

Council Policy

Council policy title:	Community & Stakeholder Engagement Policy 2017
Council policy ref no:	C/POL/17/110
Council policy owner:	Executive Manager Communications, Customer and Cultural Services
Adopted by:	Bayside City Council
Date adopted:	19 December 2017
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1. Policy intent

This policy affirms Bayside City Council's commitment to engaging its community and relevant stakeholders about matters that affects them. The intent of this policy is to provide clarity about how Council will fulfil its commitment and take into account the diverse needs of the community when making decisions.

2. Purpose/Objective

Council undertakes extensive research and consultation to understand community expectations and the external influences and environmental challenges it is facing. Where contradictions or conflicting views arise with this planning or delivery, Council is required by legislation to ensure decisions are transparent and accountable to its community (*Local Government Act 1989* (Vic)). The intent of the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy is to improve the quality and effectiveness of Council's decision making and enhance community satisfaction with Council by undertaking the following:

- Creating genuine opportunities for members of the Bayside community to participate in matters that interest and affect it;
- Ensuring transparency and accountability in Council decision making;
- Ensuring the diverse needs of the local community are taken into account in decision making; and
- Encouraging and supporting the community to participate in civic life.

2.1 Legislative Context

The policy supports Council's responsibilities within the *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic) which states that the role of Council is to provide governance and leadership for the local community through advocacy, decision making and action.

The policy aligns with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic) which enshrines the right “every person has to take part in public life, such as the right to vote or run for public office.”

Bayside City Council will adhere to all legislative requirements that mandate engagement for local governments, including but not limited to the:

- *Planning and Environment Act 1987*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Road Management Act 2004*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006,*
- *Local Government Act 1989.*

2.2 Strategic Context

Council Plan 2017–21

The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy supports the achievement of Goal 8 of the *Council Plan 2017–21*:

- *(Council’s) decision making is open, transparent and informed by representative community views;*

Additionally the associated strategic objective to:

- *Improve community engagement to inform Council decision making is supported by the adoption of a policy to guide Council’s engagement activities.*

Bayside Community Plan 2025

The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy supports the community’s aspiration to:

- *Feel supported and engaged, to live an active and healthy lifestyle regardless of age, geographical location, personal circumstances or physical ability;*

With particular reference to:

- *Having a say or being involved in decisions or projects that are important to them or their family.*

3. Scope

The Community and Stakeholder Policy ensures members of the Bayside community have genuine opportunities to participate in matters that affect or interest them, and the feedback provided is taken into account by Council when making decisions.

This policy applies to Council, Councillors, Council Committees and all Council staff acting as representatives and/or delegates of Council. These parties have accountability for acting in accordance with this policy in exercising any decisions on Council’s behalf.

This policy establishes Council’s commitment to consider input collected through community engagement along with financial, legal and environmental advice when making decisions.

4. Roles & Responsibilities

The Executive Manager Communications, Customer and Cultural Services coordinates the development, implementation, compliance, monitoring, evaluation and review of this policy.

Communications and engagement staff are responsible for providing advice in relation to this policy and will support staff in the development and delivery of community engagement and research programs. These staff are active contributors in the delivery of the community engagement culture and practice at Bayside City Council.

Managers and Coordinators are responsible for:

- Identifying members of the community (individuals and organisations) who have an interest in and are affected by Council decisions and actions;
- Implementing and leading appropriate approaches and methodologies for effective engagement and consultation to meet Council's Policy commitments; and
- Ensuring compliance with all statutory obligations on Council with regard to privacy, human rights, equal opportunity and discrimination.

5. Monitoring, evaluation & review

Monitoring, evaluation and review of the policy will be undertaken by the Executive Manager Communications, Customer and Cultural Services. The effectiveness of this policy will be measured through evaluation of engagement and research programs and annual customer satisfaction and performance metrics. The policy will be reviewed according to Council's Policy Framework.

6. Policy statement

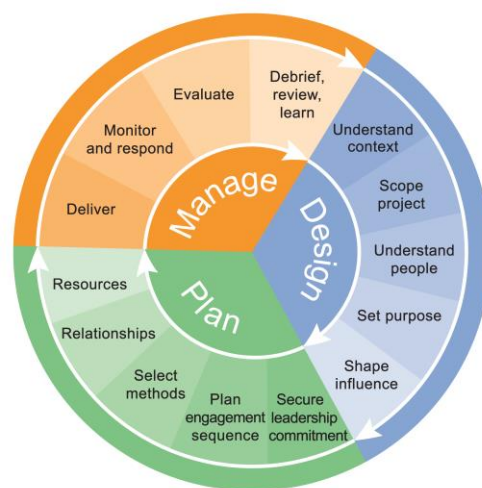
Our commitment

Bayside City Council will engage the Bayside community in matters that interest and/or affect it. Information collected through engagement will be considered along with financial, legal, operational and environmental and other appropriate advice when making decisions.

The effectiveness of each engagement program will be measured by the:

- Success of the engagement program in reaching the stakeholders who have an interest in the matter. These stakeholders will have been identified during the project planning phase and will be documented in the engagement plan. This plan will include considerations of demographic cohorts, geographic areas, communities of interest, and the impact of the matter on various stakeholders;
- Reliability of data as determined by Council when making a decision; and
- The extent to which the findings of the engagement can be and are analysed and presented with clarity to Council.

Diagram 1 – IAP2 Public Participation Model



IAP2 International Federation 2014

The evaluation of an engagement program will be reported to Council or its delegate at the time when a decision is due on the matter, or before if it is appropriate. For example, if

Council is preparing a proposed strategy or a 'position' that has been the subject of an initial engagement program, these findings will be reported as an input into Council's proposal. This proposal may then be the subject of further consultation.

Council will engage with its community and stakeholders in a manner which demonstrates they are being heard and considered. This is reflected in our engagement principles which follow the IAP2 Public Participation Model (Diagram 1) for delivering engagement programs.

Bayside City Council's Principles for Engagement

These principles guide Council's practice. They support consistency and our continuous improvement.

1. Clear purpose and process

We will ensure the purpose of our engagement is clear and understood. We will outline the process and its key steps as well as opportunities for participation.

2. Clear scope and level of influence

We will clearly communicate what can change and what cannot change in each engagement process. We will ensure community and stakeholders know what they can influence during the process and when.

3. Informed decision making and deliberation

We will plan, deliver and report on processes that allow the community and stakeholders to understand and deliberate on the issue at hand.

4. Inclusive and representative participation

We will plan processes and use tools and techniques that are accessible to all ages and abilities and we will seek out and encourage participation from those affected and interested. We will ensure representativeness in participation and diversity of views.

5. Appropriate and varied techniques

We will plan and deliver engagement using a variety of appropriate tools and techniques. These tools and techniques will be fit for purpose and fit for key community and stakeholder groups.

6. Accurate, accessible and timely information

We will ensure any information about the project or issue is presented in a clear and accessible manner and distributed so that time can be allowed for meaningful participation.

7. Feedback on how input is being used

We will inform participants of how their contributions influenced the project or issue.

When we will engage

Council will engage the Bayside community and stakeholders on matters that both interest and affect them, including but not limited to:

- Substantially changing or reviewing a Council service or program;
- Reviewing or proposing a new Council policy or strategy; and
- Capital works projects including public buildings, centres or other infrastructure.

Opportunities for community engagement may also arise when a member of the community raises an issue or item requiring a decision by Council.

Council will not necessarily engage when it has an adopted policy, strategy or decision that determines a clear direction for implementation which has already been the subject of appropriate engagement.

Who we will engage

Engagement programs will be designed to reach and maximise participation from the target stakeholder/community audience. When projects or matters affect the broader municipality, engagement programs will be designed to reach a cross section of the community, including programs to reach those whose views are less often heard, or who are difficult to reach through traditional engagement approaches.

How we will engage

Bayside City Council will engage in accordance to the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines available on Council’s website.

7. Related documents

Strategic Plans	Council Plan 2017 – 2021 Wellbeing for All Ages and Abilities (under review) Bayside Community Plan 2025
Guidelines	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Guidelines (Draft)
External References	International Association for Public Participation Victoria Auditor-General’s Office – <i>Public Participation in Government Decision-Making: A Better Practice Guide 2015</i>

8. Definitions & Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
Engagement	Any process that involves community and/or stakeholders in problem solving or decision making and uses this input to make decisions
Community	Under the Local Government Act, the ‘local community’ includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people who live in the municipality • people and bodies who are ratepayers • people and bodies who conduct activities in the municipality.
Stakeholder	An organisation or defined group of people, who are interested, affected by or contribute to an outcome. For example government departments and bodies, representatives of business and industry or service providers.