

► COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY NUMBER:	79 (C)
NAME OF POLICY:	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	October 2019
DATE APPROVED:	20 October 2015
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	General Manager, Community Services
REFERENCES:	Local Government Amendment (Performance Reporting and Accountability) Act 2014. Hepburn Shire Council Plan 2013:17

### **Best Value Principles**

Hepburn Shire Council has the responsibility to provide its ratepayers with best value, with all services provided by Council meeting the expectations in terms of quality and cost. In providing this, all services need to be accessible, responsive to the needs of the community, considerate of the natural environment and subject to continuous improvement.

To achieve the best over life outcome for Council's expenditures, which meets quality and service expectations, there will be periodic review of services against best on offer in both the public and private sectors.

All Council staff members are responsible for supporting best value principles in their normal day to day actions to ensure services are recognised by the community as delivering best value.

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### INTRODUCTION

Hepburn Shire Council's Community Engagement Policy has been adopted to give residents an opportunity to participate in decision making that will affect their lives.

This Community Engagement Policy operates within our local community context and is also responsive to a increased desire expressed across Australia to participation in direct democracy. Community engagement and public participation in Australia has been driven since the 1970s by an increased expectation that the community will be involved in decision making.

Community engagement is more than a single activity, it is a way of working. It is about inclusion, involvement and influence. Hepburn Shire Council recognises that engaging also comes with a need for responsibility, accountability and a willingness to collaborate to reach common goals.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to the whole of Council including daily operations, minor and major capital projects and other initiatives.

At a minimum Council will undertake community consultation prescribed under the Local Government Act 1989.

### POLICY

Hepburn Shire Council will:

1. Provide opportunities for community members to be informed and participate in decision making processes.
2. Promote the opportunities for community participation in a timely way.
3. Develop our skills and capacity to undertake effective engagement with our diverse community.

Our community engagement processes are informed by the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2's) model for community engagement, which includes five levels of engagement:

**Inform:** when we will provide information in an unbiased, neutral manner

**Consult:** when we will listen to issues, concerns and ideas

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**Involve:** when we will listen and advise how ideas have been incorporated (or not) into decisions.

**Collaborate:** when we actively work with the community in developing solutions.

**Empower:** when we actively develop mechanisms that will enable individuals or groups to make decisions, and accepting those decisions.

### Principles

The following principles will be used in developing community engagement strategies and activities.

**Inclusive and Accessible** - We will proactively engage with the community on issues that affect them. We will consider barriers to participation and remove them, if possible.

**Diverse and Innovative** - We will provide multiple ways for people to participate and seek innovate and creative methods to engage with the community. We will adapt our engagement strategies and activities, in line with the type and scope of the project and/or activity.

**Effective and Issues Focussed** - We will be clear about the purpose and scope of the engagement. We will plan engagement activities to maximise opportunities for participation and avoid duplication of processes.

**Good Communication** - We will provide relevant and timely information and a variety of ways for people to contribute. We will provide a range of ways to provide feedback and accept it in any form. We will acknowledge the input of community members.

**Timeliness** - We will provide adequate timeframes for participation and feedback. We will provide information about outcomes and/or decisions to participants and the community within specified timeframes.

**Evaluation** - We will review and evaluate the effectiveness of our engagement strategies and processes.

## DEFINITIONS

The following terms are referred to in the policy.

Term	Definition
Council	Hepburn Shire Council
Council Staff	Includes permanent and temporary full-time and part-time council employees, and contractors and consultants while engaged by Council.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Any enquiries about the Community Engagement Policy should be directed to Council's General Manager, Community Services or Communications Officer.

## IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be implemented through staff training and guidelines for community engagement. Tools and training will be provided to support staff to undertake effective community engagement relevant to their role.

The Community Engagement Policy will also be included within all staff inductions.

## REVIEW

The Community Engagement Policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if required by legislation or organisational changes.

The officer responsible for the review of this policy is the General Manager, Community Services.