# **What you told us about community engagement**

Feedback on our Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy

**About this project**

Our Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy sets out when, why and how we’ll engage with our community to inform Council decisions.

The Policy review needs to meet the new requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, including adopting principle statements and defining deliberative engagement practices. It must be endorsed by 1 March 2020.

The first phase of consultation was open from 26 October to 22 November 2020, with 241 people taking part. Feedback was provided through an open survey on this website, a printed survey distributed through Bayside libraries, a targeted survey for young people, and workshops with three groups that represent hard-to-reach communities. Feedback from the first phase of consultation was incorporated into a draft Policy.

The second and final phase of consultation was open from 10 December 2020 to 10 January 2021, with 8 individuals and two stakeholder groups representing hard-to-reach communities taking part. Feedback was provided via an open survey on this website and workshop discussions.

A summary of the findings and actions from each phase of consultation is presented below.

## Phase 1 consultation

**What we asked**

In the first phase of community engagement, we wanted to know what you thought about our commitment statements to deliver five engagement principles set by the Local Government Act 2020, and if we should include an additional principle to reduce inequality in community engagement.

We also wanted to know which principles were most important to you for Council to focus on and prioritise.

**What you told us**

**Our community engagement principles**

The Local Government Act 2020 engagement principles are:

* **Principle 1:** A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope
* **Principle 2**: Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
* **Principle 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
* **Principle 4**: Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
* **Principle 5**: Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making

We asked you to rate our commitment statements to deliver each of these Principles from 1 to 5 stars, and tell us what you'd add or change.

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|  | Principle 1 | Principle 2 | Principle 3 | Principle 4 | Principle 5 |
| Average star rating | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 3.9 |
| Number of comments | 58 | 47 | 63 | 36 | 42 |

**A sixth Principle**

We added Principle 6: A community engagement process must be designed to reduce inequality, as we thought it was important for our Policy. This principle isn't required by the Local Government Act, so we wanted to know if you supported its inclusion as well as its commitment statement.

84% said they supported this Principle's inclusion, with 54 comments also provided.

**What we should focus on**

We wanted to know which two engagement principles you'd like us to focus or prioritise our time and resources on.

Principle 3 'Participants must be representative of the persons and groups affected' was selected by more than half (53%) of survey respondents. This Principle also received the most comments and the lowest star rating, identifying it as a clear area of improvement for Council.

Principle 2 'Participants must have access to objective, relevant and timely information' was selected by 48% of survey respondents. This was the highest star-rated Principle in the survey and received a high number of comments.

Chart 1: Community priority order of principles



**What we did**

A proposed new Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy has been drafted, taking into consideration community feedback, internal consultation, industry advice and best practice. This draft Policy is now open until 10 January 2021 for a final phase of community consultation.

In the following sections, we've marked the major changes and inclusions to our Principle committment statements, as a direct result of community feedback. **Changes are in bold** with a summary beneath.

#### [Principle 1: A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-0)

**Commitment statement**

**When engagement is launched**, we will publish an Engagement Plan Overview including a description of the project or matter that is the subject of engagement. This will explain:

* Why the project is needed
* What the community can influence and what they can’t
* What information we need from the community
* **Methods in which we will gather feedback / contribution from the community**
* **The timeline in which the community can provide feedback and when the matter is expected to be decided**
* **Community feedback on a matter will not be considered after closing date to enable reporting to be completed within this timeline.**

If the project or matter will have multiple stages of engagement, we will define the objective and scope for each stage.

We will allocate resourcing for engagement that is relative to the scope and complexity of the project or matter.

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| Community feedback on Principle 1 primarily focussed on access to information. The types of information requested, such as clarifying engagement methods and timelines for feedback and decision making, will be published in an Engagement Plan Overview on the Have Your Say website that will be included for every public engagement. This page has been created to provide greater transparency about how community engagement is being conducted for each project.Feedback also concerned including the project budget and/or funding source in project information, which has been included in Principle 2 and reporting back which is included in more detail in Principle 5. |

#### [Principle 2: Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-1)

**Commitment statement**

We will provide **timely** access to factual and transparent information on the project or matter, including:

* **A summary of known impacts, risks and benefits including social, natural and built environment, and financial**
* Relevant background information, technical and research reports, **related policies, budget estimate and funding source****[1].**

This information will be provided **through a combination of printed, verbal, digital, audio-visual****[2] formats.**

**We will provide information** in accessible formats, **plain language summaries and provide opportunities to ask questions and receive a response, either individually or via shared communications.**

Translations and/or interpreters will be provided **when required.**

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| Community feedback on Principle 2 also focussed on providing more information to help people have a better understanding of a project, it’s impacts and benefits.We’ve expanded the types of project information that will be provided to include a wider range of possible impacts, including environmental, related Council Policies, and the project’s budget estimate and funding source, whenever possible.To improve the accessibility of the information we provide, a commitment to provide information in multiple formats has also been included in the Policy statement, as well as plain language summaries and opportunities to ask questions. Translations and/or interpreters will be provided not on request, but when required.‘Timely’ has been referenced in the commitment statement to reinforce the intent of the Principle. |

[1] The ability to provide indicative budget estimates may be influenced by the stage of planning; known scope and scale; and future competitive tendering processes

[2] This could include diagrams, illustrations, images, videos, recordings or animations.

*[Principle 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](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-2)*

**Commitment statement**

We will identify members of the community **that have a connection** to the project or matter, and publish an assessment of the level of:

* **Impact: what level of change will the community member experience as a result of the project/matter**
* **Interest: what level of interest has been expressed or is anticipated**
* **Influence: we use the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum to identify the level of influence they can expect over the end outcome or decision**(the draft policy includes appendix to details influence more clearly)

This information is used to understand the types of tools and techniques that will be most effective for engagement and communication.

**Community members who are identified as likely to experience a significant impact from a change or decision, may be offered a higher level of engagement and influence on the decision than others.**

**Individuals will be able to request additional community members or stakeholders to be considered in the engagement and/or a review of assessment ratings.**

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| The Principle 3 commitment statements had the most significant changes in response to community feedback, which also identified the Principle as the community’s highest priority.The majority of comments concerned the process, criteria and methods for identifying stakeholders.Major changes to the Policy statement include further explanation of what we mean by ‘impact’, ‘interest’ and ‘influence, and the option for community members to request consideration of additional stakeholders who may not have been identified by Council, or a review of Council’s assessment ratings of the level of impact, interest and influence a stakeholder may experience from a project.The community will be able to see Council’s assessment of project stakeholders in an Engagement Plan Overview, which will be published on the Have Your Say website as part of every public engagement. |

*[Principle 4: Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-3)*

**Commitment statement**

We will design engagement including the methods, activities and schedule to meet the needs and requirements of identified **community members**. This will consider:

* Multiple methods to participate, including written, visual, online and verbal
* The time participants will require to provide an informed response
* The resourcing available for engagement relative to the scope and scale of the project.

**Methods and tools selected will relate to the type of project and level of influence relative to the IAP2 Spectrum and relative to the project budget.** (An appendix has been added to the Policy with more detail).

**For community members who may experience barriers to participation, additional resources may be considered such as:**

* **Information and feedback processes in alternative formats**
* **Support to participate, including personal care and/or support, transport**
* **Incentives such as an expense allowance or prize draws.**

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| Policy changes include more specific methods of support, a focus on providing information in appropriate formats to meet individual needs, and the use of incentives to encourage participation.Changes to the Principle 4 commitment statements were primarily driven by feedback from groups that represent hard-to-reach sections of our community, for example, elderly residents, public housing residents, and young people. |

*[Principle 5: Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-4)*

**Commitment statement**

We will explain how and when the decision will be made, including:

* The influence community feedback will have, referencing the IAP2 Spectrum of Participation
* Other information that will inform decision making, including technical information, research, **policies, legislation**, Council priorities, commitments and available budget.

Where there are multiple phases of engagement, we will describe the above for each phase.

**Providing feedback to participants is crucial in respecting our relationship and partnership with our community. We will:**

* **Provide updates to subscribers at key progress points, including when the item will be discussed at a meeting of Council**
* **Publish a summary of the engagement process and results within two months of the close of engagement. This will include summary of participants and process.**
* **If the outcome of engagement is referenced in a report to Council or will inform a Council decision before the above deadline, the engagement summary will be published at the same time as the Council agenda**
* **Provide updates to subscribers on the outcome of the project or matter within one week of key decisions and milestones.**

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| In response to community feedback, changes to Principle 5 commitment statements are designed to better acknowledge people who’ve participated in community engagement and improve transparency in Council’s decision making.New commitments include the timely the publication of the results of engagement – that is what the community told us during an engagement, and we’ve included references to the policies and legislation that will inform decision making.We’re also going to improve how we communicate the outcome of a project by providing updates to subscribers (that’s people who provide their contact details during an engagement) within one week of any key decisions or project milestones, as well as advance notice when the project will be considered by Council. |

#### [Principle 6: A community engagement process must be designed to promote fairness and equality](https://yoursay.bayside.vic.gov.au/community-engagement-policy-review/what-you-told-us-about-community-engagement%22%20%5Cl%20%22hive-accordion-body-9557-5)

Traditional engagement activities can be biased towards the participation of those who are easy to communicate with, have a pre-existing relationship with Council, and are vocal and reasonably comfortable in a public setting.

We will design engagement **programs** to encourage fairness, equality and the participation of marginalised or hard to reach groups through:

* Selection of methods and tools, including one to one and small group discussion
* **The ability to participate in a private or closed forum and/or anonymously**
* **Monitor the participation of hard to reach groups and adapt activities to promote increased participation, if required**
* Moderation and management of public forums to enable respectful and equitable sharing of ideas.

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| With significant community support for including Principle 6 in the Policy, the changes as a result of community feedback are mostly clarifying how we’ll achieve this Principle through its commitment statements.A major change is the Principle title. We’ve made the wording more positive; to focus on promoting fairness and equality for all rather than reducing inequality.We’ve also added the ability to participate privately, which was important to young people. Monitoring participation during the engagement program will also enable us to adapt any engagement activities, if required, to ensure those who will be affected by a project are able to participate. |

## Phase 2 consultation

## What we asked

## A draft Policy was informed by community feedback from Phase 1 consultation, stakeholder advice, internal consultation, and industry best practice. For the final stage of community consultation, we wanted to know if we’d got the draft Policy right – including our definition of deliberation.

## What you told us

## The participants (8) who completed the Phase 2 survey gave the draft Policy an average rating of 2.25 out of five. Here’s what they said:

## Clear and understandable

## Too long and boring

## Reference disability access and inclusion

## Co-design policies with stakeholders

## Flag risks of proceeding or not with a project

## Fairness is key.

## Other comments, which couldn’t be applied to the Policy, included frustration with an engagement or Council decision on other projects, or unrelated issues such as homelessness or footpath trading permits.

## Participants were impressed with our definition of deliberative engagement – giving it 3.8 stars out of five.

## We also heard that we’d incorporated feedback from the first phase of consultation ‘very well’ into the draft Policy and that the information provided was easy to find and understand (71%).

## What we did

## We’ve clarified sections of the draft Policy to promote inclusion and better acknowledge the partnership role that stakeholder groups can offer in community engagement programs – particularly groups that represent hard-reach sections of our community.

## Through this we’ll:

## Ensure fair, inclusive and accessible representation for hard-to-reach sections of the community and support their participation

## Include Council-facilitated groups or Committees in the Policy definition of stakeholders and call upon these groups to provide advice and subject matter expertise.

## The Policy is purposefully wide-ranging to enable it to apply to any type of idea, initiative or project that’s the subject of community engagement. For strategy and policy development projects, such as this, the Policy commits us to working with (involve) or partnering with the community and stakeholders (collaborate) to achieve consensus and create solutions.

## What happens next

## Consultation is now closed on the Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy 2021. The Local Government Act 2020 requires Council to adopt a Policy by 1 March 2021.

## The proposed Community and Stakeholder Engagement Policy 2021 will be presented to Council for adoption at its 16 February 2021 meeting. The proposed Policy will be published with the [meeting agenda](https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/council-agendas) on Thursday 11 February 2020.

## Interested community members can [watch the meeting live](http://stream.bayside.vic.gov.au/) from 6.30pm on 16 February 2021 or submit a request to be heard (written statement) by 9am on the day of the meeting.