

Community Engagement Plan 2010 - 2014

October 2010



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Why Engage the Community?

Introduction

Latrobe City Council recognises the importance and benefits of involving community members in decision making processes to enable better outcomes focused on the needs and aspirations of the community. Community engagement enables and ensures the responsiveness of the Council and guides the quality and effectiveness of major projects, infrastructure works, policy development, service planning and community lead developments.

Council implemented its Community Engagement Policy and Strategy in 2005 to support the principles of being open, responsive, inclusive, consistent and accountable. This policy sought to provide community members with a clear understanding of the avenues for communication with Council. It also identified a range of levels and types of engagement to suit various situations. Since then Latrobe City Council has acquired considerable experience and received valuable feedback in the facilitation of community engagement.

This plan seeks to build on that experience and has the objectives of:

- Establishing a set of guiding principles for community engagement activity;
- Providing community members with a clear guide to how community engagement activities will be co-ordinated, developed and implemented; and
- Ensuring ongoing improvement and enhancement of Council's community engagement activities and capabilities.

Legislative Context

The Local Government Act 1989 states that the primary objective of a council is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having regard to the long term and cumulative effects of decisions.

In seeking to achieve this primary objective, a council must have regard to facilitating the following objectives:

- to promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district;
- to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and services are provided in accordance with the best value principles to best meet the needs of the local community;
- to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community
- to promote appropriate business and employment opportunities;
- to ensure that services and facilities provided by the council are accessible and equitable;
- to ensure the equitable imposition of rates and charges; and

- to ensure transparency and accountability in Council decision making.

The Act also states that Council is elected to provide leadership for the good governance of the municipal district and the local community and that its role includes:

- acting as a representative government by taking into account the diverse needs of the local community in decision making;
- providing leadership by establishing strategic objectives and monitoring their achievement;
- maintaining the viability of the Council by ensuring that resources are managed in a responsible and accountable manner;
- advocating the interests of the local community to other communities and governments;
- acting as a responsible partner in government by taking into account the needs of other communities; and
- fostering community cohesion and encouraging active participation in civic life.

Strategic Context

Latrobe City Council's key strategic documents, Latrobe 2026 and the Council Plan 2010-2014 identify the community's ongoing interest in council's decision making processes.

The development of *Latrobe 2026 – The Community Vision for the Latrobe Valley* was facilitated by Latrobe City Council in consultation with many local agencies, organisations, groups and individuals.

In April/May of 2009, independent researchers undertook an extensive survey of Latrobe Valley residents to determine their aspirations for the future of the region. The survey explored economic, environmental and social themes to identify the aspects that residents valued most, and those they would most like to change. It also captured the community's perspective on the biggest issues the Latrobe Valley faces in the future. Community engagement through democratic governance was identified as a key strategic action in supporting, activating and informing the community and the local government decision making process.

A concise expression of the preferred future articulated by the community is that in 2026 Latrobe Valley will be:

Liveable and vibrant - A place where people feel safe, connected and proud of their city;

Sustainable and enterprising - A place where community life compliments the environment; and

Committed to collaborative and inclusive leadership - A place where people work in partnership to facilitate local outcomes.

These values are expressed in the community's vision statement:

“In 2026 the Latrobe Valley is a liveable and sustainable region with collaborative and inclusive community leadership.”

Council contributed to the delivery of the community’s aspirations as expressed in Latrobe 2026 through the *Latrobe City Council Plan 2010-2014*. This plan notes that Council is committed to collaborative and inclusive leadership through ensuring “genuine community engagement and to conducting its affairs openly, transparently and at all times with the highest levels of integrity”.

A strategic direction under Governance as expressed in the Council Plan is to “Support effective community engagement to increase community participation in Council decision making”. The major initiative of this strategy is to “Implement the Latrobe City Council Community Engagement Plan”.

Effective implementation will be measured through an increased community perception rating of Latrobe City Council’s community engagement activities.

Links to Council Strategies and Policies

The principles, objectives and actions outlined in this Community Engagement Plan have been developed within the context of other policies, strategies, plans and commitments made by Latrobe City Council. In particular, ensuring that all members of our community have an opportunity to engage are key objectives in the following Plans:

- *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Action Plan 2010*
“2. Active community consultation and participation
 - 2.1 Ensure accessible communications
 - 2.2 Provide easy access to interpreter services
 - 2.3 Encourage strategic use of bilingual staff
 - 2.4 Undertake inclusive community engagement
 - 2.5 Provide accessible venues and facilities”

- *Older Persons Strategy 2007*
“11. Information and Communication
Latrobe City Council will adopt a proactive approach to communicating with older people and ensuring information is available in a diversity of media to assist older people.”

- *Disability Action Plan 2009.*
“Investigate and document a process to develop a whole of organisation approach to providing information in alternative formats.”

In addition, the guidelines contained in the Customer Service Plan, Complaint Resolution Policy and Local Law 1 have also been referenced during the development of this plan.

Review of Community Engagement Policy and Strategy 2005

The Council Plan 2009-2013 called for a review of the existing Community Engagement Policy and Strategy and the development of a revised Community Engagement Plan. In conducting this review a community consultation program was implemented to ascertain how the community saw their role in community engagement, council's decision making processes and their perceptions of Council's current community engagement practices.

Key Findings

- Community member interest in engagement with Council is strongest when the topic is of direct interest to them.
- Face to face engagement is preferred.
- The council Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express, traditional mail and Council's website are the preferred modes of advice of Council decisions.

Recommendations

Latrobe City Council should continue to:

- Inform the community via Council's Link publication, issuing media releases to local press and developing content on its website www.latrobe.vic.gov.au; and
- Embracing social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

Information dissemination activities should be enhanced by:

- Upgrading the Latrobe City Council telephone system;
- Developing an expanded range of printed brochures and fact sheets on Council services and activities;
- Enhancing Latrobe City Council's online engagement capacity through the development of an online community engagement portal; and
- Identifying opportunities for face-to-face communication with Latrobe City residents. Consideration should be given to face-to-face engagement activities which provide opportunities for residents to discuss issues in private.

These findings and recommendations have been considered in the development of this revised Community Engagement Plan.

Further details regarding the community consultation program's findings are presented in Appendix 1 Community Consultation Program.

Best Practice Community Engagement

In developing this plan, Latrobe City Council (LCC) has sought to utilise national and international best practice in public participation and community engagement. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is recognised as an international leader in this field. The IAP2 has developed a set of core values¹ to

¹ (c) International Association for Public Participation

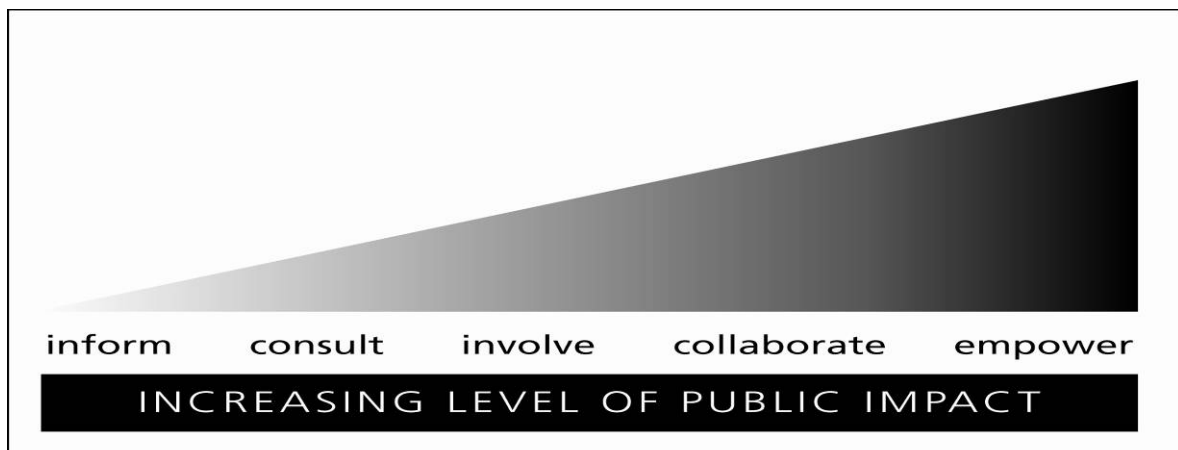
assist organisations to make decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

The International Association for Public Participation's Core Values are:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

These core values underpin the Latrobe City Council's Community Engagement Plan.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



The IAP2 "Spectrum of Community Engagement"² forms the basis for determining how, when and to what degree community engagement will occur. The spectrum shows that the level of participation can differ depending on the goals, time frames, resources and level of community concern.

This spectrum will be used by Latrobe City Council to determine the most appropriate level of community engagement. Commencing with *inform*, as the level

² (c) International Association for Public Participation

of public impact increases engagement moves through *consult*, *involve*, *collaborate* and finally *empower*.

Inform

The goal is to provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in their understanding of a problem, alternatives, opportunities and possible solutions.

Consult

The goal of consultation is to obtain feedback from the community on analysis, alternatives and decisions. Methods of consulting may include focus groups, advisory committees, online consultation, public meetings, petitions, polls and surveys.

Involve

The goal of involvement is to, through working directly with the community, ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered throughout a process. This may involve the community in various stages of a project in seeking specific answers to issues as opposed to broad general feedback sessions that occur in consultation

Collaborate

The goal of a collaboration process is to partner with the community in each aspect of a decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution. Community collaboration may be fostered through processes including steering committees, negotiation tables, policy roundtables, citizen panels, search conferences and formal and informal partnerships.

Empower

The goal of empowerment is to place final decision making in the hands of the community.

Engaging the Community

Embedding strong community engagement into Latrobe City Council's practices is a key Council priority. Council's engagement activities will be guided by the IAP2 framework and conducted in accordance with principles and objectives contained in this plan in addition to any statutory obligations.

Latrobe City Council will engage the community under a range of scenarios including:

- Latrobe City Council Strategic Planning
 - Development of the community vision.
 - Development of the Council Plan.
 - Development of the annual budget.
- Policy, Strategy and Plan development:
 - Includes development and review of documents which support the delivery of Council business throughout the municipality.
- Site specific
 - Involves changes to an area, including matters affecting an individual property.
- Service planning
 - Includes the development, amendment or improvement of a service provided by Latrobe City Council.
- Area improvement
 - Includes major projects and infrastructure. It may also include upgrades to recreational areas, Council buildings and facilities, community assets.
- Legislative requirements
 - Refers to all prescribed activity under the Local Government Act and any other relevant Acts..
- Issues affecting the:
 - Cultural and social liveability of the community.
 - Local economy and labour market.
 - Natural environment.

Community Engagement Principles

Supporting the IAP2 spectrum of community engagement are nine guiding principles which confirm Council's commitment to implement systems and processes which enhance community participation as well as develop increased opportunities to involve those members of the community not currently engaged. They support the commitment of Council to continue to develop and implement community engagement activities.

1. Participation and Inclusiveness

Encourage community involvement in a diverse range of Council activities including policy development, planning, service delivery and decision making.

Embrace inclusive processes and practices to maximise results from engagement activities.

2. Active Engagement

Use new and effective ways to engage, moving beyond established networks and tapping into the significant knowledge and expertise residing within our community.

3. Respect

Actively listen to and better understand the views, concerns and experiences of our community. Where agreements or consensus can not be reached, the choice to respectfully disagree is a valid and honourable position.

4. Integrity

Utilise engagement practices and processes that genuinely inform decision making and increase community trust and confidence in Council. Do what we say we will do, when we say we will do it.

5. Valuing diversity

Seek out diverse opinions and perspectives on Council activities and decision making processes

6. Trust

Develop community engagement activities that are genuine, relevant, timely and respectful of the community's desire to be involved. Inform the community as to the purpose of engagement and provide timely and appropriate feedback on how their input was considered by Council.

7. Timely

Schedule community engagement activities to provide maximum opportunities for involvement by all stakeholders. Ensure that community members and groups have adequate time to consider and prepare responses.

8. Transparent and Accountable

Provide community members with a clear understanding of how their inputs will be used and provide feedback on how their input contributed to Council's decision making process.

9. Informed

Ensure Council decisions are well informed by documenting the results of community engagement activities in all officer reports to Council. Council will consider submissions of all participants and community members when making decisions. If a difference occurs between community input and Council's final decision, the reasons for the Council decision will be clearly and unambiguously detailed.

Not all decisions of Latrobe City Council will provide an opportunity for broad community consultation or active participation. In some instances, a prior decision of Council or a legislative imperative may preclude further discussion or consideration of an issue. A decision may be part of Latrobe City Council's broad strategic agenda which has already been endorsed and adopted. In other instances, where there are highly complex issues, Council may legitimately seek to only gather the input of stakeholders or experts in a specific field.

Where there is no genuine opportunity for members of the community to have input into Council's decision making processes, this should be made clear and an engagement process should not be undertaken.

Council's Community Engagement Objectives

Latrobe City Council's objectives when engaging the community are informed by the community consultation program and guided by the IAP2 Spectrum of Community Engagement. They are:

1. To maintain an effective and ongoing dialogue with the community by both informing and listening.
2. To consult the community in policy development, planning and project delivery.
3. To involve the community in matters that directly affects them in a specific location or in the delivery of a Council service.
4. To collaborate with and empower the community to deliver selected services on behalf of Council.
5. Ensure the community understands how their input has influenced Council.
6. To continue to develop and improve Latrobe City Council's community engagement capacity.

1. Maintaining a Dialogue with the Community

Latrobe City Council aims to provide a range of opportunities to listen to the community and ensure that the community has access to information that is accurate, relevant, appropriate, easy to access and easy to understand.

The emphasis is on seeking out the views of a wide range of community members, utilising available tools and technology in addition to creating more accessible face to face opportunities. In addition to improving existing systems and processes, the introduction of a Community Sounding Board aims to provide Latrobe City Council with a new and broader platform on which to make well informed decisions. Appendix 2 gives more detail on the Community Sounding Board concept.

We will:

- Respond to telephone, email and written enquiries in a prompt, professional and respectful manner within timeframes specified in the Latrobe City Council customer service standards. (see Appendix 4)
- Ensure any correspondence and printed information produced by Council is available in alternative formats, when requested, including languages other than English, audio and electronic formats, Braille and large print. Support will be provided to people who require information in easy English or pictorial form.
- Provide a comprehensive online service where community members can access information when needed, containing information that is current, accurate, timely and relevant.
- Handle complaints in accordance with Council's complaint resolution policy.
- Ensure that responses to any public questions put to a Council meeting are responded to in accordance with Local Law 1. (see Appendix 5)
- Provide community members with an opportunity to speak at Council meetings in relation to agenda items in accordance with Local Law 1. (see Appendix 5)

- Ensure that any formal opportunities for the community to provide feedback and engage with Council are advertised in the Council Noticeboard section of The Express newspaper and on Council's web site.
- Ensure that key information regarding Council services is produced in hard copy format, including Link publication and stand alone brochures, having consideration for cost and environmental impact.
- Endeavour to offer face to face opportunities to engage with Council officers wherever it is possible to do so.
- Ensure that feedback is provided to every community member who engages with Council to specifically answer their question and regarding how their views either contributed to or affected a final outcome.

Actions

Year 1

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
1.1	Amend the production of Link to be a shorter, more frequent publication, including more information regarding Council services and performance.	Budget adequate for year 1. Additional \$25,000 for each year after.
1.2	Scope the upgrade of Council's telephone system and web site to understand cost and time implications and to ensure upgrades will meet community needs, for example the cost implications of a multilingual website.	\$50,000 or equivalent staff time
1.3	Scope the introduction of a Community Sounding Board as a means to provide on-going opportunities to listen to the community and to seek out feedback from a wide range of community members.	\$10,000 or equivalent staff time
1.4	Review the adherence to Council's complaint resolution policy and ensure appropriate accountability and reporting mechanisms are included.	No additional cost

Year 2

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
1.5	Develop a suite of brochures and fact sheets to inform community members of Council services, in a format that supports hard copy production.	\$20,000 or equivalent staff time
1.6	Upgrade Council's telephone system to improve initial response times and quality of responses to telephone	Cost to be determined by

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
	enquiries.	scoping
1.7	Upgrade Council's website to ensure ongoing provision of accurate and timely online information, and to ensure support of interactive capabilities and social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter.	\$200,000 – includes staff time for website upgrade
1.8	Trial the provision of a quarterly Council service display, offering face to face opportunity for contact, in major shopping centres in Churchill, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon, to be reviewed after a twelve month period.	\$40,000 or equivalent staff time

2. Community Role in Policy Development, Planning and Project Delivery

Latrobe City Council aims to provide participatory processes for the community to be consulted in the development of policies, plans and specific projects. This may include the opportunity to provide broad, general feedback on a document or process and the opportunity to be involved in various stages of a project, providing specific feedback regarding issues or ideas.

We will:

- Ensure that an engagement plan is developed for projects that are considered a priority in the Council Plan. The engagement plan should include a list of stakeholders and engagement activities that are planned for the life of the project or initiative. In designing engagement activities, project managers should be mindful of adhering to principles of good project governance.
- Endeavour to provide face to face opportunities for the community to engage with policy, strategy, plan or project development. This may include engagement via advisory committees, focus groups and workshops.
- In accordance with the engagement plan, ensure that all policies, strategies, plans and projects that will impact on the community are made available for public viewing and comment for a minimum of a four week period. Consideration should be given to the timing and length of this period to account for factors that impact on peoples' ability to respond eg school holidays, complexity of subject matter.
- Ensure consultation opportunities are advertised in the Council Noticeboard section of The Express newspaper and on the website.
- Provide assistance and alternatives to those who find written submissions prohibitive to providing feedback.
- Ensure that reports provided to Council include advice as to how community consultation has informed the recommendation.
- Ensure that each person or group who contributes to the development of a policy, plan or project is provided direct feedback as to how their contribution has been considered.
- Ensure the community is notified of Council decisions regarding Policies, Plans and projects in the Council Noticeboard section of The Express and on the website.

Actions

Year 1

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
2.1	Ensure Council's Project Management Framework includes community engagement as a core component of project delivery.	No additional cost

Year 2

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
2.2	Develop a workbook for Council staff including templates and proformas for the development of engagement plans.	\$20,000 or equivalent staff time
2.3	Provide a professional advice and support service for Council staff in the development of engagement plans and implementation of engagement activities.	\$50,000 per year or equivalent staff time

3. Impacts on Specific Locations and Council Services

Latrobe City Council aims to involve those residents and users of Council services in developing solutions to problems or in managing change. Some land use planning and infrastructure issues have specific affects on property, neighbourhoods and localities. Examples include rezoning of land, traffic management, road works, drainage, and street trees. Likewise, users of Council's regular services such as childcare, home care and leisure may be sensitive to changes that may impact on peoples' lives. In managing these specific impacts, Council aims to be sensitive to the individual and, at times, significant nature of peoples' interests and concerns.

We will

- Endeavour to consider the views of those affected by proposed changes regarding the methods of engagement to be used.
- Make the purpose of all engagement activities clear including how and when any particular contributions will be considered by Council.
- Ensure that each resident or user of a council service has the opportunity to be involved in developing solutions and contributing ideas.
- Ensure that all project briefs used to engage consultants include a requirement to develop and implement an engagement plan.
- Provide face to face opportunities for residents and users to engage with Council staff, including individual consultations where the subject matter may be sensitive or private, in accordance with the engagement plan.
- Ensure each resident or user of a council service is advised directly of the impact or change and the process by which this has been decided.
- Ensure that a direct Council contact person is provided for any proposed changes

Actions

Year 1

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
3.1	Amend the project brief, tender and contract specifications to include the requirement to develop and implement an engagement plan.	No additional cost
3.2	Develop a policy and procedures for the use of social media (eg Facebook, Twitter) by Latrobe City Council	No additional cost

Year 2

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
3.3	Develop case studies of effective community engagement delivered by the organisation for inclusion in the staff workbook to encourage knowledge sharing across teams and Divisions. For example major projects and bushfire recovery engagement programs.	Cost included in workbook development
3.4	Implement the use of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to encourage engagement with and promote specific Council services.	\$30,000 per year or equivalent staff time

Year 3

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
3.5	Provide targeted support to those service areas of Council identified as requiring improvement in engagement.	Cost included in Action 2.3

4. Community Delivery of Selected Council Services

Latrobe City Council aims to encourage the appropriate use of committees to collaborate with or empower the community to achieve the effective delivery of selected Council services. Committees of management and advisory committees are an effective means of achieving community outcomes and Council's operational requirements. For specific and identified purposes, mechanisms such as Local Government Act - Section 86 Committees allow committee members to make operational level decisions and take responsibility for day to day activities under the auspices of Council.

In supporting these community engagement activities Council will be mindful of the appropriateness of the level and method of engagement and the objectives of the engagement activity. Under the Local Government Act (1989) only Council is able to execute policy, strategic budget and council decisions.

We will

- Ensure that all special committees are conducted in accordance with the Local Government Act 1989

Actions

Year 1

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
4.1	Undertake a review of all committees and ensure appropriate governance, support and reporting mechanisms are in place.	\$20,000 or equivalent staff time

5. Providing timely and clear feedback on community input

The provision of feedback in a community engagement process enables participants to see whether their views have been accurately represented after a decision has been made. The provision of feedback also recognises and respects the contributions of community members and the time that they take to participate.

The preferred channels for feedback provision are:

- Notification in the Council Noticeboard.
- Traditional mail correspondence.
- Latrobe City Council website – posting reports and results.
- E-mail correspondence.

Feedback provided in response to Community input could include:

- Details of subsequent engagement activities with other groups.
- Answers to questions raised by participants.
- Information regarding how the feedback has or will be used.
- Details of any changes made or planned in response to participant's comments and feedback.
- Details of any future opportunities for further engagement.
- Promotion of engagement and communication activities.

Effective evaluation of community engagement activities can provide benefits which include:

- Improving practices by identifying and articulating lessons and achievements.
- Contributing to setting best practice standards and benchmarks.
- Helping to build an evidence base for innovative approaches to community engagement.
- Contributing to engagement capability development by providing feedback on performance.
- Presenting opportunities for further citizen involvement in the evaluation process.
- Building support for community involvement in Council's decision making processes by demonstrating how effective engagement works.

We will:

- Ensure that there are a variety of channels available for the community to provide input to Council.
- Endeavour to provide opportunities to enable participants in community engagement activities to identify their preferred feedback process.
- Ensure that follow-up is provided in a timely manner and that commitments to follow up on particular issues or matters raised during engagement are undertaken within agreed timeframes.
- Continue to evaluate the feedback activities conducted by Council to ensure that they are accessible by a wide range of community members.

- Review the impact and the processes of community engagement activities including the views of the participants regarding the value of the exchange and whether the methods used were appropriate.

6. Developing our Capacity to Engage

Latrobe City Council aims to build skills, knowledge and experience in the development and implementation of community engagement activities.

Skills required by individuals implementing community engagement activities are:

- Effective listening skills.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills.
- Presentation skills.
- Conflict resolution skills.
- Networking skills.
- Research and analysis skills
- Facilitation skills.
- Negotiation skills.
- Time management skills.
- Cross cultural awareness skills.
- Equity and diversity principles.
- Effective knowledge of Latrobe City Council's community engagement principles.
- Sound knowledge of Latrobe City Council's project management framework.
- Understanding of Latrobe City Council's policy and procedures.

Furthermore, it is recognized that where engagement is delivered by an individual without the necessary qualities to enhance engagement activities, there is the potential for Council's relationship with the community to be degraded as opposed to enhanced.

We will

- Ensure that adequate support is provided to guide the development of engagement plans and delivery of engagement activities.
- Encourage the development of a community of practice around excellent community engagement within Latrobe City Council.

Action

Year 1

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
5.1	Develop a Community Engagement staff training program to be implemented on an ongoing basis.	\$20,000 or equivalent staff time

Year 2

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
5.2	Provide an annual report to Council on the progress of this plan.	\$5,000 or equivalent staff time
5.3	Conduct a community engagement survey in year 2 of the plan to determine progress (using similar questions to original survey).	\$5,000 or equivalent staff time

Year 3

Ref	Activity	Estimated Cost
5.4	Undertake a minor review of the plan in year 3 to check progress and make any adjustments.	\$20,000 or equivalent staff time

Engagement Matrix

The following matrix gives an indication of the methods and circumstances by which an engagement process with the community may be undertaken.

Legend

- 1 Every Time
- 2 In most circumstances
- 3 Depending on program/issue/timing
- 4 Occasionally, as appropriate
- 5 Not appropriate

Method	Most useful to:	1. Maintaining a Dialogue with the Community	2. Community Role in Policy Development, Planning and Project Delivery	3. Impacts on Specific Locations and Council Services	4. Community Delivery of Selected Council Services	5. Providing timely and clear feedback on Community input
		E.g. Listening to views on Council priorities	E.g. Seeking comment on Community Engagement Plan	E.g. Traffic management issue in a particular street	E.g. Latrobe Regional Airport Board	E.g. Responding to those who have made a submission to the budget
Advertisement Local Paper (Council Noticeboard)	Inform	2	1	3	5	2
Web page	Inform Consult	1	1	3	4	1
Link publication	Inform	2	3	4	4	3

		1. Maintaining a Dialogue with the Community	2. Community Role in Policy Development, Planning and Project Delivery	3. Impacts on Specific Locations and Council Services	4. Community Delivery of Selected Council Services	5. Providing timely and clear feedback on Community input
Write a letter	Inform Consult Involve	3	4	1	2	3
Email	Inform Consult Involve	3	3	2	2	2
Telephone	Inform Consult Involve	5	5	3	3	2
SMS	Inform Consult	5	5	3	3	3
Community Sounding Board	Inform Consult Involve	1	2	4	5	2
Social media (Facebook, Twitter) *	Inform Consult	3	4	2	4	3
Media release	Inform	3	2	3	4	3
Local Radio (Gippsland FM)	Inform	3	3	3	4	4
Local and Neighbourhood publications and networks	Inform	4	4	2	4	3
Survey	Consult	4	3	3	4	5
Receive Petition	Consult	2	2	2	4	5

		1. Maintaining a Dialogue with the Community	2. Community Role in Policy Development, Planning and Project Delivery	3. Impacts on Specific Locations and Council Services	4. Community Delivery of Selected Council Services	5. Providing timely and clear feedback on Community input
Letterbox drop	Inform	5	5	3	5	4
Personal briefing	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	5	3	3	3	3
Focus Group	Consult Involve	5	3	3	4	5
Public Meeting	Inform Consult	4	3	3	5	4
Search Conference	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	4	3	3	5	5
Project reference group	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate	5	3	3	5	3
Special committees	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower	5	5	3	1	3
Public Comment period	Consult	4	1	3	4	5

** The use of this channel is dependent on the implementation of Action 3.2*

Appendix 1

Community Consultation Program

In conducting this review a community consultation program was implemented to ascertain how the community saw their role in community engagement, council's decision making processes and their perceptions of Council's current community engagement practices.

Community consultation activities supporting the community plan included:

- A hard copy survey distributed to a random sample of business and industry groups.
- A telephone survey of residents across the municipality.
- Shopping centre displays in Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Churchill.
- An online survey at www.mylatrobe-city-ideas.com.au
- An online blog at www.mylatrobe-city-ideas.com.au
- A twitter page.
- A facebook page.
- Targeted advertisements.
- Guest speakers at community meetings and service clubs.

The community consultation program sought to identify:

- The preferred level of community participation in Council's decision making processes.
- The topics or areas of interest where residents sought to participate in Council's decision making processes.
- The preferred means of communication between Latrobe City Council and the community when engaging on issues.
- The preferred means of communication when being informed of Latrobe City Council's decisions.
- The strengths or weaknesses of Council's current community engagement practices.

Participant Demographics

The average age of the over 1300 participants in this community consultation program was higher than that of the wider Latrobe City community. The largest age cohort of the Latrobe City community is the 35 – 49 years. The largest age cohort of participants in the community engagement activities was 55-64 and 64 and over years. In considering the community consultation program results it is important to be mindful that they may not be representative of the demographic profile of Latrobe City. The following graph provides details of the breakdown of participants by age.

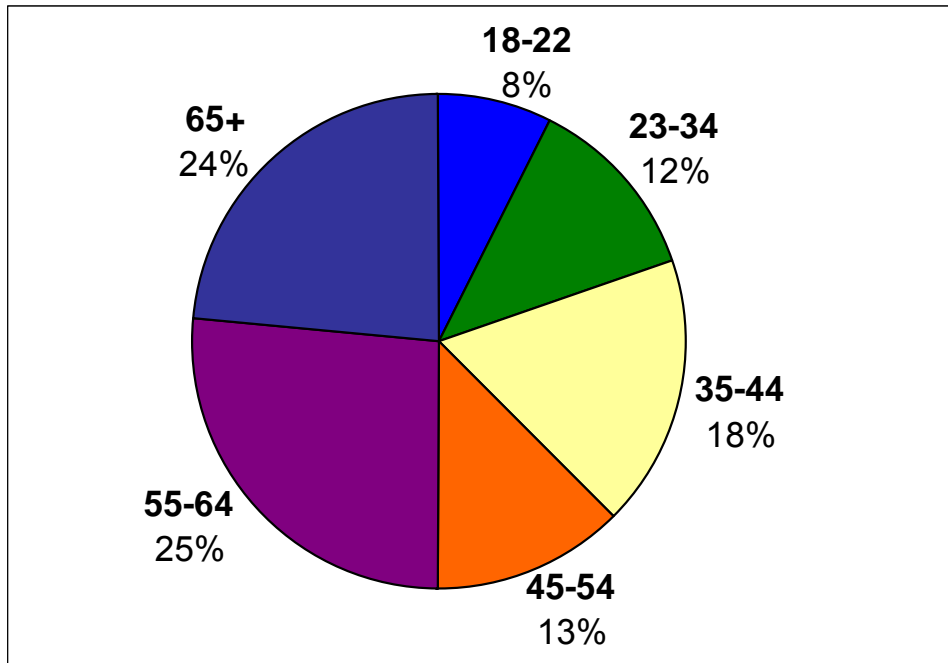


Fig. 1: Breakdown of participants by age

Level of Community Participation

Respondents were asked whether they felt that they should be heavily involved, involved, somewhat involved or not involved in Latrobe City Council's decision making processes. Less than ten percent of respondents said that they did not want to be involved in Council's decision making process. This indicates strong community interest and an expectation that they should be involved in Council's decision making processes.

This involvement was considered to be important for the following reasons:

- Participation is an important right of citizens in a democratic system of government.
- Community members felt that they could add depth and richness to the dialogue by addressing ideas, presenting options and problem solving.
- Being involved throughout the process would give the community ownerships of outcomes.

Feedback also suggested that the Community was growing disconnected from the issues or project based engagement platform used by Council in conducting its activities.

Areas of Community Participation

Engaging community members on issues that interest them, at a time when they are receptive is a key challenge for a community engagement process. Community consultation program respondents were asked to consider the areas of interest to them from a specified list of categories. The following graph displays the participant responses (note: participants could select more than one option).

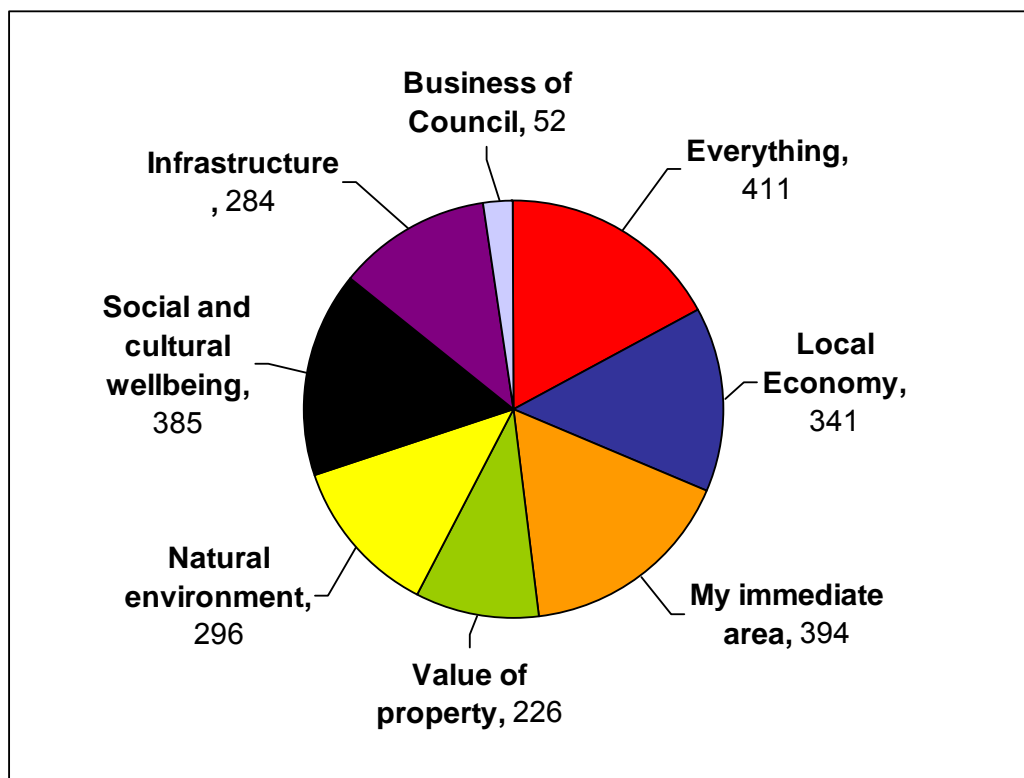


Fig 2. Areas of interest for community engagement

The most popular response was ‘everything’ – however when the concept of “everything” was tested at face to face engagement activities, respondents generally indicated that they were interested in a range of activities that had meaning to them. For some respondents this meant everything to do with the provision of children’s services and for others it meant everything to do with the development and provision of parking. Everything when tested generally related to a field of particular interest that respondents were unable to clearly identify in the topic options provided.

Other important areas of interest included things that may be happening in and around a respondent’s immediate area. These findings reinforce the view that residents are interested in things that they will notice when going about their daily business. Face to face engagements suggested that residents expect a level of Council communication with them when there was something occurring in their immediate area.

Some survey participants noted that when planning changes were going to affect local residents, that face to face meetings were held with residents to discuss the impact of those changes. There was considerable positive feedback on these meetings and one-on-one sessions. Residents appreciated the opportunity to speak with specialist council staff regarding the impact of changes on them.

Respondents also registered high level of interest in being involved in Council decisions regarding the social and cultural wellbeing of residents. However, it should be noted that this high response rate may have been influenced by a very robust and dynamic community engagement process regarding the

location of the proposed Performing Arts Centre occurring at the time the community consultation program was conducted.

Respondents rated the local economy as the fourth most popular issue. The natural environment, infrastructure placed fifth and sixth, with issues that may affect the value of an individual's property registering seventh. Issues concerning Council's internal processes and policies were of interest to only a handful of respondents and ranked a distant eighth.

Methods of Community Engagement

Community consultation program respondents were asked which communication method they would prefer Council to utilise when seeking their involvement in decision making processes.

The top four responses were:

1. face to face surveys (345 responses)
2. traditional mail (340 response)
3. Council Noticeboard (321 responses)
4. Council's website (288 responses)

All of the above were almost twice as popular as the fifth preference, invitations to Council workshops.

There was strong support for face to face communication where community members could talk to and ask questions directly of Council staff. The one-on-one, face-to-face meetings as a result of the Black Saturday bushfires were commended as a way of enabling community members to talk about personal issues without having to be concerned about sharing those issues with a wider audience.

Some community members mentioned town meetings that were formerly held between Council and community groups. While these were considered to be a way to ask questions of Council and seek clarification on issues, some community members felt that they were an opportunity for "squeaky wheels" to pursue personal agendas.

A preference for direct personal communication is also reflected in the respondent's preference for traditional mail correspondence. Mail continues to be the most appropriate method of contributing to Council's decision making processes.

Respondents within the cohort of 'business and special interest groups' indicated a preference for electronic communication, identifying e-mail as the preferred method for contributing to Council's decision making process.

Latrobe City Council's Council Noticeboard appearing twice weekly in the Latrobe Valley Express newspaper was strongly supported, as was Council's website.

Feedback suggests that the community are growing disconnected from the issues or project based engagement platform from which Council has been conducting its activities. There was a perception that Council is happy to conduct engagement activities when it is seeking something from the community, however, when the community wants something from Council engaging with the organisation can be difficult.

There was widespread criticism of Council's telephone system. Many respondents indicated that it fails to meet acceptable performance standards. As the 1300 telephone number is Latrobe City Council's primary communication channel the performance of this system is a critical communication and engagement issue.

Mediums of Communication

The top three methods of informing the community of council decisions were:

1. The Council Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express.
2. Traditional mail.
3. Latrobe City Council's Website.

These three responses emerged as clear preferences, attracting considerably more responses than any other method. More than 600 participants responded that the Council Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express was their preferred method.

Communication improvements identified:

The community consultation program identified the following key improvement opportunities for the Council:

- Council's telephone system needs to be enhanced.
- A strong desire for Latrobe City Council to develop a greater range of hard copy information and service material.
- Council needs to find a way to talk to the community all the time, not just when they have a major project to discuss.
- The community has a genuine desire to see more of their Councillors.
- Council staff's communication/presentations skills should be improved.

Strengths or Weaknesses of Current Engagement Practices

To enhance the qualitative inputs of the community consultation program eight focus groups were held to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Council's current approach to community engagement activities.

While these focus groups were poorly attended the issue of strengths and weaknesses was canvassed at a number of subsequently held community group presentations. The outputs of the focus groups and these group discussions have been collated and are summarised as follows.

Strengths of Latrobe City Council's current community engagement activities

- Council Noticeboard is a good tool for keeping the community informed.
- Website has a lot of good information.
- Link publication is good but could be more frequent and less dense.
- Bushfire Recovery has been an excellent example of good community engagement.
- The Planning Teams use of one on one, face to face meetings are much better than a large forum where 'squeaky wheels' dominate.
- Personalised letters should be sent to every resident advising them of the planning process and proposed planning changes.
- Use of graphic information and illustrations very good.
- Council staff attending local community meetings to speak on issues impacting the community. Worked through the process with different community groups (Bushfire Recovery).

Weaknesses of Latrobe City Council's current community engagement activities

- Communication feels one way.
- Council doesn't provide opportunities for face to face communication with the community.
- Communication is only on a project basis – seeking ongoing dialogue and discussions.
- Community suspects that information passed from officers to Councillors can be edited.
- Short timelines – often a short length of time between a report coming out and the requirement to respond.
- Written submissions requirement does not allow for community members with low literacy levels. One-on-one sessions provide access for all.
- Show full options available for situation or issue so community can understand and make informed decisions.
- Better publicising of Council Meetings and hold them in a variety of locations.
- Too much reliance on the web. Propose a book or brochure of services, ward information and biographies on Councillors.

Community Satisfaction Survey

Each year, Latrobe City Council participates in the Department of Planning and Community Development's Community Satisfaction Survey – a broad survey that seeks to identify the community's general level of satisfaction or contentment with its local government.

The Community Satisfaction Survey tests Council's performance in a number of key areas including Community Engagement. In the 2009 survey, Latrobe City Council registered a trending increase in the community's overall level of satisfaction with the way Council engages them.

Seventy percent of respondents registered a positive rating. The 2009 rating was higher than the community engagement results in 2008, 2007 and 2006. This implies an ongoing level of improvement in the community's perceptions of engagement at Latrobe City Council.

Each year contextual or qualitative data is also supplied to accompany the statistical data. This gives greater detail and depth to the survey results. In 2009 these comments were predominantly positive.

Community Consultation Program Results Summary and Recommendations

Summarising the preceding findings and outcomes, community member interest in engagement with Council is unsurprisingly strongest when the topic is of direct interest to them. Face to face engagement is preferred; however the council Noticeboard in the Latrobe Valley Express, traditional mail and Council's website are the preferred modes of advice of Council decisions.

The community consultation program recommended that Latrobe City Council should continue to:

- Inform the community via Council's Link publication, issuing media releases to local press and developing content on its website www.latrobe.vic.gov.au; and
- Embrace social media such as facebook, twitter etc.

It also recommended that information dissemination activities be enhanced by:

- Upgrading the Latrobe City Council telephone system;
- Developing a range of printed brochures and fact sheets on Council services and activities;
- Enhancing Latrobe City Council's online engagement capacity through the development of an online community engagement portal; and
- Identifying opportunities for quarterly face-to-face communication with Latrobe City residents. Consideration should be given to face-to-face engagement activities which provide opportunities for residents to discuss issues in private.

These findings and recommendations have been considered in the development of the revised Community Engagement Plan.

Appendix 2

Community Sounding Board

A Community Sounding Board is designed to provide Latrobe City Council with a broader platform on which to make well informed decisions whilst contributing to the development of a participatory relationship with a wide cross section of our community.

Although a comprehensive scoping exercise is proposed for year one of this plan, it is envisaged that the Sounding Board would be an email/internet based system with a large database of members who are regularly contacted for comment on a range of Council plans, strategies and activities.

Examples of Sounding Boards

Sounding Boards have been developed as a pivotal link between local government and the community in many countries across the world. In 2000, Stirling Council, in Scotland established a citizens' panel, the Stirling Sounding Board. This sounding board is made up of 1,300 residents and is representative of the wider community by such factors as age, gender, working status, tenure, urban and rural localities. The sounding board is refreshed occasionally to ensure that the views reflect those of all citizens.

Kenilworth Town Council in the United States established a sounding board to act as an instrument of community at grass roots level and to promote and watch over the particular interests of Kenilworth.

Wyndham Council in Victoria has established a community panel to act as a sounding board and also has a program called community talk which is designed to provide feedback to Council on issues of importance to their community. In New South Wales, Mosman Council has a sounding board which emphasises the importance of community involvement in planning for the future of their municipality.

The development of a Community Sounding Board would provide Latrobe City Council with a new and broader platform on which to make well informed decisions. The establishment of such a Board will also create more of a participatory relationship with a wide cross section of our community.

Sounding Board Operation

Purpose of the Sounding Board

The establishment of a sounding board would contribute to a whole of community approach in examining issues that are of importance to our community. This would enable the community to become actively involved and to participate in communicating to Council the changes they wish to see in their society. The process of encouraging active community participation on important issues would provide participants with an increased sense of ownership in working towards finding solutions to complex issues. Participation creates an environment that moves people from a state of indifference to that of an active stakeholder.

The Community Sounding Board would help to create new contacts and help Council to deepen its coverage whilst inviting our community to be a more integral part of planning for our future development.

The Sounding Boards' main function would enable Council to:

- Gain different viewpoints regarding a range of issues that may confront our community;
- Listen to a wide range of voices on important issues within the community so that a range of opinions are heard;
- Provide an opportunity to present proposals by Council to a broad cross section of the community to get their input;
- Consider and report on matters of interest or concern to the community;
- Assist in keeping in contact with community groups, special interest groups, residents and businesses in the community.

Benefits for Council and the community

The development of a Community Sounding Board will enable Council to be better positioned to make informed decisions about issues that affect the local community. It will provide Council with increased confidence that a cross section of the community is engaging on issues of concern. In turn, the community will enjoy a Council that is more accountable and in tune with its wishes.

The Community Sounding Board could be used when Council wants to gain a wide range of opinion on specific issues, or when developing key strategies that have the potential to impact on a wide cross section of our community. Members of the Sounding Board may also be asked to help with interviews or focus groups aimed at further broadening community input and feedback.

This would enable Latrobe City to engage with a wider cross section of the community than is possible at the present time through the Township Forums and Small Township Associations. On issues that have an impact across the

municipality, participants would have the chance to offer feedback about a range of issues and to engage in open dialogue about the important issues that our community must address.

Community participation on the Sounding Board

It is proposed that the Sounding Board be made up of residents so as to be, as far as practicable, representative of the wider community by such factors as age, gender, working status, tenure, urban or rural.

Participating in a sounding board would provide residents with the opportunity, through a range of processes, to express their views on issues and to propose local solutions to local issues where change or improvement is required.

It is proposed that a public expression of interest in participating in the sounding board should be advertised so as to encourage wide community involvement. In addition, specific interest and stakeholder groups would be invited to participate so that the sounding board would have access to, and the capacity to canvass, a wide range of views on key issues. These interest groups include voluntary and not-for-profit, health, tourism and education, key local industries, small business and other sectors that play a key role and have an interest in our community.

Latrobe City residents who have completed the Gippsland Community Leadership Program and those who have completed the Master in Organisational Leadership and the Master's in School Leadership through Monash University, together with current and former Youth Council members would also be invited to participate.

It is envisaged that the Sounding Board would have a significant membership and communication with them will be through the internet. Latrobe City Council has a number of options regarding online community consultation interfaces.

Appendix 3

Stakeholder Lists and Engagement Plans

Stakeholder Lists

While decision making activities are of interest to community members, it would not be efficient or sustainable for Latrobe City Council to engage with the entire community on every issue.

The development of stakeholder lists is a normal practice in community engagement. Stakeholder lists will include those organisations and individuals affected by or having a specific interest in the decision, issues or policy under consideration.

Council will seek to identify a primary list of stakeholders, a secondary list of stakeholders and a tertiary list of stakeholders based on their level of interest in an issue and its potential outcome.

Primary stakeholders are those individuals likely to be directly affected by any Council decision. They include but are not limited to:

- Residents living near a proposed development site.
- Families utilising a child care service which is being reviewed.
- Users of a leisure centre being upgraded.
- Councillors.

Secondary stakeholders are those with a general interest in a Council decision including but not limited to:

- Community groups in the area.
- Special interest groups.
- Businesses.
- Residents who live and work in the broader area connected to the issue.
- Local media.
- Local members of parliament.

Tertiary stakeholders are those with a broad interest including:

- State and Federal Government agencies.
- Non-government agencies and organisations.
- State media.

In collating lists of stakeholders there will be hard to reach members of the community. The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) has undertaken a study on this topic. The VLGA “Hard to Reach – Local Government, social profiling and civic infrastructure” study provides useful information and guidance.

Engagement Plans

Where legislation does not specify consultation methods or requirements Council will require its staff and contractors to develop a written Community Engagement Plan for all project based community engagement activities. This plan will be available for public viewing prior to engagement activities being undertaken on Council’s website and at the Customer Service Centres.

Community Engagement Plans will reflect Council’s principles of community engagement; it will develop a schedule of community engagement activities which are effective, inclusive, productive, cost effective and able to be delivered within the parameters of Council’s resources. It will be clear about the level of engagement being undertaken.

Clarity and openness regarding the reasons for engaging the community is essential. The first step is to clarify the engagement objectives and the desired levels of engagement. Issues for consideration include:

- Potential impact on individual residents and their local area.
- Level of social impact.
- Level of economic impact.
- Level of environment impact.
- Level of cultural impact.
- Level of community awareness/interest.
- Change of Council policy/legislation.

Level of Stakeholder Engagement

Before developing a Community Engagement Action Plan and identifying the appropriate level of community engagement, it is prudent to talk to primary stakeholders. Initial dialogue will provide a foundation for judgements regarding levels of community engagement. There will be instances where the community’s preferred level of engagement conflicts with that which Council can accommodate. In these instances, Council will clearly express the purpose of any community engagement in the context of the issue being considered.

When determining the level of engagement, consideration should be given to the following:

- Background information – history of the issue, previous decisions by Council.
- Level of interest from the community as perceived by Council staff and Councillors. Levels of interest change over time and it is important that Council's community engagement processes are flexible.
- Underlying values and views of internal and external stakeholders.
- Degree of complexity – is there a single issue or are there multiple issues?
- Degree of potential community impact and/or concern – what is the general community perception of the issue?
- Degree of political sensitivity.
- Availability of human, material and financial resources.
- Media interest.

Appendix 4



Our Customer Service Standards

Face to face: We will

- Greet customers with a smile.
- Wear an ID badge, in a prominent position above the waist, visible at all times when on duty.
- Ensure all customers are treated in a courteous, respectful and professional manner.
- Acknowledge all customers within five (5) minutes of arrival.
- Be conscious of potential audiences when discussing confidential information and offer a more private location if required.
- Deliver information that is current and in plain language.
- Provide an avenue for feedback at all service points.

Telephone: We will

- Handle all calls within five (5) rings.
- Respond with “good morning/afternoon or welcome to, (work area), (name)”.
- Use group pickup or diversion on our phones when we are away from our desks or on leave.
- Never ignore a ringing phone.
- Respond to customer phone calls within two (2) working days.
- Introduce the caller and provide relevant details when transferring calls.
- Take responsibility for every call we receive, regardless of the subject matter.
- Make sure our work area is staffed, or ensure someone is contactable, at all times during normal business hours.

Our Customer Service Standards

Correspondence, including email: We will

- Provide a written response within 10 working days.
- Provide acknowledgement and regular updates of a request where it cannot be completed within 10 working days.
- Use clear, simple and concise language, avoiding jargon.
- Record all verbal/phone responses as file notes in relevant files and/or programs, ie Dataworks, Pathway.
- Ensure all electronic responses are stored in relevant programs, ie Dataworks, Pathway.
- Use standard organisational templates.
- Meet Council's style and correspondence guidelines.
- Ensure correspondence is made available in alternative formats, when requested.
- Include an appropriate contact name, address, telephone number and email address for Latrobe City.

Online: We will

- Provide a comprehensive online service where customers can access information when needed.
- Ensure information is current, accurate, timely and relevant.
- Ensure our website is accessible, user-friendly and complies with our organisational style guide.
- Meet international guidelines for accessibility.
- Use clear, simple and concise language, avoiding jargon.
- Offer payment options.
- Offer feedback options.
- Include a contact address, telephone number and email address for Latrobe City.



Meetings (internal and external): We will

- Be punctual or provide advice of non-attendance or lateness.
- Turn mobile phones off or to silent before meetings start.
- Arrive prepared and briefed for all meetings.
- Actively participate and professionally represent Council.
- Wear an ID badge, in a prominent position above the waist, visible at all times when on duty.
- If responsible for minutes, ensure these are distributed within 10 working days of the meeting.
- Take responsibility for all Council rooms and resources reserved.
- Be flexible in scheduling venues and times of meetings, where possible.

Complaint Resolution: We will

- Treat customer complaints seriously, confidentially and in a professional manner.
- Provide information on how, when, where and to whom to make a complaint.
- Explain the complaint resolution process.
- Offer assistance in lodging a complaint, where needed.
- Forward written complaints to Corporate Information for registering.
- Record verbal complaints in our customer service tracking system.
- Acknowledge all formal complaints, in writing, within 3 working days, giving a timeframe within which the complaint will be responded to.

Appendix 5

Local Law 1 – Sections 62 and Division 10

DIVISION 8 - PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

62. Question Time

- 62.1 There will be a public question time at every Ordinary Meeting to enable members of the public to submit questions to Council.
- 62.2 Public Question Time will have a duration determined by the Chair from time to time.
- 62.3 Questions submitted to Council must be prefaced by the name and address of the person submitting the question and generally be in a form approved or permitted by Council.
- 62.4 If a person has submitted 2 or more questions to a meeting, the second question and beyond:
 - 62.4.1 may, at the discretion of the Chair, be deferred until all other persons who have asked a question have had their first question asked and answered; or
 - 62.4.2 may not be asked if the time allotted for public question time has expired.
- 62.5 A question may be disallowed by the Chair if the Chair determines that it:
 - 62.5.1 relates to a matter outside the duties, functions and powers of Council;
 - 62.5.2 is defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial or objectionable in language or substance;
 - 62.5.3 deals with a subject matter already answered;
 - 62.5.4 is aimed at embarrassing a Councillor or a member of Council staff;
 - 62.5.5 relates to personnel matters;
 - 62.5.6 relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer;
 - 62.5.7 relates to industrial matters;
 - 62.5.8 relates to contractual matters;
 - 62.5.9 relates to proposed developments;
 - 62.5.10 relates to legal advice;
 - 62.5.11 relates to matters affecting the security of Council property; or
 - 62.5.12 relates to any other matter which Council considers would prejudice Council or any person.
- 62.6 All questions and answers must be as brief as possible, and no discussion may be allowed other than for the purposes of clarification.

- 62.7 The Chair may nominate a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer to respond to a question.
- 62.8 A Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer may require a question to be put on notice. If a question is put on notice, the answer to it must be incorporated in the minutes of the meeting at which it was asked and a written copy of the answer sent to the person who asked the question.
- 62.9 A Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer may advise Council that it is his or her opinion that the reply to a question should be given in a meeting closed to members of the public. The Councillor or Chief Executive Officer (as the case may be) must state briefly the reason why the reply should be so given and, unless Council resolves to the contrary, the reply to such question must be so given.

DIVISION 10 - MEMBERS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING BEFORE COUNCIL

64. Request to speak before Council to be referred to Mayor

- 64.1 At every Ordinary Meeting, time may be allocated to enable any member of the public who has made a request under clause 64.2 to address Council and answer questions put to them.
- 64.2 A member of the public wishing to be heard by Council at a meeting may make a written request to the Chief Executive Officer who must refer the request to the Mayor.
- 64.3 Any request to address Council at an Ordinary Meeting will be considered having regard to:
- 64.3.1 the nature of the matter to be discussed;
 - 64.3.2 priorities in relation to other Council business;
 - 64.3.3 other members of the community present who also wish to address the Council; and
 - 64.3.4 whether such an opportunity has already been provided to the person at this meeting or another meeting.

65. Consideration of Request

If the Mayor permits a member of the public to be heard he or she may direct the Chief Executive Officer as to the meeting at which the member of the public will be heard. Alternatively, the Mayor can ask the Chief Executive Officer to refer the request to Council.

66. Notification of Hearing

If the Mayor permits a member of the public to be heard, the Chief Executive Officer must notify all Councillors of that permission, and also notify the member of the public of the date, time, and place at which they will be heard.

67. Summary of Submissions

67.1 A member of the public may lodge with the Chief Executive Officer a written submission detailing the subject matter of their address prior to the member of the public addressing Council. The submission must be provided to the Chief Executive Officer at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the Council Meeting to enable the submission to be distributed to Councillors. A failure to adhere to this requirement may result in the submission not being distributed to Councillors and is at the discretion of the Mayor.

67.2 All material distributed to the Councillors by the member of the public is at the discretion of the Chair, to allow for the orderly conduct of the meeting.

68. Limitations upon Speakers

The Mayor may set time limits on the length and address of each speaker and if appropriate may request the member of public to shorten, summarise or finalise their address to Council or their answers to questions posed by Councillors to allow ordinary business to continue.

69. Questions but no discussion permitted

Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer may question the member of the public on matters raised by it for purposes of clarification but no discussion will be allowed.

70. Matter to be Determined at a subsequent meeting

No motion must be allowed on any address made to Council until the next Ordinary Meeting after the address has been heard, unless Council, by resolution, decides otherwise.

71. When public participation inappropriate

A request to address a meeting of Council may be rejected if Council has resolved to close the meeting in respect of a matter under section 89(2) of the Act.

Appendix 6

Responding to your concerns 2010

Introduction

Latrobe City Council has developed a client complaints policy to formalise Council's existing complaint management system.

This policy ensures that complaints are managed efficiently, effectively and fairly. The client complaints policy has been designed to ensure effective management of complaints from inception to satisfaction or final determination.

Council acknowledges the right of community members to make a complaint about Council without fear or retribution.

Relationship to Council Plan and Latrobe 2021

The Client Complaints Resolution Policy relates to the following Strategic Objectives contained within the Council Plan and outlines in Latrobe 2021: The Vision for Latrobe Valley.

Governance

To ensure governance and leadership through a strong commitment and adherence to democratic processes and legislative requirements.

Democratic Governance

“By representing the interests of the community and conducting its affairs openly and with integrity, reflecting the highest level of good management and governance.”

- Continually reinforce the Council's commitment to the value of democratically elected local government.

Community Capacity Building:

To ensure the community through enhancing community advocacy, leadership, partnerships, inclusiveness and participation.

Advocacy and Leadership

“By maintaining an understanding of issues of local importance, Latrobe City will provide leadership in addressing such issues. Where appropriate, the City will advocate on behalf of the community and will ensure that the community is represented.”

- Support research and analysis of issues of emerging community concern and develop strategies to address those issues.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with Council's level and quality of service, policies or procedures. Dissatisfaction may arise from the service provided by Council staff, councillors, contractors and systems or from the impact of a particular policy or procedure.

What is not considered to be a complaint?

A complaint does not include:

- a request for service;
- a request for information, documentation or explanation of policies or procedures or decisions of council;
- reports of damage or faulty infrastructure (eg. Uneven footpath);
- reports of hazard (fallen trees);
- reports concerning neighbours or neighbouring property (eg. Noise complaint); or
- the lodging of an appeal in accordance with a procedure or policy.

How do I make a complaint?

In most instances a complaint can be resolved by contacting Council's customer service area. However, if this conversation does not resolve the matter to your satisfaction, it is recommended that you write to Council and make an official complaint.

Complaints may be lodged with Council in the following ways:

- In person
- Telephone
- In writing
- Facsimile
- E-mail.

All complaints must contain the name, address and contact telephone numbers of the complainant together with a description of the problem.

Council has a Client Complaint Form which can be filled out. Copies of the form can be obtained from Council's Customer Service Centre or from its website at www.latrobe.vic.gov.au

Any staff member or Councillor may receive a complaint and is required to follow the procedures set out in Council's Client Complaints Resolution Policy. If a complaint is unable to be resolved at 'first contact', Council's Customer Service Staff may seek to coordinate an appointment, at a convenient time, so that the complaint can be discussed with the appropriate responsible officer. Written complaints will be acknowledged in writing within three working days of receipt, identifying a set time by which Council will provide a response. All

contact with complainants shall be noted on the Council's customer contact system.

Complaints that will not be investigated

The Chief Executive Officer may determine that a complaint will not be investigated where:

- the matter is considered frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith;
- involves a matter where an adequate remedy or right of appeal already exists, whether or not the complainant uses that remedy or right of appeal;
- relates to a decision of Council;
- relates to conduct before a court, coroner or tribunal;
- relates to a matter under investigation by the Minister for Local Government or any other government department including the Victorian Police Service;
- relates to the appointment or dismissal of any employee or an industrial or disciplinary issue;
- relates to a matter awaiting determination by the Council;
- relates to the actions or conduct of private individual.
- there is insufficient information available; or
- the complainant declines or refuses to provide further information or where there are threats made against Council or council staff.

Where the Chief Executive Officer determines that a complaint will not be investigated, the complainant will be advised accordingly in writing.

Complaint Monitoring

Council will monitor customer complaints and trends. This information will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and used to identify areas for improvement in Council's service delivery and activity.

What if I am unhappy with the outcome of the initial complaint?

If a complaint can not be resolved, then the complainant has the right to request an Internal Review. This will then entail an investigation by either Council's General Manager Governance, a General Manager or the appropriate division or a delegated Senior Officer. The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the Internal Review.

If the complaint still remains unresolved then the complainant may wish to escalate a complaint further to an appropriate body.

Local Government Victoria (LGV)

Part of the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD), it supports and advises the Minister for Local Government in regards to the administration of the Local Government Act 1989. LGV may make inquiries into possible breaches of the Local Government Act and may assign an Inspector of Municipal Administration to investigate a matter if it is considered

that there is sufficient evidence of a substantive breach. Complaints about possible breaches of the Local Government Act may be directed in writing to Local Government Victoria or to the Minister for Local Government.

www.localgovernmentvictoria.vic.gov.au

Victorian Ombudsman

The Ombudsman seeks to provide a speedy, inexpensive, non-adversarial way for people to receive a fair hearing of their grievances with government administrations. The Ombudsman can help when your complaint is about an administrative action taken by any council employee, but not those of a councillor when acting in the role of a councillor or of a council acting as a decision making body.

www.victorianombudsman.vic.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria

The Commission's role is to ensure the basic right of all people to fair treatment no matter what their circumstances or background. Decisions made by Council may not use gender, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, breastfeeding, age, race, impairment, religion, political beliefs, trade union activity, or sexual preference as the basis for disadvantaging you or treating you differently from the rest of the community.

www.equalopportunitycommission.vic.gov.au

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

VCAT deals with disputes between people and government in areas like:

- Planning and environment
- Land valuation
- Licences to carry on business
- State taxation
- Many other government decisions.

www.vcat.vic.gov.au

What if I am complaining about a Councillor?

A complaint about a Councillor must be made in writing and addressed to the Mayor who will be required to undertake an investigation.

A complaint about the Mayor must be made in writing to the Chief Executive Officer who will be required to undertake action as deemed appropriate.

A complaint about a Councillor may result in a decision by Council to refer the complaint to a Councillor Conduct Committee.

What if I am complaining regarding a decision or action of the Chief Executive Officer?

A complaint about the Chief Executive Officer must be made in writing and addressed to the Mayor for investigation and action as deemed appropriate.

Where do I send my complaint?

Please address all correspondence to:

Chief Executive Officer Latrobe City Council PO Box 264 Morwell 3840