

# SHIRE OF VICTORIA PLAINS

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

### 1. PURPOSE

This policy outlines the Shire of Victoria Plain's (Council's) approach to Community Engagement and commitment to use appropriate, effective and inclusive engagement practices to support meaningful conversations with our communities and stakeholders.

Community engagement is not only good business practice, but it is also important to good government. For this reason, the Council is committed to engaging with the communities within the Shire.

Community engagement is about involving the community in decisions which affect them and it is critical to the successful development and implementation of acceptable policies and decisions and for improving services by being responsive to the needs of the community.

Community engagement does not mean achieving consensus. However, it does involve seeking broad, informed agreement and the best possible solution for Council and the community.

### 2. STATEMENT OF INTENT

To provide a clear statement of Council's commitment to best-practice community and stakeholder engagement as it applies to decision making;

To define the guiding principles that will ensure appropriate, effective and inclusive community and stakeholder engagement is achieved consistently across the Shire; and

To outline the required mechanisms to be established and continually reviewed to ensure best practice engagement practices are integrated into strategic and operational planning.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

*Community Engagement:* A deliberate process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups across a community to encourage active involvement, open dialogue, feedback and participation and to align decision making processes appropriately to actions undertaken to a problem, opportunity or outcome.

*Community:* Referring to residents, ratepayers, business and land owners and people who have an interest in decisions made by Council.

*Consultation:* Seeking feedback or advice on a select topic or project.

*IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement:* Refers to the International Association of Public Participation engagement framework with its scale ranging from providing information (low level of engagement) to active participation (very high level of engagement).

*Stakeholders:* Individuals or organisations which affect or can be affected by project decisions. Stakeholders can include interest groups, clubs, associations, service providers, government departments/agencies, media, business and industry.

### 4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Shire of Victoria Plains Councillors, staff, consultants and contractors that manage projects, plans and initiatives that impact stakeholders in our community, as well as consultants appointed to manage these on the Shire's behalf.

This policy applies to the engagement strategies managed through the Shire's traditional methods, and increasingly online engagement as the Shire continues to develop this platform.

This policy is not intended to replace legal and statutory obligations. It should, however, guide business unit specific practices and procedures.

## **5. PRINCIPLES**

This Community Engagement Policy is informed by the Shire of Victoria Plains Community Engagement Principles as outlined in the Community Engagement Framework for which Council will have regard to the following when undertaking community engagement:

- Engagement will be targeted, open and easily understood
- We will allow sufficient time and opportunity for participation
- We recognise that there is diversity in the activities and projects Council undertakes and that the type of engagement should vary accordingly
- We will approach engagement from an impartial perspective
- Engagement activities will be inclusive, accessible and actively seek a diverse range of perspectives
- We will be upfront about how much opportunity there is to influence a decision
- We will actively identify those affected by or interested in a decision and make every effort to support and encourage participation in the decision-making process
- We will define the community's role in any community engagement process using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum
- We will provide information to support meaningful community participation and we will encourage each other to listen to perspectives to recommend appropriate solutions
- We will listen and provide feedback about how the information gathered will be used to inform the outcome
- We will learn from each experience to review and improve our practice

## **6. WHY WE CONSULT AND ENGAGE**

We utilise deliberative engagement to:

- a) Strengthen decision making by Council that reflects the interests and needs of all sections of community.
- b) Increase the involvement and participation of all community groups in engagement activities and mitigate any barriers to engagement.
- c) Be deliberate inclusive and intentional with targeted engagement practices to ensure that hard to reach individuals and communities are heard to provide access and equity.
- d) Centre the importance of the need of all populations in the community within the context that they live.
- e) Elevate and encourage new voices and ideas to welcome differing lived experience and perspective.
- f) Reinforce community understanding and confidence in Council.
- g) Create and maintain opportunities for Council to collaborate with its stakeholders

**When we will engage and consult:**

- On developments or changes with potential to impact residents and ratepayers
- When required by legislative requirements
- To obtain input into long-term and strategic plans of the Shire
- On major projects and strategic issues

- When requested by the community or Council

The Shire of Victoria Plains will take a planned and purposeful approach when engaging with stakeholders and the community and will use tools such as the IAP2 Spectrum (Appendix 1).

We recognise the skills required to undertake community engagement and will provide staff with opportunities for further skill development and training. We also recognise that from time to time we may need to retain professional consultants to assist with certain engagement strategies.

### **When we may not engage and consult**

There are some situations when it may not be effective or appropriate to seek feedback from the community and stakeholders, for example when:

- Legal constraints exist
- The Shire is required to act in a timeframe which prevents consultation
- The matter is delivering a policy-driven decision where previous engagement with the community and stakeholders has occurred
- A decision has already been made or the Shire is not the decision-maker and has no ability to influence the decision
- The matter concerns public safety or is an emergency.

## **7. REFERENCES**

Strategic Community Plan  
 Disability Access and Inclusion Plan  
 Customer Service Charter  
 Freedom of Information Act 1982  
 Local Government Act 1995  
 Regulations Health Act 1911 and associated regulations  
 Local Town Planning Scheme  
 Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015  
 Heritage of WA Act 1990  
 Environmental Protection Act 1986  
 Bush Fires Act 1954  
 Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1984  
 Privacy Act 1998  
 Disability Services Act 1993  
 Equal Opportunity Act 1984

<b>Author</b>	
<b>Version</b>	
<b>Adopted</b>	
<b>Reviewed</b>	

**APPENDIX 1 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
<i>Goal</i>	To provide the membership with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain member feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the members throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the members 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 members
<i>What does this look like?</i>	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.