

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
POLICY**

2021



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nation and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to our reconciliation journey, because at its heart, reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, for the benefit of all Victorians.

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Adopted: 2021

Review: 2025

Thanks to our community

Thank you to the people who shared their input, ideas and reflections that have helped shape this Community Engagement Policy. We reached out to you over many months to seek your involvement and participation in conversations, activities and workshops about the principles and practice of community engagement. We appreciate your time and interest and look forward to fostering a deeper culture of public participation together. To find out more about the community engagement policy consultation visit participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Melbourne recognises and values the vast knowledge and experiences within our diverse communities, and is committed to placing the community at the heart of what we do. Together we can shape an evolving Melbourne where our communities are resilient, connected and engaged. Effective and meaningful community engagement plays a critical role in enabling this future at a local, national and global level. Genuine and equitable access to participatory decision-making is essential to a strong community.

This policy supports Council's goal of being a deliberative city, and realising our vision as a bold, inspirational and sustainable city.

PURPOSE

The Community Engagement Policy outlines the City of Melbourne’s commitment and approach to community engagement practice.

It details the principles that guide our work towards delivering sustainable outcomes for our city: through shared problem-solving, open dialogue and meaningful participation.

The policy seeks to foster a deeper culture of public participation. It provides a common language that strengthens community engagement for all.

This policy applies to all Council service areas, teams and employees. Community engagement is everyone’s responsibility and evolves as our city evolves. It applies across the work that Council delivers, from strategic planning, to community development, service delivery and legislative requirements. The policy informs the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of community engagement processes. It lets the community know what they can expect from us.

This policy represents one of the four pillars of engagement from our Community Engagement Framework, alongside ‘People’, ‘Practice’ and ‘Performance’. The framework was endorsed by Council in 2010 and embedded across the organisation. It structures the way we invest in and are accountable for community engagement through a range of internal processes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist team • Training program • Mentoring program • Facilitator network • Practitioner network
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate Melbourne • Planning, advice and support • Templates and resources • Contractor guidelines
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Melbourne Engagement Protocols • Community Vision • Council Plan • Strategic Plans
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit • Research program • Evaluation toolkit • Lessons learned process



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The City of Melbourne acknowledges the professional services provided by the following firms in the development and implementation of the City of Melbourne's Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2022. The City of Melbourne is grateful for the expertise and support provided by these firms in the development and implementation of the City of Melbourne's Community Engagement Strategy 2018-2022.

There are no payments to be made by the City of Melbourne to any of the firms listed below as an acknowledgement of their services.

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Have your
say
on your city's
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

HOW WAS THIS POLICY DEVELOPED?

This policy was developed in consultation with the community, Council and our employees and is underpinned by a strong history of public participation at the City of Melbourne.

Each year, we typically engage on over 50 projects, reaching around 135,000 people through our online and face-to-face activities.

The policy was informed by an internal review, as well as benchmarking international, national and local examples of best practice community engagement. We also undertook a program of consultation activities in late 2020 and early 2021, in addition to reviewing previous community feedback and data.

This policy is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2020 and aligns with other key references including the Victorian Auditor-General's *Public Participation in Government Decision-Making Better Practice Guide*, our previous Community Engagement Charter, and the City of Melbourne values.

We will review this policy and our processes periodically to ensure that they continue to reflect the expectations of the community, Council and our employees.

“Help people to value that they have a voice. Find the ones that don’t know they have a voice yet, because there’s so many strong agents of change out there.”

- Traditional Custodian group



WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them.

The outcomes of community engagement activities are better decisions that result in improved policy, facilities and services, as well as greater community satisfaction and wellbeing.

At the City of Melbourne, our community engagement approach is underpinned by theory and evidence, and is embedded in our organisational culture and values.



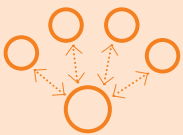
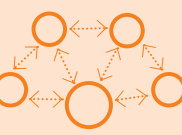

Whenever the City of Melbourne is planning, delivering a project or making a decision that significantly impacts the way our community experiences the city or their interaction with our organisation, the community must have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in that process.



THE SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement occurs for a variety of reasons and across a broad range of Council areas, such as city planning, service delivery, infrastructure design, strategies, plans and more. You can see when we are required by law to engage in the Legislative Requirements section. The City of Melbourne uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) *Spectrum of Engagement* to guide our planning.

The IAP2 Spectrum is a useful, widely recognised tool that identifies five levels of participation. For each level there is a corresponding goal, commitment and role for Council and the community in the process. There may often be more than one level of engagement used across a project, depending on the stage, scope, timeline and stakeholders involved, as well as the influence and impact identified.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
					
Goal	To provide our community with objective and clear information that lets them know when something is happening, or about to happen.	To seek and consider community feedback on alternatives, proposals and/or decisions we need to make.	To work directly with our community throughout the process to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are understood, considered and incorporated where appropriate.	To partner closely with our community in identifying alternatives, developing solutions and co-designing a jointly agreed outcome.	To place final decision making in the hands of our community, build their capacity to identify solutions and lead or deliver change.
Our commitment to community	We will keep you informed.	We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decisions.	We will work with you to ensure what we've heard is directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decisions.	We will work together in co-designing solutions, and as much as possible, incorporate your advice and proposals into the decisions.	We will work alongside you to realise your decisions and aspirations.
The role of community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Partner or lead
Engagement type	Informative	Consultative	Deliberative	Deliberative	Deliberative

DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Deliberative engagement is a process used to reach an outcome or decision for complex issues. The process typically occurs over a period of time and brings together a real mix of voices to work through and consider issues in a supported environment.

It is an inclusive and transparent process in which participants are provided with:

- a clear purpose from the outset of what will be achieved and why
- relevant evidence and background information to analyse
- sufficient time to explore, assess and discuss options
- practical support to enable participation in the process

Deliberative engagement requires locals, experts, Councillors and City of Melbourne employees to be engaged in informed discussion. It should enable a diverse range of people in our community to be highly involved, including those most impacted by the decision.

City of Melbourne will undertake deliberative engagement for the development of our:

- Community Vision (10 years)
- Council Plan (4 years)
- Financial Plan (10 years)
- Asset Plan (10 years)
- and projects and policies where deliberative engagement is determined to be the most effective process to reach an outcome or make a decision.

“If we all contribute our perspectives, then a wider range of views will be available in the end to make the right decision.”

- 12 year old student





OUR PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENT

The City of Melbourne has developed the following principles through consultation with our community. They are our commitments to community engagement that guide our work.



Place-based and community development

City of Melbourne understands the strengths, assets and connections to place that our community has, and we invest in building the capacity of our community to lead and affect change.

We will engage creatively in the places and spaces where our community live, work, play and visit, and will work to strengthen the connections and understanding of local areas and issues.

We will seek out experts alongside local expertise and will foster reciprocal relationships and proactive partnerships with Traditional Custodians, community organisations, residents, workers, businesses, students and other precinct and neighbourhood-based individuals, leaders and groups.

We will ensure that the community is supported to identify place-based concerns and opportunities, and we will work together to address these concerns and realise aspirations.



Inclusive and Accessible

Everyone has a right to be involved in decisions that affect where and how they live. Everyone should feel supported and comfortable to have their say in council decision making.

We will value diverse ideas and perspectives and proactively seek out a real mix of voices and experiences that reflect our municipality.

We will provide accessible information and genuine opportunities that invite and enable our community to participate, ensuring they feel valued and empowered.

We will allocate appropriate resources to support the needs of participants, particularly from underrepresented voices in our community, ensuring the methods, communication and spaces we use are culturally safe and accessible for all.



Accountable and Transparent

City of Melbourne is accountable for the decisions we have been entrusted to make and we are clear on why and how we engage.

We will communicate in a clear and timely manner so our community can easily understand what we are asking, what level of influence they have and how it will impact them.

We will ensure our staff are well resourced and skilled in engagement, and conduct consultation processes openly and fairly.

We will report back to our community on what we did and what we heard during consultation via Participate Melbourne and other relevant channels, as well as ensuring that those who have formally engaged in consultation processes are informed when a decision will go to Council to be endorsed.

We will improve our engagement practices through ongoing evaluation and learning, as well as continually extending our reach and strengthening our relationships with the community.



Trust and Respect

City of Melbourne is actively invested in our relationship with our community and we understand that trust is developed by commitment and adherence to these principles.

We will respect the time and commitment our community invests in engagement and will work collectively with a common goal of building strong neighbourhoods and a vibrant city for everyone.

We will listen deeply and engage in open dialogue, supporting our community to realise its aspirations. We will promote ongoing discussion, deliberation and mutual exchange of ideas, utilising our channels and networks.

We will commit to meaningful engagement that enhances and continuously builds trust with our community, and demonstrates integrity in our processes.

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YOUR VOICE
MATTERS!

participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au
community engagement policy

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귀 기울이겠습니다



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CITY OF
MELBOURNE

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Community engagement is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to play in participatory decision-making that shapes the places where we live, work, play and create. There are roles for both Council and the community in initiating, leading, participating in and delivering engagement activities.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Community, business, government and other stakeholders	Support community engagement processes and Council decision-making by seeking information, actively participating in engagement activities, putting forward ideas and promoting consultation opportunities to other stakeholders.
Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Councillors	Champion the commitment and principles of engagement through leadership, modelling best-practice and decision-making.
CEO, Deputy CEO and Executive Leadership Team	Champion a culture that fosters best-practice engagement and model the principles through leadership, process and implementation of this policy.
Management Leadership Team	Manage teams and projects to ensure community engagement is undertaken consistent with this policy and that staff are appropriately resourced, trained and supported.
Director Community Services	Monitor implementation of this policy and conduct periodic reviews to drive continuous improvement across the Community Engagement Framework.
Community Engagement Team	Oversee the Community Engagement Framework to build organisational capacity and practice through provision of advice, training and mentoring, resources and tools, as well as building and maintaining place-based relationships with community.
Council employees	Ensure their community engagement planning and delivery is consistent with this policy and as appropriate to their role and function.

“The closer the decision-making is to people... the more happy the community will be, the more the ‘common good’ will be looked after and the quality of life will improve for everyone.”

- worker



OUR LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Elements of our community engagement work are guided by Victorian Government legislation which sets specific engagement requirements for some Council activities. These statutory requirements usually relate to long term strategic council planning and budgeting, amendments to the planning scheme, development of public health and wellbeing plans, local law making, land acquisition and sales, electoral reviews and some road changes.

The Local Government Act 2020 outlines a set of overarching principles and requirements to guide the engagement approach of councils. Other relevant legislation includes:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- Disability Act 2006
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Local Government Act 1989
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994

DEFINITIONS

Co-design

A partnership with community to come to an agreed model or design of service delivery or public infrastructure. Co-design can also refer to the co-design of the engagement process itself to ensure it is fully transparent and works for all parties.

Community

An individual or a group of people united by at least one common characteristic such as geography, shared interests, values, experiences, or tradition.

Community development

Community groups and individuals are supported to identify important concerns and opportunities, and to plan and implement strategies to mitigate their concerns and realise aspirations. Community development and community engagement are related. They can be understood as a continuum of community work.

Community engagement

A planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in decisions that affect them or are of interest to them.

Deliberative engagement

A process used to reach an outcome or decision for complex issues. The process typically occurs over a period of time and brings together a real mix of voices to work through and consider issues in a supported environment. It is an inclusive and transparent process where support, time, information and purpose are key requirements.

Participatory decision-making

A process that includes a broad range of people in the making of a decision. It includes both 'public participation' and 'community engagement'.

Place-based

An approach that acknowledges the uniqueness and diversity of our neighbourhoods and builds strong connections with local stakeholders, community organisations, groups, leaders and individuals to strengthen and support local places, spaces and people.

Public participation

The involvement of people who live, work, create, visit or study across the City of Melbourne in local government decisions and planning. Participants know how they can influence a decision and are encouraged and supported to participate.

Stakeholder

An individual or group that has an interest in any Council decision or activity, including Traditional Custodians and Aboriginal communities, other tiers of government and government agencies, businesses, educational institutes, not-for-profits and philanthropic organisations, visitors, residents, advocacy groups, children, ratepayers and renters, emergency services, culturally and linguistically diverse people and many more.

“Using direct and plain English is the way to go, plus accessible languages that reflect our diverse community.”

- resident



REFERENCES

City of Melbourne

Community Engagement Policy – Consultation Findings
participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy

City of Melbourne

Key strategies, plans and reports including Council Plan and Future Melbourne 2026
melbourne.vic.gov.au

International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)

Quality Assurance Standard – Core values and spectrum of engagement

<https://iap2.org.au/resources/quality-assurance-standard/>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Principles of deliberative engagement

<https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation.htm>

Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO)

Public Participation in Government Decision-making Better Practice Guide

<https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf>

Victorian Government

Local Government Act 2020

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/local-government-act-2020/003>

USEFUL LINKS

Participate Melbourne

participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/

Participate Melbourne is the City of Melbourne's online engagement platform where the community can have their say on the city's big issues and future plans. The platform enables people to contribute their opinions, join conversations, receive updates on projects, and find out how their feedback has influenced decisions.

Council and Future Melbourne Committee

[melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/
Pages/committees-meetings.aspx](https://melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/Pages/committees-meetings.aspx)

Council and Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) meetings are the formal decision-making forums for all matters under Council's responsibility, including the implementation of Council Plan strategies. The public are welcome to attend these meetings to listen to the discussions, ask a public question, and/or make a verbal submission.

How to contact us

Online:

melbourne.vic.gov.au

In person:

Melbourne Town Hall – Administration Building
120 Swanston Street, Melbourne
Business hours, Monday to Friday
(Public holidays excluded)

Telephone:

03 9658 9658
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Fax:

03 9654 4854

In writing:

City of Melbourne
GPO Box 1603
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia



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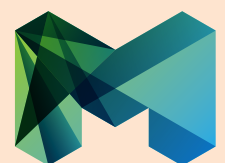
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