

Participation Guidelines – Community Engagement (in person)

Purpose:

We engage with our community in order to hear the opinions, ideas and suggestions. Designs and planning for projects and programs are enhanced by listening to our community members and what's important to them.

Policy and framework

We hold workshops, focus groups, pop up sessions and interviews to seek input. They are guided by our Community Engagement Policy and the IAP2 spectrum. Depending on the matter, we identify the degree of influence the community may have.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Influence and decision making

Our community's scope to influence a project may be reasonably limited by:

- Financial constraints and the budget available for a project
- Grants from external sources who may have specific requirements of a project
- Practical considerations such as the size of a site, parking requirements, construction and availability of materials
- Legislative requirements including the Greater Dandenong planning scheme, health and safety laws, road safety and environmental protections
- Engineering, architectural and other expert advice

We undertake to listen carefully to our community in good faith and to incorporate suggestions and improvements where possible. We undertake to listen to different views and try to ensure a wide variety of voices and opinions are heard. We try to ensure different opinions and community perspectives are balanced and weighed carefully in decision-making.

This is the case whether there is 'participatory' or 'deliberative' engagement.

Officers' roles and undertakings

Officers are responsible for:

- providing fair, equitable access to good faith community engagement
- collating and faithfully reflecting community feedback in reports to Council, for Councillors to make decisions
- advising where community feedback has already been incorporated in a proposal
- advising where there are
- 'closing the loop' – providing feedback to those who have participated in community engagement on what happened to their suggestions and whether they were incorporated

We undertake to:

- explain what is available to be influenced and what isn't
- listen carefully and respectfully to our community
- be open to things we hadn't considered
- incorporate suggestions and improvements where possible
- seek out and listen to diverse views, from diverse parts of our community
- ensure different opinions and community interests are balanced and weighed carefully in decision-making
- provide honest advice and explain where a community suggestion is impractical, inconsistent with law or might not be supported for another reason.

Participants' roles and undertakings

We ask participants in community engagement to:

- start from a position of good faith
- share their opinions and suggestions
- listen respectfully to others, including those with different opinions
- take turns and allow time for everyone to contribute, including the those who are less confident
- be respectful to everyone present
- ask questions if they need more information or something is unclear
- be willing to 'park' an issue if the discussion is getting stuck (and come back to it later)
- provide feedback about how we can do better next time and what we've done well