

Community Engagement Policy



Version 3.0

Approval Body:	COUNCIL
Endorsement Date of Current Version:	18 August 2020
Current Version:	3.0 <i>Policy documents are periodically reviewed for required changes and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy on the Sharepoint to ensure that you have the current version.</i>
Compulsory Review Cycle:	Every 4 years
Review Date:	30 June 2028 <i>In addition to required material changes, at the formal Review Date, there may be circumstances, from time-to-time, requiring minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively.</i> <i>Examples include: a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, or including a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be authorised by the approval body.</i>
Responsible Department:	Communications and Corporate Governance
Responsible Team:	Community Engagement and Advocacy
Relevant Legislation:	• Local Government Act 2020 • Equal Opportunity Act 2010 • Disability Act 2006 • Privacy and Data Protection Act 2004 • Planning and Environment Act 1987 • Road Management Act 2004 • Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 • Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 • Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 • Matters subject to s.223 of the Local Government Act 1989 • Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2021

	• <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> • <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> • <i>Public Administration Act 2004</i>
Relevant Council Documents:	<i>Voice of Children and Young People Framework</i>
ECM ID:	14076253

1. Purpose and Intent

Our community and stakeholders play a vital role in helping us improve and shape the future direction of the City of Casey.

The purpose of this policy is to outline Council's ongoing commitment to engage with the City of Casey's diverse communities, community groups and stakeholders. We will actively encourage participation in engagement opportunities to help support meaningful conversations with our diverse communities, community groups and stakeholders. This will help us to better reflect our community members' needs, priorities and expectations in Council's activities and decision-making process.

The Local Government Act 2020 sets out several fundamental principles for engaging local communities in local government decision-making processes. This policy includes key guiding principles to enable best-practice community engagement. It also outlines how these principles will be applied to ensure that the community is informed, consulted, and engaged in decisions that affect them.

More than 800 community members contributed to the development of this policy. Council identified five key insights out of their feedback, which have been used to underpin our approach to community engagement. These insights include:

1. Engagement matters to our community members and they want opportunities to provide input.
2. Deliberative engagement is important and should be used in line with community preferences.
3. Listen to community feedback and share how it was used in Council outcomes and decisions.
4. Make it easy to find engagement opportunities.
5. Keep the community informed by providing progress updates on engagement activities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to community engagement processes followed by Council. It is expected that other agencies' work in the City of Casey local government area use the policy as a guide for their own practice.

3. Definitions

Key term	Definition
Accessibility	Means identifying and eliminating obstacles and barriers to ensure anyone can access or use places, services and information, regardless of their ability, location, culture, language, time, resources or other differentiating factor.
Children and Young People	Means anyone aged 0 – 25 who is a member of the City of Casey community.
Communication channel	Refers to the way in which Council may communicate engagement opportunities with you. This can include a range of channels including social media, Council website, Casey Conversations, or newspaper advertising.
Community	Includes individuals, groups of people, stakeholders, special interest groups, business groups, community groups and community organisations. A community can refer to a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest (community of practice) or a community of affiliation or identity (such as an industry or sporting club).
Community engagement	Refers to a planned process that supports public decision-making. It includes: • Sharing information and providing updates • Seeking feedback and gathering input • Dialogue and deliberation It is also sometimes referred to as public participation.
Community member	In the context of community engagement, a community member is a participant in a community engagement process. Outside of community engagement, these same people may be clients or customers in their interactions with Council.
Council	Means Casey City Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> . Can refer to the City of Casey as an organisation as well as the Mayor, Councillors, Council staff, Executive Council Officers, consultants, and contractors working on behalf of the City of Casey.
Deliberation	Means long and careful consideration or discussion.
Deliberative engagement	Describes a series of engagement practices that demonstrate all the following features: • Influence - Promise of influence over policy and decision-making (Involve/Collaborate/Empower using the IAP2 Levels of Engagement). • Inclusion - Participation that is representative of the community and inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values. • Deliberation - open dialogue and discussion, access to information and movement towards consensus.

Diverse communities	Refers to the different communities that exist within the City of Casey municipality, including those with a common interest such as business or sporting associations. It can also refer to people who share something in common, such as all abilities, gender or culture.
International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)	The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation dedicated to advancing the practice of public participation. The City of Casey's engagement is guided by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. According to the IAP2 spectrum for engagement, the five levels of engagement that are outlined by the IAP2 framework include: 1. Inform - To provide the public with balanced information to assist them understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. 2. Consult - To obtain public feedback and analysis, alternatives and/or decisions. 3. Involve - To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered. 4. Collaborate - To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of a preferred solution. 5. Empower - To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Representative engagement	Describes actively seeking out and involving individuals or groups impacted by Council's activities, projects or decision making to ensure diversity of viewpoints and values are considered.
Reasonable support	Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment which does not impose a disproportionate or undue burden, to ensure accessibility.
Stakeholders	Defined as individuals, groups of individuals, organisations or political entities who are interested in or impacted by a Council outcome or decision.

4. Policy

4.1. What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a process whereby Council uses a variety of methods to proactively seek out feedback from the community.

The type and level of engagement undertaken by Council will be determined by the scope, complexity and impact of the Council project or decision being made.

We are committed to community engagement that creates genuine connections and conversations with our diverse communities and stakeholders. Through our engagement activities we provide the community with opportunities to share information, contribute feedback and provide input into the decisions that affect them. This leads to more robust decision making, that better reflects the needs, priorities, and expectations of our community members.

4.2. Why we engage

At the City of Casey, we believe that the people who are impacted by our activities, should have an opportunity to provide feedback or have input into the decision-making process. As a Council our engagement can help create the following benefits:

- Offers opportunities for residents and key stakeholders to contribute and influence decisions that directly affect their community.
- Allows Council to better understand the needs and priorities of our diverse communities and stakeholders.
- Allows Council to make more informed decisions.
- Creates greater transparency and trust.
- Supports genuine and meaningful conversations.
- Fosters stronger relationships with our community and stakeholders.
- Builds community understanding about Council's scope of work and decision-making process.
- Engages and informs children and young people of their rights to safety, information and participation.
- Facilitates information sharing.
- Creates better public value.
- Promotes better social cohesion.
- Improves social capital.
- Delivers better outcomes for our communities.

We believe every voice counts. Through engagement we want to encourage our community members to share their views and feedback to help guide Council outcomes and decision making. We represent this through our engagement practices by:

- Empowering our community to have a voice in Council's strategic direction and long-term vision.
- Empowering community participation through inclusive and accessible engagement practices.
- Enriching lives by making informed decisions that reflect our communities' needs and priorities.

4.3. Community engagement principles

Council's community and stakeholder engagement approach is guided by the community engagement principles set out under the Local Government Act 2020:

1. A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.

2. Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.
3. Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.
4. Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.
5. Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

4.4. When we engage

Council's decision to engage will be guided by the following:

- Council will engage when there is influence available for the community.
- Council will undertake engagement when a policy, project or decision is likely to significantly impact the community. The impacts may be economic, social, environmental, build form or governance related.

Council's engagement will commence as early as possible in the process. This helps to ensure our community and stakeholders can make a meaningful contribution that can help direct Council outcomes and decision making. Engagement may occur once or multiple times, commensurate with the scope, complexity and impact of the project or decision. Opportunities to give feedback and input will be made available for 3-4 weeks.

4.4.1. Other engagement considerations

Other considerations that help shape how and when we undertake engagement at the City of Casey are:

- **Legislative** - Council will undertake engagement where prescribed under the relevant legislation or regulations. The engagement will be undertaken to ensure we meet our statutory obligations as well as meeting the commitments outlined in this policy. These legislative considerations include the engagement requirements set out under the *Local Government Act 2020* as well as other relevant Acts (refer to section on Statutory Requirements).
- **Planning and Environment Act** – Council acknowledges that there are consultation requirements under the Planning and Environment Act that we must comply with. These specific consultations may require Council to use an engagement approach different from the process outlined in this Policy.
- **Council elections** - As a Council we are required to avoid public consultations during the Council election period and will not undertake community consultation on contentious topics which may be subject to election matters. Should public consultation be considered necessary during this time, the results will not be reported to Council until after the election.
- **Major strategic policies or issues** - Council understands the need to seek community or stakeholder input into projects or decisions that have a broad or high impact on individuals or groups of individuals. Where this is the case, Council will use a range of engagement methods to seek representative feedback from our community.
- **Localised impacts and initiatives** - This applies to any Council decision, policy or localised issue that affects a specific part of the community (refer to definitions). In these circumstances, we will tailor our engagement program based on the complexity and size of the project being undertaken and the communities we are consulting with.
- **Council services and day-to-day business** - Where appropriate we will engage with our community and stakeholders on any core services or funded projects where there may be significant impact on the community and or stakeholders. We will identify and seek feedback on the negotiable elements related to these Council activities.
- **Reasons for limited engagement** - In some circumstances Council may be restricted in the level of engagement it can undertake. This may include situations where: Council isn't the leading agency (e.g. emergency authorities, VicRoads), specialist knowledge or

expertise is required, work is commercial in confidence, work relates to operational matters or where there is an unacceptable risk posed to our community if we do not take immediate action. Wherever possible, Council will continue to share information about these activities with our community and stakeholders.

4.5. Who we engage

We will engage with community and stakeholders that are impacted by, or interested in, a project or Council decision. This can include anyone who lives, works, plays, visits, studies or has an interest in the Casey area.

For each engagement we will identify the communities or stakeholders who are impacted and seek to engage with them to ensure we have representative feedback to guide our project or decision making.

Accessible and inclusive engagement

Participants in a community engagement process are entitled to feel valued, respected and welcome, regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes.

In undertaking any engagement, efforts will be made to ensure that our diverse communities can access, understand, and contribute their perspectives to the process in a way that is appropriate, productive, and respectful.

Our engagement methodology will seek to understand and address the barriers to participation that are faced by our diverse community on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes. We understand that this is not a once-off consideration but something to be addressed at every stage of engagement from design, implementation, analysis through to monitoring and evaluation.

Reasonable support such as translators, childcare or transportation will be provided free of charge when needed to enable participation. Consideration will also be given to time and location of engagement activities to ensure accessibility.

Children and Young People

City of Casey is a child safe organisation that is committed to empowering children and young people to have a say on decisions that impact them. The rights of children and young people to be informed and to participate in decision making are legislated by the Victorian Child Safe Standards and supported by the Victorian Child Friendly Cities and Communities charter.

The Community Engagement team, in partnership with Child Safe and Child, Youth and Family, will work to ensure the organisation upholds the Child Safe Standards through the design and implementation of age-appropriate engagement methodology.

4.6. How we will engage

Our community engagement will have clearly identified objectives and scope.

We will identify the decision to be made, the negotiables and non-negotiables, the purpose and objectives for the engagement and the level of influence available. These will be communicated to the community and stakeholders and we will ensure these are understood.

Our engagement processes will be proportionate and fit for purpose, considering the scope, complexity, impact, purpose, level of public interest and legislative requirements.

The communication channels and engagement methods we use will be those suitable to the purpose and those our community prefer, and we will ensure their accessibility. We are committed to engagement representative of the individuals and groups affected by a proposed Council outcome or decision. We will collect and store data in a way that maintains privacy and meets standards.

Deliberative engagement will be practiced when the legislation requires it, and when it is suitable to the scope, complexity and impact of the project or decision.

We will keep our community informed as well as provide progress updates of engagement processes underway.

We value and recognise the contribution of participants who have given up their time to provide feedback or attend engagement activities.

4.6.1. Types of engagement

The City of Casey's engagement is guided by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. According to the IAP2 spectrum for engagement, the five levels of engagement that are outlined by the IAP2 framework include:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL				
To provide the public with balanced information to assist them understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback and analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC				
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLES				
FAQs Information sheets	Surveys Focus groups	Workshops Information sheets	Community Reference Groups Consensus building	Delegated decision making (e.g. community makes the decision)

Updates on Council websites	Community Panel	Deliberative opinion polling	Participation in decision making Co-designing	Community ballot
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4.6.2. Our engagement values

We are committed to the following engagement values:

- Genuine engagement – We will engage with the community meaningfully and inclusively, ensuring that varied voices are heard and the engagement process is transparent and accessible.
- Respect – We will respect the community's diversity and ensure that engagement processes are tailored to meet the specific needs of our diverse communities and stakeholders.
- Collaboration – We will work collaboratively with the community to develop solutions that reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.
- Empowerment – We will empower the community to participate in decision-making by providing them with the information, skills and resources needed to be effective participants.
- Accountability – We will ensure that the community is informed about the outcomes of engagement processes.

4.7. Monitoring, evaluation and review

At the City of Casey, we are committed to continual improvement of our community engagement practices ensuring its effectiveness and our accountability.

We will use Council channels to keep our participants and the broader community informed of the engagement outcomes and let them know how their feedback has been used to inform Council outcomes or decision making.

Our monitoring and evaluation approach will be tailored to the size and scale of the engagement activity and may include monitoring and evaluation of:

- Communication channels and engagement methods
- Process - inclusive of clear purpose and objectives for participants
- Outcome/Impact

Indicators and measures will draw from a wide variety of inputs and will be fit for purpose. Our measures could include the number of calls received, surveys completed, attendees at focus groups to evaluate whether we achieved the highest level of representation from our community. Reporting and updates will always be available online through our Casey Conversations consultation platform, as well as provided directly to those who asked to be kept informed and have provided contact details.

Other ways we can measure our engagement effectiveness include how the feedback provided by our community members was integrated into Council projects or outcomes.

By evaluating and reviewing our engagement it allows us to be both transparent and accountable. Feedback from our community provides clear data and evidence, it is also an important tool used by Councillors to help inform their decision making in matters before the Council.

4.8. Responsibilities

The design, delivery, reporting and evaluation of community engagement is the responsibility of all employees.

To ensure that City of Casey can deliver on its commitment to community engagement outlined in this policy, staff will be supported in the following ways:

- Access to a suite of resources to support them in the design, delivery, reporting and evaluation of community engagement, including process guides, templates and checklists.
- Access to training and professional development opportunities.
- Access to expert staff to give advice on matters relating to project planning, resource allocation, communications and best practice engagement methods.

4.9. Breaches

Staff are required to meet the requirements of this policy, and breaches of this policy may be managed in line with Council's Code of Conduct.

5. Relevant Documents

Title	Link
Privacy Policy	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/privacy-policy
Diversity, Access & Inclusion Policy	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/diversity-access-inclusion-policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/child-safe-policy
Cyber Security Policy	TBC
Data and Information Management Policy	TBC
Public Transparency Policy	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/public-transparency-policy
Reconciliation Action Plan	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/innovation-action-reconciliation-plan
Child Friendly Cities and Communities Charter	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/child-friendly-cities-communities-charter
Health and Wellbeing Strategy	https://www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/health-wellbeing-strategy-2021-25

6. Document History

Date approved	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
	Version 1 – Draft to be endorsed	1.0	30 June 2024
18 August 2020	Updated version to make small text amendments and include <i>Child Wellbeing and Safety (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Bill 2021</i> in Relevant Legislation	2.0	30 June 2024
TBC	Major changes made to document layout in line with review period.	3.0	TBC

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