

Community Engagement and Public Participation in Moreland Policy



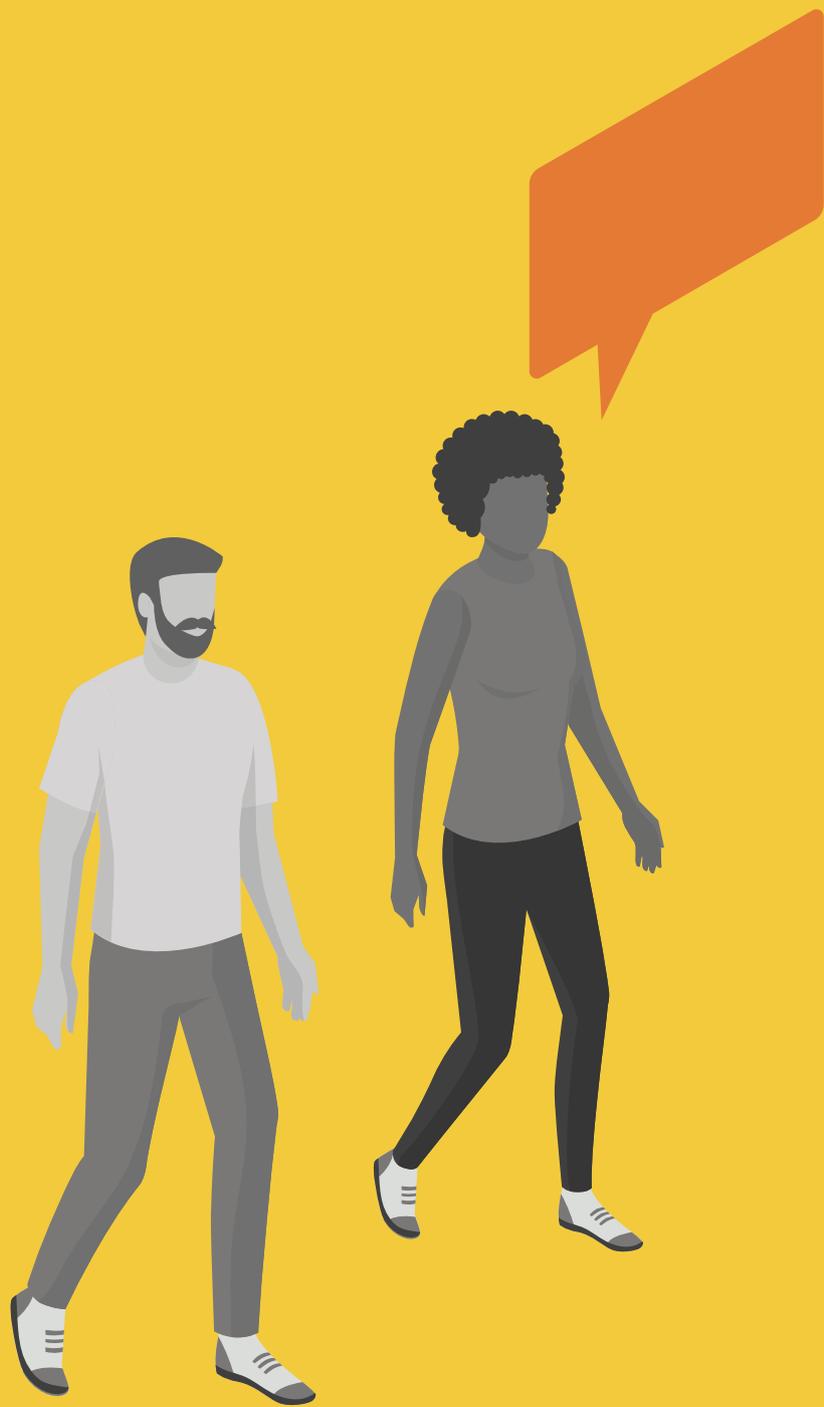
Moreland City Council

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Responsible Department **Community Engagement and Partnerships**





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1. Introduction

Engaging with people is at the heart of Council business. Council is committed to establishing and maintaining high quality processes in community engagement and public participation to ensure people who live and work in Moreland have the right to influence and have a stake in the future of our city. To that end, Council has made a strong commitment to improving engagement with the community through the Council Plan 2017-2021.

Moreland is a great place to live, learn, visit and work, but over the next 4 years we want even more for our city. Community are partners in shaping the city, and engagement is the term we use for the ways in which we work together. We want residents and businesses to be central in that journey, actively working together to help set and achieve strategic priorities and help to shape better and more efficient services that are sustainable, inclusive and equitable.

This Policy outlines what Council will do and commits Council to key principles in how it will act to realise the potential of collective effort and deliver on its commitment to community engagement.

Underpinning the Policy is the Community Engagement Framework. The Framework is a living document that provides guidance on how the Policy will be implemented in practice, including details of how Council will apply individual engagement approaches and how Council will monitor, evaluate and review the Policy and its impacts.

The Community Engagement Implementation Plan identifies key activities, actions and resources needed to implement the Policy and Framework.

2. Context

The Council Plan 2017-21, developed in early 2017, outlines the strategic objectives and key priorities Council will focus on for its four year term. This policy supports the objective of 'A Responsible Council', and in particular the priorities to:

- Provide transparent and effective governance of Council's operations;
- Reach the top 25% of all Councils in community satisfaction with Council's engagement practices; and
- Improve resident satisfaction to 90% with Council's performance in customer service.

Driven by community demand for greater public participation and stimulated through the development of the Council Plan 2017-21, Council has prioritised improvements in our engagement practices and the transparency and governance of our operations. To support this direction, Council sought expression of interest and made a critical investment of time to form a Community Reference Group, comprised of community members, Council staff and Councillors. This group worked together to better understand how Council could improve engagement practices and provided insight and recommendations that informed this Policy, the Community Engagement Framework and our approach.

This Policy applies to all Council staff, contract workers, consultants and all people who engage with the community on behalf of Moreland City Council. It also provides a guide to Councillors. This policy should be applied to projects, activities, plans or processes where the input of community and other stakeholders can make a valuable contribution to decision making and when changes to services or infrastructure may affect community.

2.1 Alignment

While the fundamental rethink of community engagement was initiated in the Moreland Council Plan 2017 – 2021, Council’s commitment to community engagement and public participation is also a key goal of the Moreland Human Rights Policy 2016 – 2026 and the Moreland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 – 2021, both of which align with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

2.2 Organisational Context

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 - under which, providers of services have a duty to take reasonable and proportionate steps to eliminate discrimination as far as possible; must not discriminate when they deliver services; and must make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities so that they can participate or access a service, including when providing information.

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 – requires consideration of relevant human rights in making decisions and makes actions that are incompatible with human rights illegal. In particular, the right of every person in Victoria to participate in the conduct of public affairs and the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. The Charter also acknowledges that human rights have a special importance for the Aboriginal people of Victoria, as descendants of Australia’s first people .

The Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 – which includes requirements for consultation when amending legislation and regulations.

Public Administration Act 2004 – requires the use of community views to improve outcomes.

Road Management Act 2004 – requires consultation.

Planning and Environment Act 2007 – requires consultation.

Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 – requires consultation on Child Safe Principles.

2.3 Research and other drivers

Council’s Community Engagement Policy and Framework have been developed using the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum as a foundation. This spectrum is recognised as a best practice approach to community engagement of all kinds.

The Policy commitments and processes outlined in the Framework were informed by past and current community involvement, benchmarking across local governments with higher satisfaction ratings, examining case studies and academic research. The Community Engagement Policy and Framework will ensure that stakeholders across Moreland have an opportunity to participate in public life and inform decision making, consistent with Section 18 of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

3. Objectives

The objective of this Policy is to renew Council's understanding of community engagement and commit to principles that will guide our approach to engagement and participation through the Community Engagement Framework. The Policy will ensure engagement is integrated into Council activities to support decision making, build relationships and strengthen communities. The Policy also seeks to improve Council's consistency in our engagement methods and processes and achieve better outcomes through authentic engagement practices, continuous improvement and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

This Policy addresses Council's engagement with community, community's engagement to Council and engagement within the Moreland City Council organisation to support collaborative and richer outcomes.

4. Policy Details

4.1 What is community engagement

Community engagement refers to the purposeful interactions and exchanges to share information, build capacity, strengthen relationships and realise the benefit of collective effort to help our city thrive. In other words, community engagement is the conversations we have with people about decisions that may affect them. It is about providing opportunities for people to have a say in reviewing, designing, approving, influencing or commenting on the decisions, activities and services in Moreland.

Community is a broad word to encompass all who have an interest in their city. This includes residents, rate-payers, businesses, participants, workers, students and visitors.

Community engagement includes varying levels of engagement, from enquiry to empowerment, and many possible approaches in implementation (Table 4.1.a).

Table 4.1.a

ENQUIRE	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Council expectation					
Receive enquiries and complaints.	Provide news and information to the community.	Ask for feedback on a particular matter.	Invite participation toward an outcome pre-determined by Council.	Work together with the community toward an agreed outcome.	Provide assistance toward an independent outcome.
Implied promise to community					
Council will endeavour to respond to you.	Council will keep you informed.	Council will listen to and acknowledge your contribution.	Council will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are considered in the decision making.	Council will look to the community for advice and innovation, incorporating into decisions where possible.	Council will help you implement our mutual goals.
Role of community					
Bring community or individual concerns to Council. Request information.	Receive information about what is going on in the municipality.	Contribute thoughts and ideas.	Participate in making plans and decisions.	Actively partner for an agreed outcome.	Carry out a community-led initiative.
Possible methods					
Customer service enquiries Complaints and Response Incoming to Councillors and Staff Question Time Incidental information	Inside Moreland Website Social media On hold messaging Adverts Council reports Flyers	Voting Surveys Public meeting Social media Interviews Visits to community groups Consultation methods	Workshops Reference Groups Councillor Briefings Participation in a program, facility or activity Ward meetings Advisory committees	Advisory Committees Partnerships Place Managers Community Development programs Service provider networks	Community groups and organisations Special interest groups Community Grants Programs Citizen Juries and deliberative bodies Advocacy Co-design Living labs

4.2 Why do we engage

Council exists to provide essential services to the city and its communities. Delivering these services appropriately requires a range of interactions, from providing information, consulting on projects and plans and facilitating community participation. Engagement is a two-way relationship between Council and community. Council conducts community engagement activities to harness the rich and diverse knowledge within our community to better understand their perspectives, needs and aspirations and in order to inform decision making and achieve better outcomes. Another facet of engagement is the unsolicited intelligence community brings to Council in the form of news, concerns, or information and interests. This knowledge improves Council's strategic planning, service delivery, spending priorities and decision making.

Additional benefits of effective community engagement include:

- transparency, integrity and increased trust in Council processes and decisions;
- better informed Council decision making;
- a better informed community;
- increased community involvement and ownership;
- sustainable outcomes; and
- improved levels of satisfaction with Council decisions and processes.

Council is also required to undertake legislated consultation processes as part of the development of various corporate and statutory planning documents.

4.3 Who do we engage

We engage with stakeholders, these being any individual or group with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and who may be impacted by their outcomes. This could include people who live, work, study, invest in or have a connection to Moreland.

It is important that we engage with the right people at the right time, not necessarily all of the people all of the time.

The Community Engagement Framework has been established to provide guidance how to identify appropriate stakeholders for community engagement.

4.4 When do we engage

Council will engage with the community and key stakeholders, including other areas of Council during the planning stages of projects or initiatives, when a change in service, activity or infrastructure is considered, when an issue is raised and requires a decision, when more information or evidence is required, or when issues arise that are likely to have a material impact on members of the community.

Engagement may be required at multiple stages within a project, program, development or change in service. This could include community engagement in the first planning stages, during implementation and/or in the evaluation of a project, program, development or change in service.

Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas, teams and employees. Table 5.1.a provides a brief overview of 'Council expectations' regarding when we might engage with our community. The Community Engagement Framework has been established to provide clear guidance as to how this Policy will be put into practice.

4.5 How do we engage

Council has adopted the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum as the foundation for this Policy and technical approach to engagement. We also commit to engagement as a relationship with community towards an outcome.

Engagement should be tailored to suit the needs of the opportunity for both community and Council, and includes a full range of approaches from enquire, inform or consult to involve, collaborate or empower.

Table 5.1.a provides a brief overview of the methods Council may use to engage with our community.

To ensure the effective and consistent application of engagement principles, processes and behaviours, appropriate to the opportunity, a Community Engagement Framework has been established to describe engagement approaches and provide guidance and set expectations for Council employees and our community on the level of engagement and approaches we will use.

5. Principles for engagement

The following principles underpin the process for successful community engagement for Council and our community. The principles provide a structure to help understand the needs and interests of our community and build consistent, open and respectful working relationships. How the principles operate in practice and how they align with our organisational values, should be considered in the planning of every engagement activity.

5.1 Purposeful

We begin every engagement with a clear understanding of what we want to achieve.

We will:

- **Clearly define the decision required and the scope of public engagement and participation;**
- **Be clear to stakeholders about limitations and the potential for influence; and**
- **Establish a public participation plan, identifying how risks will be managed and detailing the implementation and monitoring of the plan through the process, along with review and evaluation.**

5.2 Respectful

We acknowledge and respect the expertise, perspective, needs and aspirations of our community.

We will:

- **Work together and learn to work better together with a commitment to the common good;**
- **Value the community intelligence and knowledge to enhance the outcome;**
- **Provide appropriate time and resources to ensure that those affected can participate in a meaningful way.**

5.3 Inclusive

We acknowledge the diversity of our community and the importance of identifying relevant stakeholders and making it easy for them to engage so that everyone can play a role.

We will:

- **Model respectful, inclusive practice by ensuring access and equity are part of the design;**
- **Be aware and take into account the needs of diverse communities to be able to participate in a meaningful way, including language, accessibility and equity;**
- **Use multiple methods of engagement to suit the availability and abilities of stakeholders.**

5.4 Responsive

We involve stakeholders from the start and agree on when and how to engage.

We will:

- Build engagement into projects and programs from inception so the community are provided information early enough to facilitate participation;
- Respond to the engagement and input of the community in a timely and constructive manner, so they understand how they have informed the outcome;
- Inform community members who have made submissions, a week in advance of the final Council report and make them aware of how to access the report; and
- Be open to understanding and incorporating the views of those affected by decisions and providing access to all relevant information in a manner that participants can understand.

5.5 Transparent

We are open and honest in our engagement and set clear expectations.

We will:

- Be clear to stakeholders about scope of the pending decision, the decision making process, potential for influence and any limitations on this process;
- Be clear about the roles people are taking and the tasks and responsibilities required;
- Address community and stakeholder concerns in an honest and forthright way and communicate results back to the public in a way they understand; and
- Build in evaluation and continuous improvement of engagement processes.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Party/parties	Roles and responsibilities
Council and Councillors	Champion the commitment and principles for community engagement through leadership, modelling practice and decision-making.
Executive Management Team	Champion customer-centric behaviours and community engagement through policy, process and leadership.
Corporate Management Team	Community engagement is the responsibility of all Council service areas.
All Staff	Community engagement is the responsibility of all employees as appropriate to their role and function.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Council commits to establishing an annual monitoring, evaluation and review process to measure the overall level of success in the Policy's implementation. This process will include monitoring, evaluation and review of:

- Individual engagement plans for specific projects, programs, developments;
- Individual engagement approaches across all levels of engagement, including shared decision-making processes at the level of 'empower' (Table 5.1.a);
- The overall level of outreach achieved by community engagement across the community; and
- Council performance against service standards related to customer service and engagement approaches at the level of 'enquire' (Table 5.1.a).

The Community Engagement Framework has been developed to provide guidance and transparent criteria for Monitoring, Evaluation and Review.

The Implementation Plan identifies activities, time and appropriate resources for implementation, including those that will be allocated to evaluate engagement processes to ensure they add value to the program or initiative to which they have been applied.

Council also commits to establishing a continuous improvement process to ensure the Community Engagement Framework is continually evolving. Additionally, the Framework itself will be continually updated to ensure that it meets the needs of users.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
Advocacy	Public support for, or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
Community	<p>Community is a flexible term used to define groups of connected people. We use it to describe people of Moreland generally, including individuals or groups who live, work, play, study, visit, invest in or pass through the municipality.</p> <p>More specifically, it can refer to everyone affiliated with the Moreland municipality, or smaller groups defined by interest, identity or location, and not necessarily homogenous in composition or views. Different types of communities often overlap and extend beyond municipal boundaries. Communities may be structured, as in clubs or associations or unstructured, such as teens. Communities are flexible and temporary, subject individual identity and location.</p>
Community Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community linked by location could include a group of people who live, work or gather in the same area; as large as the whole city and as small as a community garden or street. • A community of interest is a group of people who have a shared interest, including artistic or cultural interest, ethnic origin, business and recreational interest. • Community of identity are people who share the same self-identified qualities. Examples are age/life stage, faith, gender/sexual orientation, vulnerability, skill or aspiration. • A community of affiliation is a group of people who are members of a group or club. Examples include sporting clubs, religious groups, seniors group, service organisations, and groups formed to fulfil a particular purpose such as a community garden or Amnesty International chapters.
Community consultation	This is a form of community engagement that relates to the tools and practices used by Council to enable public involvement in decisions and actions that shape the community.
Consultation	The process of seeking input on a matter.
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international organisation advancing the practice of public participation. IAP2 supports people who implement or participate in public decision-making processes.
Monitoring, evaluation and review	The process of monitoring, evaluation and reporting against indicators of success. Review of community engagement approaches includes monitoring and measurement of indicators of both overall success of engagement as well as breadth of outreach.

Term	Definition
Plan	A plan outlines a detailed future course of action for Council aimed at achieving specific goals or objectives within a specific timeframe. A plan should identify roles and responsibilities along with resources that are required.
Policy	A policy sets out Council's views with respect to a particular matter. It includes a set of principles or rules that provide a definite direction for the organisation.
Public participation	Public participation encompasses a range of public involvement, from simply informing people about what government is doing, delegating decisions to the public and community activity addressing the common good.
Responsible governance	Effective processes for making and implementing decisions.
Stakeholder	An individual or group with a strong interest in the decisions of Council and are directly impacted by their outcomes.
Strategy	A strategy provides high level holistic directions for Council designed to bring about a desired future, such as achievement of one or more goals or outcomes.

8. Associated Documents

Plans:

- Council Plan 2017-2021
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Social Cohesion Plan

Policies:

- Human Rights Policy 2016 – 2026
- Communications Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Management of Customer Requests Policy
- Inclusive and Accessible Communication Policy
- Name and Address Register Data Management Policy

Framework:

- Community Engagement Framework

9. References

- Community Engagement Strategy 2012-2016
- IAP2 Framework
- Victorian Auditor General's Office Public Participation Principles





Moreland City Council

