

Title:	Community Engagement
Type:	Council
Adopted:	27 May 2020
Document No:	20/27907
Attachments:	Community Engagement Guidelines (TRIM 15/45624) Community Engagement Toolkit (TRIM 15/45626)

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy is to formalise Council's commitment to engaging with communities across Murrindindi Shire through the use of appropriate, effective and inclusive engagement practices. The Policy recognises the importance of designing community engagement methods to support maximum engagement and meet the specific outcomes of a particular initiative or project.

2. Rationale

Adopting an integrated approach to community engagement will guide Council's service planning with shared decision making, enhanced community relationships and capacity development.

Delivering a transparent and equitable community engagement methodology will strengthen community through encouraging leadership, decision making and advocacy.

3. Scope

This Policy outlines Council's position and commitment to community engagement across the whole organisation. The Policy will guide all forms of engagement with community led by Council.

4. Definitions

Reference Term	Definition
Community	Our community consists of people who live, work, visit or use services and amenity across Murrindindi Shire. Our community includes residents, ratepayers and members of the general public who have an interest in the Shire including individuals, groups, organisations, businesses and government.
Community Engagement	An interactive process providing a range of opportunities for community to inform decision making, foster relationships and encourage capacity development.
Inclusive	Undertaking community engagement in a manner that considers the needs of individuals and specific groups.
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation	The International Association for Public Participation Spectrum, which helps define options for engaging the public in any participation process.

5. Policy

Community engagement is a core process that underpins the Council Plan and ensures that community needs and aspirations are considered in developing and implementing Council's strategic directions and priorities.

The guiding principles relevant to Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Engagement Policy are:

A Transparent Process

- Council will openly share information with the community (subject to legal impediments).
- The decision-making process will be clear and communicated to participants, including how community feedback, advice and concerns will be incorporated.
- Council will report back to the community on the findings and recommendations of the engagement process.

An Inclusive Process

- Information provided to the community will be presented in a way that is accessible and easy to understand and will take into account the diversity of our communities.
- All affected and interested stakeholders will be encouraged to participate. A variety of processes will be used to enable all parties to effectively participate.

A Fair Process

- Community engagement will occur at the beginning of a process or issues as far as possible, will be clearly defined and will extend over the life of the issue.
- Adequate time and resources will be allowed for the engagement process to take place in order to give the community the best chance of influencing the outcomes.
- The engagement process will be genuine – not tokenistic or contrived.

A Responsive Process

- Council recognises that we don't have all the answers and look to communities to identify concerns and collaborate on solutions.
- All contributions during the community engagement process will be thoroughly considered before a decision is made.
- Reasons for decisions will be provided to the community.

Murrindindi Shire Council uses the IAP2 Spectrum as a framework to determine what level of community engagement is most appropriate for a specific issue or project.

Adherence to the Policy is supported by the *Community Engagement Guidelines* and the *Community Engagement Toolkit* designed to provide officers with a clear framework for conducting community engagement.

To maintain a strong focus on community engagement, Council is committed to ongoing innovation, new technologies which support engagement and training for Councillors, Council committee members and Council staff.

6. Related Policies, Strategies and Legislation

This policy is related to the following Murrindindi Shire Council Policies and Strategies:

Council Plan 2017-2021

Communications Policy and Strategy

Customer Services Policy

Code of Conduct (Employee)

Responsible Officer: Director Community Engagement

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Councillor Code of Conduct
Communications Strategy
Towards 2030 Community Planning Framework

Related State Government Legislation includes:
Local Government Act 2020
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008

7. Council Plan

This policy relates to the Council Plan 2017-2021 Our Promise strategic objective of expanding our two way engagement with community, and ensuring that the range of services we provide are best aligned with community priorities and Council's resources.

8. Management and Review

This policy will be monitored by the Manager Community Wellbeing. It will be a requirement of all directors and managers to ensure engagement and communication levels are observed.

The effectiveness of the *Community Engagement Guidelines* and *Toolkit* will be measured by the degree to which they lead to better decisions (policies, plans and projects) and improved alignment between services and community expectations.

The Policy will be reviewed every four years and within 12 months of Council elections.

9. Consultation

The review of this Policy did not require external community consultation

10. Human Rights Charter

This Policy has been developed with consideration of the requirements under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.