

HOBSONS
BAY CITY
COUNCIL



Community Engagement Policy 2023

2023 Version 2.0

Acknowledgment of Country

Hobsons Bay City Council acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of these municipal lands and waterways, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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1. Purpose

Hobsons Bay City Council's Community Engagement Policy 2023 underpins Council's commitment to engaging its residents on the issues and decisions that affect them.

The policy articulates the principles, commitments, and various levels of engagement that Council will undertake to ensure a clear process for community engagement in Council's decision-making processes.

The Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy 2023 is consistent with the statutory requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* and relevant sections of the *Local Government Act 1989*.

2. Background

Following the inclusion of community engagement requirements in the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council endorsed and released its first community engagement policy in April 2021. The *Community Engagement Policy 2023* reflects changes resulting from a subsequent review of that initial policy. The review considered both statutory requirements and organisational and community needs.

3. Scope

This policy applies to the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of community engagement activities as directed by Council, implemented by Council employees, or legislated by the *Local Government Act 2020*. It also applies to contractors, consultants and volunteers undertaking community engagement on behalf of Council.

The policy does not apply to community engagement activities that are subject to prescribed processes required by other Victorian laws and regulations (e.g., land-use planning applications), or other Council procedures (e.g., service requests and complaints).

4. Definitions

Community engagement	The planned processes where Council and the community have conversations with each other and exchange information through a range of methods.
Deliberative engagement	Key characteristics are authentic engagement with the community; opportunities for relevant stakeholders to engage; clear demonstration of how all views have been considered; and accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community's level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.
Participatory engagement	Involves one-way information exchange, either from Council to community or community to Council. Typically occurs when feedback is invited on ideas, alternatives, or draft documents.
Council	Hobsons Bay City Council being a body corporate constituted as a municipal council under the <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> .
Councillors	Individuals holding office as members of Hobsons Bay City Council.

Council Officer or Officer	Hobsons Bay City Council employees.
Consultants / Contractors	External organisations/individuals who at times assist or lead Council engagement processes.
Community	Includes individuals or groups who live, work, play, study, visit, invest in or pass-through Hobsons Bay.
Stakeholder	An individual, group, or organisation with a strong interest in the decisions of Council, who is directly impacted by Council's outcomes.
Local Government Act 2020 ('the 2020 Act')	The <i>Local Government Act 2020</i> gives the Victorian Government the power to make laws it considers necessary for local government, including laws relating to the constitution of councils, council elections, and the powers and duties of Councillors and council staff.
Local Government Act 1989 ('the 1989 Act')	The previous Act, of which certain provisions have not been repealed and remain in force.

5. Principles

Council's approach to community and stakeholder engagement is guided by the community engagement principles set out under Section 56 of the 2020 Act, as follows:

- a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope;
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
- participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

6. Statutory requirements

Some Council engagement activities are directed by statutory requirements. For example, the 2020 Act requires Council to develop a Community Vision, Financial Plan, Asset Plan and four-year Council Plan, while the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires Council to develop a four-year Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

In developing these and other plans/projects/activities that are subject to statutory requirements, Council will meet its community engagement obligations.

The recommended minimum levels for these engagements are:

Plan/project/activity	Community engagement type
<i>Community Vision</i>	Deliberative
<i>Council Plan</i>	Deliberative
<i>Financial Plan</i>	Deliberative
<i>Asset Plan</i>	Deliberative
<i>Annual and/or Revised Budget</i>	Participatory
Making or amending of a local law	Participatory
Other statutory and non-statutory plans, strategies or policies, governance rules, service planning and capital works projects	Dependent on complexity of the activity/project

On matters where submission processes were previously governed by Section 223 of the 1989 Act, Council will take develop and implement an appropriate engagement approach based on legislative requirements and application of the Community Engagement Policy.

The 'formal submission process' under Section 223 of the 1989 Act, will only apply to the following:

- Council decision to change system of valuation [*Section 157(5), 1989 Act*]
- Special rates [*Sections 163A and 166(4), 1989 Act*]
- Rebates and concessions [*Section 169(1C), 1989 Act*]
- Regional Library agreements [*Section 179, 1989 Act*]
- Concentration or diversion of drainage [*Section 199, 1989 Act*]
- Drainage of land [*Section 200, 1989 Act*]
- A range of traffic and road related matters [*Section 207A, 1989 Act*].

7. Guidelines

When Council initiates a project, idea or initiative that may impact community, the project team, together with the community engagement team, will seek to:

- allow at least five to six weeks for community engagement planning and delivery, as part of Council's regular project management processes
- allow at least a four-week period for the engagement activities to be open for public consultation
- provide the community with enough notice of upcoming engagement activities (normally three to four weeks), including time to read information prior
- avoid conducting community engagement around key dates such as the December/January holiday period, public holidays, and school holidays, unless it allows specific stakeholder groups to participate
- show sensitivity to social issues and trends.

8. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Mayor	Encourage community participation, as well as lead engagement with the municipal community on the development of the Council Plan.
Councillors	Demonstrate commitment to community engagement principles through leadership, modelling good practice and having regard to community input as part of decision making.
Directors / CEO	Ensure that good quality and timely reporting is provided to Councillors on community engagement processes and outcomes. Ensure reputational and other risks of community engagement are managed.
Service unit managers / Coordinators	Approve service unit community engagement plans. Ensure community engagement practices are conducted in accordance with the given plan and this policy. Manage reputational and other risks.
Council officers	To adhere to this policy when planning, delivering and reviewing community engagement activity.
Community engagement service unit	Provide strategic advice and support Council's community engagement processes. Approve engagement plans.
External consultants / contractors	Adhere to this policy when assisting or leading community engagement processes on behalf of Council.
Hobsons Bay community / stakeholders	Provide feedback and input in a respectful manner.

9. Related documents

- Hobsons Bay City Council's *Community Engagement Toolkit 2023*
- Hobsons Bay City Council's *Privacy Policy 2020*

10. Related legislation

- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*

11. Review date

This policy will be reviewed three years from the date of endorsement by Council unless it is required to be updated sooner.

12. Further information

For further information concerning this policy please contact the Manager - Strategic Communications, Engagement and Advocacy.

13. Document control

Policy Name	Community Engagement Policy
Object ID	
Agility Document Number	
Responsible Directorate	CEO office
Policy Owner	Manager - Strategic Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Policy Type	Council
Date Adopted by Council	
Review Date	

14. Version history

Version Number	Date	Authorised by