



DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Community Engagement Findings Report

JANUARY 2021



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Consultation during COVID 19

Due to COVID-19 and associated social restrictions, all face to face consultations are on hold indefinitely. As such the project solely utilised online and telephone consultation methods with a heavy reliance on internal networks and existing stakeholder databases.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project background

The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) requires that councils must adopt a Community Engagement Policy (the Policy) by March 2021. In addition to meeting the legislative requirements, the development and implementation of the Policy will set the expectations for community engagement both internally at Council and with the community. The Policy will guide best practice community engagement processes and outcomes through consistent and transparent approaches.

Part of the requirements for developing the Policy is that it must be done in consultation with the community. This report encompasses both the first phase of engagement with community, and the second phase which was a public exhibition period of the draft Policy.

During the community consultation period (23 July – 31 August 2020), the community were asked to help shape the way Council makes decisions about the things that are important to them in Wyndham City. This report outlines the methodology of the consultation, the demographics of the participants who got involved, as well as the findings; key messages and survey responses.

During the public exhibition period (10 December 2020 – 10 January 2021) we invited final feedback on the draft Policy via an online survey to ensure it aligned with community expectations.

1.2 Project objectives

To satisfy the requirements of the Act and position Wyndham City as a leader in the community engagement space, this project aims to assist with the development and implementation of a Community Engagement Policy that will:

- Define what community engagement is at Wyndham City Council
- Outline the community engagement principles and levels of deliberative engagement
- Detail Council's approach to engagement and provide a consistent and flexible process to guide all engagement activities – including when to engage
- Embed a culture of Public Value in all engagement activities
- Encourage greater transparency and community participation in Council decision making
- Enable Council to be proactive and open to new and innovate engagement methods and tools
- Complement, interact with and enhance Council initiatives
- Maximise opportunities for engagement for all community members of Wyndham through quality processes that gain a representative view

- Ensure engagement efforts and applications are not siloed within departments or teams

2. Engagement approach

2.1 Methodology

To best achieve the engagement objectives, an Engagement Plan was developed within COVID restrictions to guide the activities. The approach included a range of tools and techniques designed to allow a variety of stakeholders to provide input into the development of the Policy, reflecting on their lived experiences of participating in consultations.

This report provides a synthesis of data collected from the online surveys, children’s idea’s lab, each of the online discussions, and follow up phone conversations and emails post online discussions.

The Loop

Wyndham City’s online engagement platform, The Loop, provided the community access to the online surveys, registration for the online discussions and the idea’s lab.

The tools and techniques employed throughout the project are detailed in Table one.

Table 1 – Tools and techniques

Tool/Technique	Description
Community online survey (2)	<p>A digital survey on The Loop was prepared for community participation. It was published via The Loop and live for a four-week period during the first phase of community consultation.</p> <p>A second survey was published on The Loop inviting community feedback on the draft policy which was available to be read. It was available for a four-week during the second phase of community engagement (the public exhibition period).</p>
Online Discussions (3)	<p>Four live online discussions utilising Microsoft Teams over a two-week period asking participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe a great consultation experience, - why it was great, and, - what Wyndham can do to ensure participation in future consultations.
One-on-one phone conversations	Community members who were unable to attend the online discussions were offered a one-on-one phone

	conversation to discuss the above (online discussion) topics.
Focus Group (Wyndham’s African Community)	An online focus group utilising Microsoft Teams asking members of the African community to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe a great consultation experience, - why it was great, and, - what Wyndham can do to ensure participation in future consultations.
Idea’s Lab (4 – 12 years)	An activity aimed at engaging children aged 4 – 12 years asking, ‘how would you like to tell Council what you want when we are making big decisions that impact you’? Children could submit their responses in different forms e.g. drawings, building with Lego, drawing with chalk. The activity was housed on The Loop with a Idea’s Lab Kit to download (see here).

2.2 Communication and promotion techniques

Several communication tools were used to promote the consultation to the Wyndham City community.

A list of communication techniques can be found in the below table (Table 2).

Table 2 – Communication techniques

Community Group	Communication techniques
<i>Children 4- 12 years</i>	Kindergartens network
	Library network and social media
<i>Youth</i>	Youth Podcast advertisement
	Youth social media
	School networks
<i>General Community</i>	Social Media
	The Loop database
<i>Aged and Disability</i>	Neighbourhood Hubs networks
	Wyndham Disability Support Network
	Homecare workers issued with email and survey to complete with clients
<i>Diverse Communities</i>	Neighbourhood Hub networks
	Community Development networks
	Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander networks
	Wunggerwil Dhurrung Centre networks

During the second phase, the online survey was available on the project page on The Loop and was promoted via a newsletter to subscribers of The Loop (approximately 4,000 community member), community members who participated in the first phase of community engagement, social media and a media release.

See below tables 3 and 4 showcasing data on social media posts and The Loop for the first phase of engagement.

Table 3 - Social Media analytics

<i>Tool</i>	Number of posts	Number of views	Number of engagements (clicks)
<i>Facebook Wyndham City Living (Paid ad)</i>	2	35208	335
<i>Facebook Wyndham City Living (Organic post)</i>	3	6326	135
<i>Facebook Youth in Wyndham</i>	1	126	2
<i>Facebook Wyndham Experience</i>	1	134	2

Table 4 - The Loop, analytics from Wyndham City's online community engagement platform

<i>Total number of visits to the project page</i>	1200
<i>New registrations to The Loop</i>	61
<i>Aware visitors (made a single visit to the project page)</i>	873
<i>Informed visitors (clicked on something on the project page to read further)</i>	318
<i>Engaged visitors (participated in the project and used an engagement tool i.e. survey)</i>	86

2.3 Participants

Phase one of the community engagement process had a total of 100 people participate across the five engagement methods as demonstrated in Table 5.

Four people provided feedback during the public exhibition period during the second phase of engagement. The demographic data for these people has not been analysed due to the small number.

Table 5 – Participant numbers by engagement method – first phase of engagement

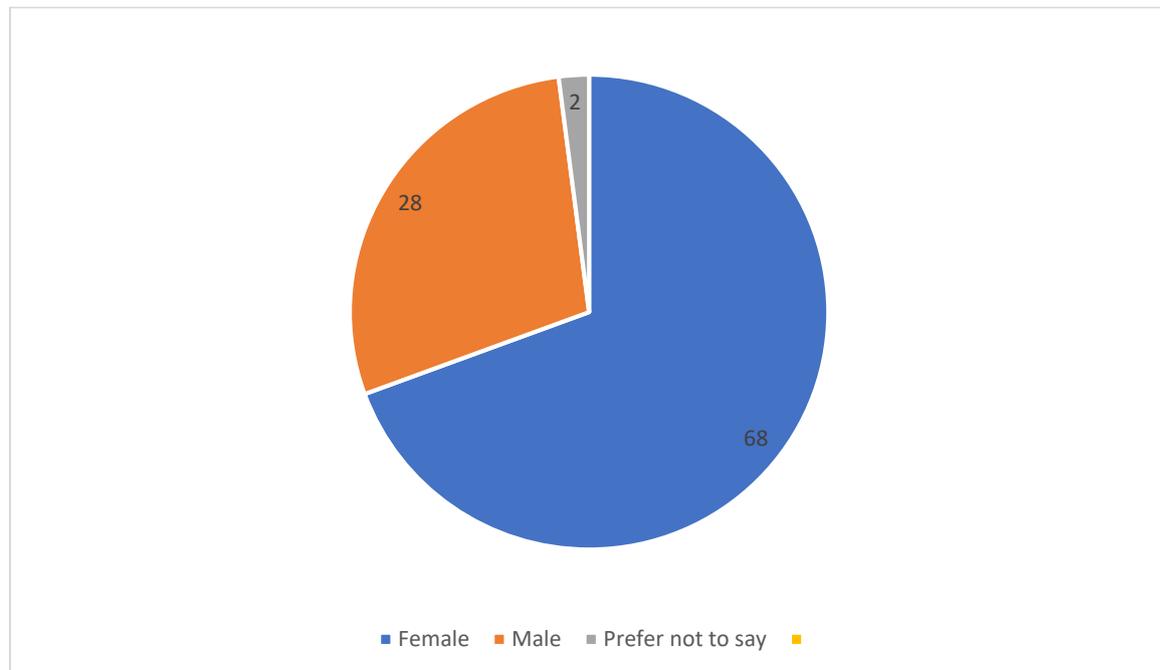
<i>Engagement method</i>	Total participants
<i>Community online survey</i>	78
<i>Online Discussions (3)</i>	9
<i>One-on-one phone conversations</i>	1
<i>Focus group (Wyndham’s African Community)</i>	8
<i>Idea’s Lab (children 4-12years)</i>	4
	100

The below are of note, of the 100 people who participated:

- 15 people participated that have disability or care for someone with a disability
- 55 per cent of participants told us this was their first consultation they had been involved in
- 26 participants indicated they had young families
- 10 participants were Wyndham City business owners

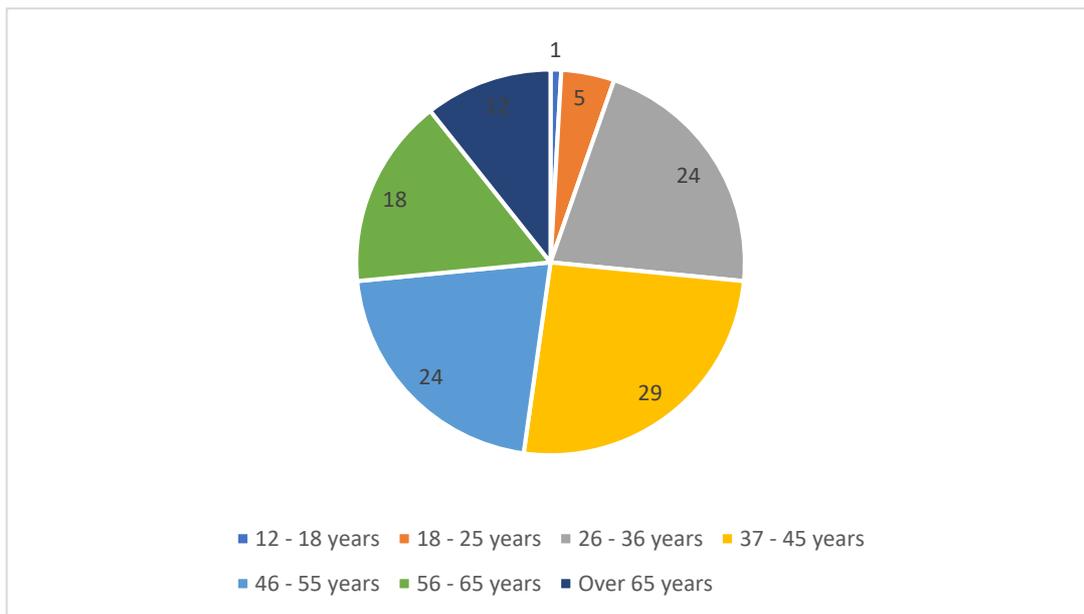
Demographic data was collected for participants across the five engagement methods shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Participants by gender



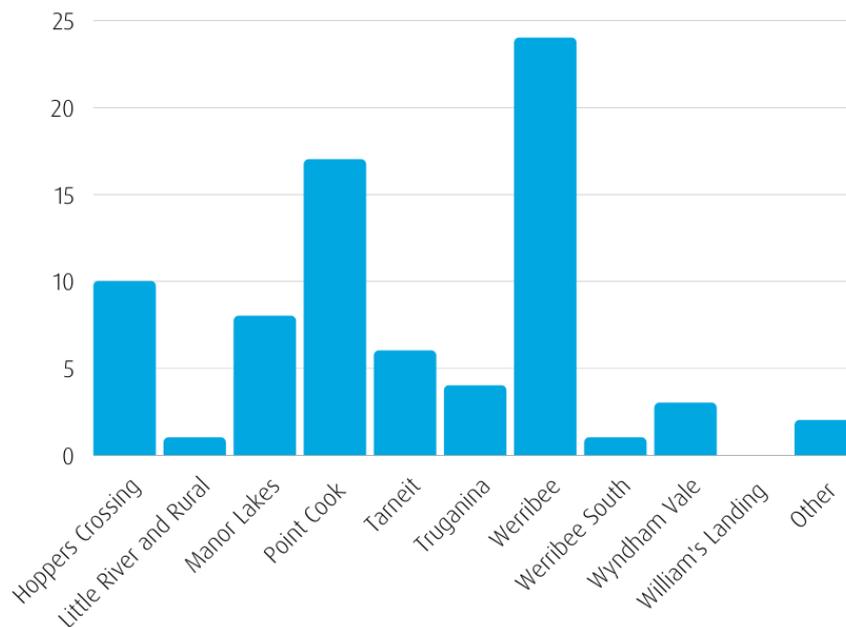
A diverse range of age groups participated in the survey demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Participants by age group



Participant's place of residence is demonstrated in Figure 4, with Werribee, Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing, Manor Lakes representing 73% of participants. Participants included in the 'other' section listed in Figure 3 were from Altona and Frankston.

Figure 3 – Participant's place of residence



2.4 Limitations

The engagement methodology and analysis of findings had some limitations that should be acknowledged when reading this report. These are:

- All consultation efforts were online due to COVID-19. This presents a range of limitations such as:
 - Only community members with a certain technical ability were able to participate,
 - Only community members with access to technology (devices, internet connection etc) were able to participate,
 - Community members may prefer to only participate in consultation that is face-to-face,
 - Although the online discussions were made available at a variety of days / times, due to time constraints and family commitments (working from home, children at home etc.) community members may not have had time to participate,
 - The wellbeing of community members may be affected and participation in a consultation is not something of interest during this time.
 - The targeted community engagement was via internal networks, this presents the limitation of providing a sample result rather than broad representation.
- The second phase was open over the Christmas and New Year Period which may impact on community interest and time to respond.

3. Findings: First Phase - Community Consultation

3.1 Key findings

The following is a summary of the key findings for consideration that emerged from the results of the online discussion engagement process where two key questions were asked.

Within the online discussions, two key questions were asked.

Question one: What makes great community engagement?

Having a thoughtful, planned and structured process

Wyndham community members called for more co-ordinated planning of community engagement across Council. This included:

- Providing information prior to consultation to allow stakeholders to organise their thoughts and be better prepared to contribute.
- Providing regular points for input and feedback.
- Closing the communication / information loop; getting back to the community with outcomes of the project.
- Designing creative and dynamic consultation processes that encapsulate the needs of the stakeholder.

Being accessible

A common theme amongst the online discussions was accessibility. Participants talked about wanting to participate but being unable to attend a workshop because of the time and having to care for children. Participants also called for:

- Having multiple methods for stakeholders to be informed and provide input.
- Displaying information in different formats, for example, documentation, infographic, and video.
- Going to where the community are.
- Having translation and interpretation services, as many Wyndham community members do not speak English as their first or even second language.
- Creating play spaces and activity zones for children to allow parents / guardians access to participate.

Being inclusive, respectful and equitable

Participants of the online discussions spoke about the need for Council to acknowledge feedback and to ensure community members felt appreciated for their input. They also talked about finding the right times and listening to the quiet voices, not just the loudest in the room. Other key messages under this theme included:

- Allowing participants time to speak about their personal lived experiences.

- Understanding that the loudest voices in the room don't necessarily represent the whole community's ideas.
- Treating stakeholders with respect and acknowledging their valuable contributions.
- Including culturally appropriate consultation methods.

Empowering the Wyndham City community

Community members were clear that collaborating with Council was important to them. They want to have a say on projects they are passionate about, and have their voices heard.

Participants also talked about:

- Understanding that a community member's lived experience has value; this is their expertise.
- When appropriate, working collaboratively with the community to form relationships and build skills.
- Allowing stakeholders, the opportunity to be involved in ways that are relevant to them, for example, youth led groups.
- If applicable, allowing community members to be involved in the implementation process.

Being transparent

Participants called for a better understanding on why Council is engaging with the community. They feel many consultations are undertaken without purpose, just because they must. When this occurs, engagement is 'tokenistic', and trust can be lost.

Community members named a few things that would create more of a transparent approach to engagement, including:

- Being clear with what the community can influence.
- Investing time into sharing information and building trust.
- Allowing the opportunity for the community to provide input in decisions that haven't already been made.
- Being upfront about the negotiables and non-negotiables of a project.
- Continue communicating to stakeholders' post consultation and show the implementation of the project.

Question two: How should Wyndham City support you to participate in Council consultations?

Clear communication

Participants of the online discussions spoke about the necessity of clear and appropriate communication. The following suggestions were made for Council to review:

- Recognising not all community members are online; the need to ensure consultation has a variety of information feeding and gathering methods.
- Making language simple and easy to understand.
- Regular direct emails from The Loop about new and developing consultations.

Making consultation accessible

Wyndham community members made recommendations as to how Council could make consultation more accessible. Some ideas were:

- Online profiles for community members with personalised information.
- Ensuring surveys are not the only way of participation, particularly for diverse communities.
- Creating spaces that are welcoming and accessible for parents.
- Simplify Council information.
- Utilising The Loop for all consultation projects and making it personalised for people's interests.
- A Council outpost at Little River to provide the opportunity for consultation in-person.

The importance of multipurpose spaces for community members to make contact and link in with different Council services was also noted.

Building relationships and empathy for our community

Participants of the online discussions spoke about the importance of strong ties between Council and community. The following suggestions were made:

- Ensuring Council staff introduce themselves before engagement commences to build rapport and trust.
- Having culturally appropriate services to help bridge gaps with multi-cultural communities.
- Showing respect to community leaders and understanding cultural norms within different groups.
- Taking the time to build relationships. Great engagement is sometimes through the small conversations.
- Implement 'Cultural Days' including food sharing and gathering for the community.

Promoting consultation

Community members made suggestions as to how Council could best promote consultations and increase participation numbers, ideas included:

- Utilising different social media platforms.
- Utilising internal networks, for example, Kindergarten newsletters, Neighbourhood Hubs, and the Library database.
- Summarising the Council Agenda and emailing to residents a week prior to the Council Meeting.
- Utilising community leaders and 'community connectors' to support promotion of consultations to different groups.
- Displaying consultation information at libraries with librarian's support if needed to participate.

Participants also remarked on the following:

- Planning and meeting with bordering Councils as there is sometimes crossover.
- Providing understanding for how the decisions made today will affect the children of tomorrow.
- Wyndham community members are unsure of who represents them with Council issues.
- Important for Council to clarify its role and responsibilities in comparison to State Government.

Wyndham African Community Online Discussion

In partnering with the Neighbourhood Hubs Team, a Wyndham African community focus group was formed.

The following is a summary of the key messages for consideration that emerged from the results of the focus group.

Relationships

- New community members to Wyndham City sometimes do not have any existing networks and are unaware of the services Council provides. There needs to be an outreach program for these residents.
- Council staff need to build relationships and trust with the Wyndham African community to ensure a positive experience
- Council can network with faith organisations to better engage the community
- Council should try to engage youth in different way; develop connections. The suggestion of a youth leader training program was made.

Closing the loop

- Important to provide feedback on what has happened with the information collected during a consultation.
- Community members would like to see the implementation process and sometimes be involved.

Diversity

- The Wyndham African community would like to see more diversity within the staff at Wyndham City Council.

Accessibility

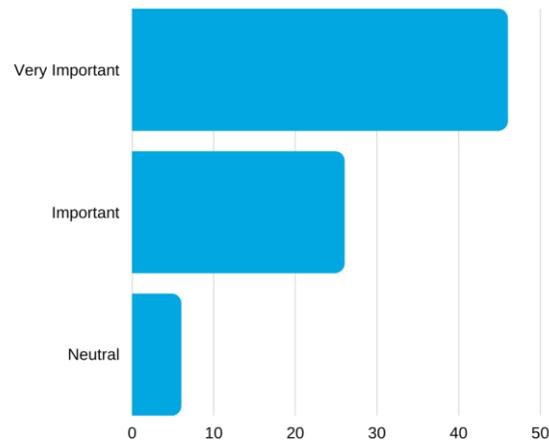
- Make information on ways to connect with Council easily available.
- Ensure Council staff are culturally sensitive and make every interaction with community a positive experience
- Language and interpretation services to be available at Council.
- Present information in different ways.
- Design consultations with families in mind (different times of day/children involvement).
- Some community elders will only attend consultations with their children as they are their interpreters.

3.2 Online community survey

The importance of engagement

The Wyndham community were asked how important it is to provide input into projects that matter to them within their local community, with 92 per cent indicating it was either important or very important (shown in Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Number of people who believe providing input into projects is important (n=78)



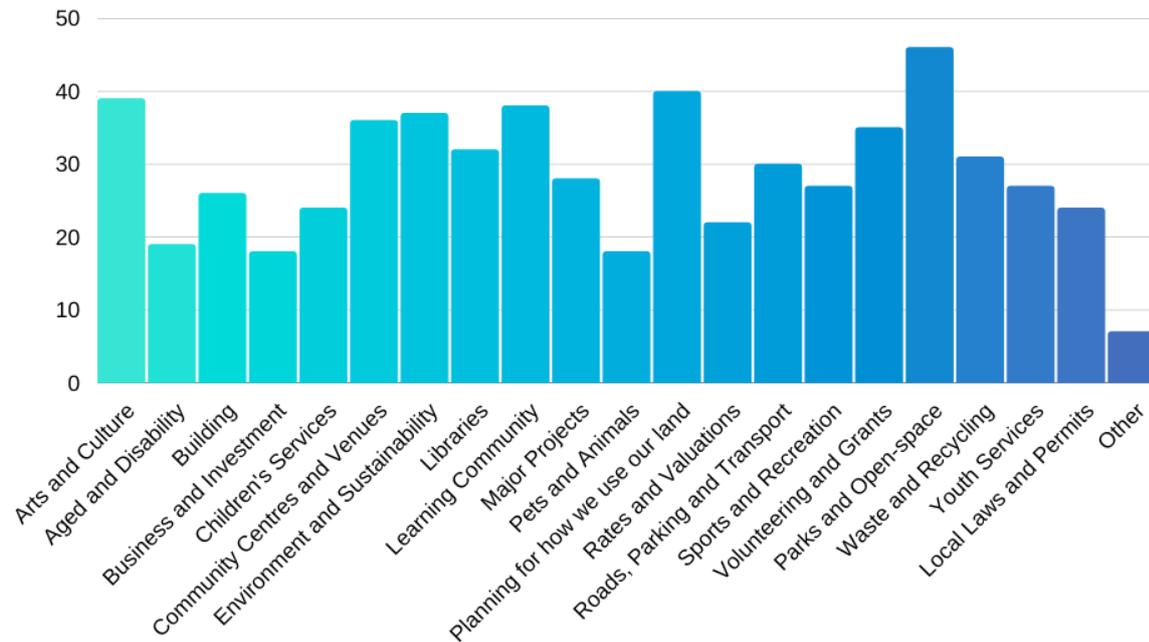
What areas the community are interested in participating in consultation

Overall, as shown in Figure 5, the community survey demonstrated most people are interested in providing their input in the following:

- Parks and open space
- Planning for how we use our land
- Arts and Culture
- Learning community (Learning centres, Wyndham Learning Festival)
- Environment and Sustainability
- Community Centres and Venues

Please note, participants were able to select multiple areas of interest.

Figure 5 – Number of people who would like to be involved in each type of project (n=78)



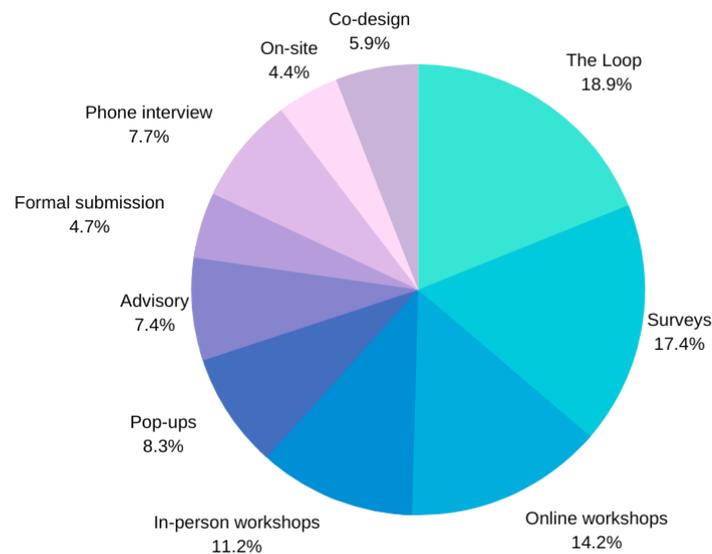
Methods of engagement

The community were asked how they would like to be engaged on issues that are important to them. The results from the community survey are demonstrated in Figure 6 and show most people want to participate through:

- Online engagement activities via The Loop, Wyndham's online engagement platform (64 votes)
- Surveys (59 votes)
- Online workshops (48 votes)
- In-person workshops (38 votes)

Figure 6 – methods of engagement

Please note, participants were able to select multiple methods of engagement.



Face-to face vs online

The survey asked participants if they were more likely to participate in consultation activities online or face-to-face.

- 67 percent indicated they were more likely to participate in online activities in their own time.
- 33 per cent indicated they were more likely to participate in consultation activities when face-to-face.

Wyndham City vs local suburb/immediate community

The Wyndham community were asked if they were more likely to participate in consultation projects that directly affected their local suburb/immediate community or had interest for Wyndham City wide projects.

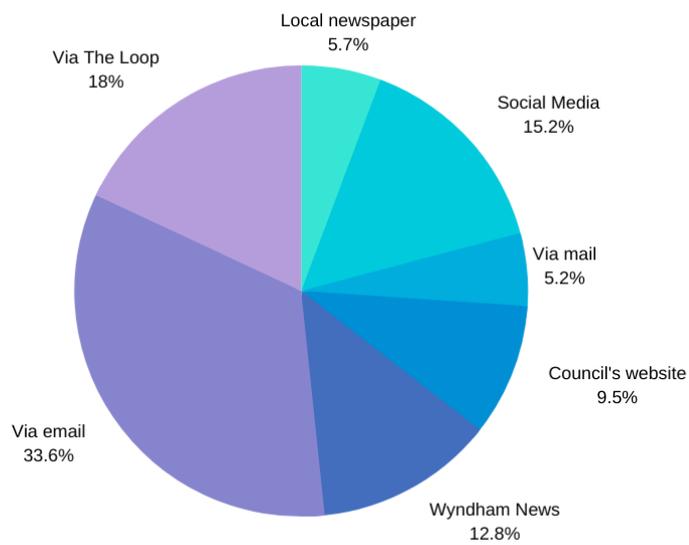
- 51 participants were more likely to participate in projects within their own suburb / immediate community
- 46 participants were more likely to participate in projects from all over Wyndham City

Informing community

The community were asked how they would like to be informed about engagement opportunities. The results are illustrated in Figure 7 with results indicating:

- 71 people preferred direct emails
- 38 people preferred information via The Loop
- 32 people preferred Social Media
- 27 preferred Wyndham News

Figure 7 – how the community would like to be informed of consultations



4. Findings: Second Phase - Public Exhibition of draft Policy

Public exhibition is the final stage of consultation on the draft policy and is designed as a check in for those residents who have already contributed or who are interested in the policy. An online survey was promoted between 10 December 2020 and 10 January 2021, inviting final feedback on the draft policy to ensure it aligns with community expectations.

In total, four community members responded via the public exhibition process. A summary of community responses received, as well as the response, is included below. All community members have received a response directly as to how their feedback has been used in the process. You can view a full copy of the survey questions at Appendix 2.

The new definition for community engagement

There was overall strong agreement with the new definition among the community members who responded, with the average score being 4 out of 5.

One community member emphasised the importance of multiple engagement methods, including face to face, and not relying on online engagement.

Community comment	Response
Be mindful that many people may not be computer literate and won't be able to take part. The website is challenging at the best of times and I'm sure many people will not feel included. Sometimes you need to personally connect with people to maximise your genuine evaluation.	This is a valuable suggestion and we will be incorporating a range of suggested engagement methods into the staff Community Engagement Practice Framework, which will accompany the policy.

The Policy statements attached to the legislated Principles

There was overall agreement with the policy statements in the draft Policy among the community members who responded, with the average score being 3.5 out of 5.

One community member suggested using rights-based language in the Principles. This comment and response is included below.

Community comment	Response
Instead of saying that participants in the community are entitled please use a rights based language e.g. participants in the community have rights.	This language is legislated under the Local Government Act 2020 and we are unable to change it. However, we will incorporate rights-based language as part of the drafting of the Community Engagement Practice Framework.

Further comment on the draft Policy

There were two further comments on the draft Policy, both emphasising accessibility and inclusivity.

These comments and responses are included below.

Community comment	Response
Is this only available online? If so, it's hardly inclusive, keep in mind the fact many people also don't have English as their first language.	<p>This is an important suggestion, and we will consider displaying hard copies of public exhibitions at key community venues in the future. We are also updating our engagement website "the Loop" to emphasise options for interpreters and translation.</p> <p>Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the importance of emphasising safety, community engagement methods utilised for the draft policy were predominantly online and on the phone. We acknowledge that in normal circumstances utilising a range of methods including in-person engagement is preferable. A Community Engagement Practice Framework is being developed once the draft Policy is adopted. This will further assist staff by outlining inclusive engagement methods</p>
This policy is a great starting point, more resources I would be interesting to know what work is being done to make sure community engagement is accessible and that staff have the skills to work with Community members with disabilities and to ensure that their practice is inclusive	This is a valuable suggestion and we will be working with Council's diversity team to incorporate a range of engagement methods into the staff Community Engagement Practice Framework, which will accompany the policy.

5. Conclusion and next steps

The feedback and data collected through the consultation processes identified several recurring themes as well as novel ideas and perspectives.

This feedback, together with the outcomes of discussions with Council officers, as well as the requirements of the Act, informed the content and direction of the Community Engagement Policy and subsequent supporting documentation.

The Draft Policy was presented to the Ordinary Council Meeting on 8 December for endorsement for public exhibition. The final Policy will be presented to Council on 2 February 2021 for endorsement.

Appendix 1

The Loop Online Survey Questions: Phase 1: Community Consultation

1. Select all that apply to you
 - I'm aged 18 – 24
 - I'm over 65
 - I have a young family
 - I'm a Wyndham business owner
 - I have a disability and/or care for someone in my household with disability
 - None of these apply to me

2. What is your gender
 - Female
 - Male
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other

3. What language/s do you speak at home?
 - English
 - Punjabi
 - Hindi
 - Mandarin
 - Urdu
 - Arabic
 - Other (please specify)

4. What suburb do you live in?
 - Hoppers Crossing
 - Little River and Rural
 - Manor Lakes
 - Point Cook
 - Tarneit
 - Truganina
 - Werribee
 - Werribee South
 - Wyndham Vale
 - William's Landing
 - Other (please specify)

5. How important is it for you to help shape projects that affect your local community?
- Very important
 - Important
 - Neutral
 - Low importance
 - Not important at all
6. What areas would you like to participate in to help shape Council decisions? (tick all that apply)
- Arts and Culture
 - Aged and disability
 - Building
 - Business and Investment
 - Children's Services (MCH, Immunisations, Kindergarten)
 - Community Centres and Venues
 - Environment and Sustainability
 - Libraries
 - Learning Community (Learning Centres, Wyndham Learning Festival)
 - Major Projects
 - Pets and Animals
 - Planning for how we use our land
 - Rates and Valuations
 - Roads, Parking, and Transport
 - Sports and Recreation
 - Volunteering and Grants
 - Parks and Open space
 - Waste and Recycling
 - Youth Services
 - Local Laws and Permits
 - Other (please specify)
7. How would you like to participate?
- Online engagement activities via our online engagement platform, The Loop
 - Online workshops
 - In-person workshops
 - Surveys
 - Pop-up at local events
 - Long term involvement in an advisory capacity
 - Formal submission to Council at a Council meeting

- Over the phone interview / conversation
- On -site
- Co-design (partnership with Council to design projects /policies etc.)
- Other (please specify)

8. Which statements best reflect your interests (tick all that apply)

- I'm more likely to participate in consultation activities when face-to-face
- I'm more likely to participate in consultation activities online, in my own time
- I would like to shape projects from all over Wyndham City
- I would like to help shape projects from within my own suburb / immediate community

9. How would you like to be informed about future opportunities to participate?

- Via The Loop
- Via email
- Wyndham News (Council Magazine)
- Council's website
- Via mail
- Social Media
- Local newspaper
- Other (please specify)

10. Have you previously participated in a consultation for a project, plan, or policy?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Appendix 2

The Loop Online Survey Questions: Phase two - Public Exhibition

1. How much do you agree with the new community engagement definition for Wyndham City? (1 to 5)
2. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about the definition?
 - Yes
 - No
3. What else would you like to tell us about the new definition for community engagement?
4. How much do you agree with the Policy Statements that are attached to the legislated Policy Principles? (1 to 5)
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about the Policy Statements?
 - Yes
 - No
6. What else would you like to tell us about the Policy Statements?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about the Draft Community Engagement Policy?
 - Yes
 - No
8. What else would you like to tell us about the Draft Community Engagement Policy?