomes to meet the requirements of this policy and meet the requirements of the Local Government Act, 2020.
IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation Australasia)	IAP2 is an international member association which seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement, incorporating individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest.
Stakeholder	This definition is broader than a group with an interest in an issue: it is extended to include the broader community and Council staff. The definition also applies an organisation that deliver services in the area and is affected by a Council decision.
VAGO (Victorian Auditor General's Office)	VAGO regularly undertakes audits of functions of Council, including community engagement activities. It provides a set of guiding principles for public participation.
Deliberative Engagement	Deliberative engagement is the process of bringing together a group of individuals who are as closely representative population of the community as practically possible. This group considers relevant facts from multiple points of view over a period of time, identifying options, and coming to a group decision.

## Legislation and Related Documents

- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Information Privacy Act 2000
- Local Government Act 2020
- Local Government Act 1989
- Planning and Environment Act, 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Equal Opportunities Act 2010
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1992
- Multicultural Act, 2011
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Child Safety Act 2015
- The Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act, 2005
- Gender Equality Act, 2020

## Cardinia Shire Council's

- Council Vision 2040
- Council Plan 2021-25
- Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan
- Public Transparency Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Liveability Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Cultural Diversity Plan
- Access and Inclusion Plan.

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