

# Community Engagement Policy *2025-29*



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## Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Wyndham City Council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Peoples of Australia. We acknowledge the Bunurong and Wadawurrung Peoples as Traditional Owners of the lands on which Wyndham City operates. The Wadawurrung and Bunurong Peoples have and always will belong to the Werribee Yalook (river), creeks, stars, hills and red clay of this Country. We pay respect to their Ancestors and Elders who always have, and always will, care for Country and community today and for future generations.



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## Purpose

Community engagement is a community-inclusive process that allows people to have their say on decisions that affect their lives. It is a crucial input into good decision making and as the arm of government closest to the people, Council has an important role to make sure community engagement is genuine, transparent and appropriate.

### **Wyndham's definition of Community Engagement**

Community engagement is a planned, two-way process that provides opportunities for community to have meaningful involvement and share lived experiences to inform Council's decision making.

Wyndham's Community Engagement Policy 2025-29 (the Policy) sets expectations and principles for community engagement. It guides best practice community engagement processes and outcomes through consistent and transparent approaches.

## Scope

This policy applies to all forms of community engagement by Councillors, officers and consultants acting on behalf of Council including but not limited to:

- the planning, delivery and evaluation of any community engagement process or activity
- engagement with the community regarding issues, proposals and Council decisions such as projects, strategies, plans, programs or service delivery, and
- engagement with key groups in the community.
- The policy does not apply to Council processes such as service requests or complaints.

## Principles

The below principles are legislated in the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) and guides all community engagement processes at Wyndham.

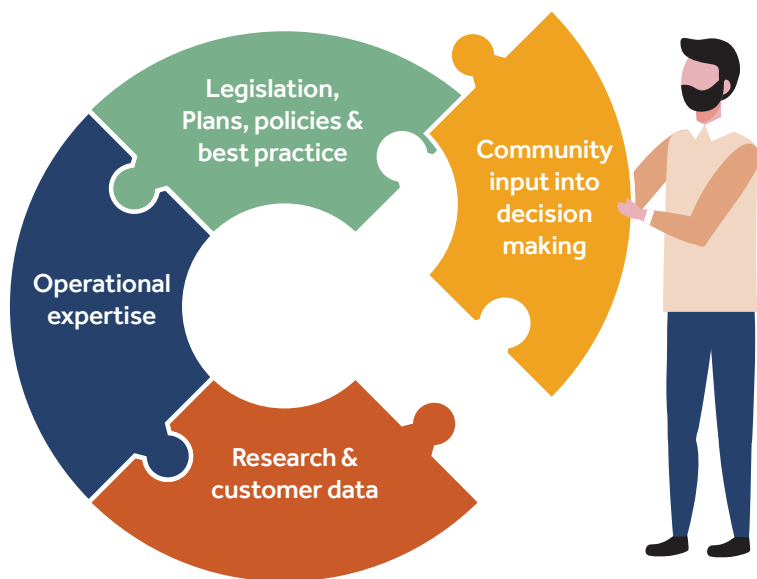
- A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.
- Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.
- Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups 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.

We've adapted and simplified the Principles as demonstrated in the table below.

Wyndham Principle	How we will do this
 <b>Clear objectives and scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the goal and what can or can't change.</li> <li>• Clearly explain why we are doing it and what can and cannot be changed</li> <li>• Use past experiences and data to plan better engagement.</li> </ul>
 <b>Access to information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information in time for everyone to be able to get involved.</li> <li>• Use different ways to make sure people understand and can provide their thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• Participants are informed and able to provide input.</li> </ul>
 <b>Representation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify who is affected or interested in the decision.</li> <li>• Reach out to diverse groups using existing networks.</li> <li>• Make sure a broad range of voices is heard, not just the loudest ones.</li> </ul>
 <b>Support for participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide help to reduce barriers to participation (language, literacy, disability etc).</li> <li>• Use culturally appropriate methods.</li> <li>• Engage in ways and places that are relevant and accessible to people.</li> </ul>
 <b>Transparency in decision making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear from the start on how feedback will be used in decisions.</li> <li>• Communicate what can and can't change.</li> <li>• Share engagement outcomes and decisions with participants.</li> <li>• Councillors will consider all community views.</li> </ul>

## Community engagement and decision making

The information we get from our community engagement processes are just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to making decisions at Council. We combine community feedback with other evidence (research/customer data), expert knowledge and our strategic policies and legislation to make a decision.



1. **Community input:** Community input, as guided by this policy, is a crucial input to decision making at Council. We recognise that this input does not take the place of decisions made by elected representatives. The aim is to provide the broadest range of views and feedback, including community's needs, lived experiences and the impact on them to be taken into consideration when a decision is made.
2. **Research and customer data:** Relevant research, analysis and insights is used as a further input to the decision making process. Customer data includes insights gained from community's everyday interactions with Council services.
3. **Legislation, plans, policies and best practice:** We consider and apply all principles within the Local Government Act 2020, where relevant. For example, financial management, public transparency, strategic planning and service performance principles. Other legislative requirements, existing policies and plans and best practice approaches are also used.
4. **Operational expertise:** Council staff operational expertise, expert knowledge and advice is used to provide recommendations and enhance the decisions being made.



## Who do we engage with?

Our engagement processes identify people likely to be affected by a proposed project or decision. This may be anyone who lives, works, studies or spends time in Wyndham.

We aim to involve the right people in the right way at the right time. This make sure everyone who is impacted by a decision or project is given the opportunity to provide feedback or input.

We tailor our engagement process to make sure the greatest number of people can contribute including identifying and eliminating barriers where possible.

## When do we engage?

Engagement processes are planned and implemented when it is identified that there is a proposed project or decision that will impact all or some of the community.

In some instances, Council is legislatively and/or legally required to engage with the community. In these cases, we will treat the legally required level of community engagement as the minimum standard. This policy is designed to complement and support these existing requirements.

In addition to the Local Government Act 2020, other relevant legislation and guiding documents includes, but is not limited to:

- Road Management Act 2004
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011
- Subordinate Legislation Act 1994
- Public Administration Act 2004
- Gender Equality Act 2020
- Disability Act 2006

## When don't we engage?

The opportunity for community engagement may sometimes be limited. Instances might include:

- where we are required to take immediate action as in an emergency response
- where we aren't the leading agency or don't have the decision-making power
- decisions that related to the day-to-day operations of Wyndham City Council
- legal or commercial restrictions prevent it

## How do we engage?

Engagement will be in proportion to the impact of the proposed project or decision/s being made.

There is no 'one-size fits all' approach to community engagement processes. A variety of methods and tools will be used to depending on what decision needs to be made and who needs to be involved.. To ensure that we are providing best value to our community the level and type of engagement depends on:

- what decision is to be made
- the ability of the community to shape the decision
- the significance and complexity of the matter
- the level of resourcing required, and
- legislative requirements.


### Deliberative engagement

Legislation requires deliberative engagement practices for key processes. While there may be other projects that could benefit the use of deliberative engagement, not all are. Suitability will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The below table sets out a guide for the minimum requirement of community engagement to be implemented.

Policy or Process	Minimum level of engagement
Community Vision	Deliberative engagement
Council Plan	Deliberative engagement
Financial Plan	Deliberative engagement
Asset Plan	Deliberative engagement
Annual Plan and Budget	Other types of community engagement
Making of a local law	Other types of community engagement
Acquiring or selling land	Other types of community engagement
Other plans (including the Revenue and Rating Plan), strategies or policies, capital works projects, services and day to day business	Determine level based on the decision being made, the ability of the community to shape it, legislative requirements, significance and complexity and level of resourcing required.
Processes where there is no or limited opportunity for community input	Determine level based on the decision being made, the ability of the community to shape it, legislative requirements, significance and complexity and level of resourcing required or/inform.  Wherever possible, we will make sure that impacted community members are given timely information about the process or decision.





Wyndham has adopted the following key elements when using deliberation engagement processes. Not all deliberative processes will need to include every element.

- There is a complex problem or issue to be solved.
- A deliberating group is selected using a random and stratified recruitment method
- Information from diverse sources and covering different sides of the issue, such as background reports and expert speakers, is provided.
- The group is given 4-6 full days of time to deliberate.
- The process is designed and facilitated by independent skilled facilitators.
- The group considers information, identifies options, comes to judgement, writes their own recommendations/report, and presents it to the elected council.

## **Submissions process**

On matters where submissions processes were previously governed by the Local Government Act 1989, section 223, Council will tailor an appropriate engagement approach based on legislative requirements.

At times, the only form of community participation may be through a submission as governed by Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989. It is important to note that Section 223 is not repealed from the Local Government Act 1989. Where other legislation requires a Section 223 process Council will continue to manage the submission process in the same way as it previously had. Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 will still apply to various provisions of that Act including:

- Section 157(5) – council decision to change system of valuation
- Sections 163A and 166(4) – special rates
- Section 169(1C) – rebates and concessions
- Section 179 – Regional Library agreements
- Section 199 – concentration or diversion of drainage
- Section 200 – drainage of land
- Section 207A – a range of traffic and road related matters

## Roles

Roles and responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared as follows:

Who	Roles and responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that matters under consideration are informed by the appropriate level of community engagement.</li><li>• Balance the range of views and concerns on an issue when making a decision.</li></ul>
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that matters under consideration are informed by the appropriate level of community engagement.</li><li>• Champion better practice community engagement through policy, process and leaderships.</li><li>• Monitor implementation and compliance with the policy.</li></ul>
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manage areas of responsibility to ensure community engagement is consistent with this policy.</li></ul>
Community Engagement Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversee the Community Engagement function to build organisational capacity and practice through provision of expert advice, support, training and mentoring.</li></ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake community engagement activities consistent with this policy.</li></ul>
Wyndham community, businesses, government and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support community engagement processes and Council decision-making by seeking information, actively participating in engagement activities, putting forward ideas and promoting consultation opportunities to other stakeholders.</li></ul>



## Evaluation and reporting

The Community Evaluation and Monitoring Framework, measures the success of the Policy. It provides the key measures and performance indications to guide rigorous and transparent evaluation and reporting. It does this through an annual evaluation of the Policy to determine if community engagement at Wyndham, as a whole meet the requirements and obligations of the Policy and the Act. Inputs to this evaluation framework include:

1. The Local Government Performance Reporting Framework
2. The Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey
3. Annual review and audit of the engagement principles against performance indicators
4. Internal review of our internal service provision

## Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)

The implications of this policy were assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020.

The Gender Impact Assessment showed that the Community Engagement Policy highlights the need for consideration of the needs of all intersectional groups when planning and executing community engagement processes. This includes individuals who experience overlapping forms of disadvantage or discrimination based on characteristics like race, gender, disability, age, socioeconomic status, cultural background or sexual orientation.

## Policy review

This policy will be formally reviewed every four years. It will be periodically reviewed and updated as needed.

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