



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2018

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL



MORE INCLUSIVE.
BETTER OUTCOMES.

ENGAGING
MITCHELL



DEFINITIONS.

When planning and delivering community engagement, it is important that a common language is understood. For this Framework, the following definitions apply.

Engagement	Engagement is a planned process with the specific purpose of working with individuals and groups to encourage active involvement in a project. The term engagement is very broad and the purpose of the engagement should be defined for each specific project and project stage. Engagement refers to the range of opportunities open to stakeholders and the community to participate in a project. This ranges from educating individuals or groups about a project; obtaining community feedback at a key project stage or milestone; or working collaboratively with stakeholders to address local issues.
Community	<p>A community is a group of people who have a relationship or a shared interest. A community of place is a group of people who are connected by the area they live, work and/or visit.</p> <p>This could include a community who live in the same street, neighbourhood or suburb; a community who work in the same building; or businesses located in a particular activity centre.</p> <p>A community of interest is a group of people who have a shared interest. For example the natural environment, local history or contemporary art.</p> <p>A community of affiliation are a group of people who are members of the same group or club including members of a sporting club, Rotary or a church group.</p>
Stakeholder	Stakeholders are individuals or organisations which affect, or can be affected by project decisions. Stakeholders can include interest groups, government departments/agencies, media, business and industry.
Communication	Communication refers to the range of channels and formats used to disseminate information to different audiences. The purpose of communication is to build awareness and support but can also be used to make announcements, to keep people informed and to respond to media or public enquiries.
Public	Public refers to members of the general public who may not belong to a specific community relevant to the project but they still have an interest in the project.
Council	Mitchell Shire Council, being a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 1989.
Councillors	Individuals holding the office of a member of Mitchell Shire Council.
Council Officer	Staff of Mitchell Shire Council.
Interface Council	Interface Councils are a group of ten municipalities that form a ring around metropolitan Melbourne. Interface Councils comprises 10 councils: Cardinia Shire Council, City Of Casey, Hume City Council, Melton City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, City of Whittlesea, Wyndham City Council, Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

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More inclusive, better outcomes.

Strategy Owner	Community Development
Creation Date	October 2014
Revision Date	November 2018

INTRODUCTION.

The Community Engagement Framework 2018 outlines Mitchell Shire Council's commitment to engage, consult and involve with the community, and other local relevant stakeholders, to inform decision making processes.

Mitchell Shire is one of Victoria's fastest growing outer metropolitan municipalities, strategically located just 40 kilometres north of Melbourne.

Mitchell Shire is an interface growth area, with a mix of rural and urban living with affordable housing and a diversity of lifestyle and housing choices.

As of January 2018, our total population stood at approximately 45,000 (Forecast.id 2018).

In the next 20-30 years our population is projected to grow to 250,000 people, many of them young families (forecast id). It is anticipated that most of this growth will occur in and around the southern townships of Beveridge, Kilmore/ Kilmore East and Wallan/Wallan East.

Mitchell Shire is a diverse community seeing the age profile slightly higher than the neighbouring growth areas of Hume and Whittlesea. This reflects the current transitional status of Mitchell Shire as an interface growth area, as it continues to attract young people and younger families who supplement our traditional township communities.

This diversity highlights that a variety of methods must be used to engage with our community, valuing the differences of opinions and needs across the municipality.

Mitchell Shire Council is renewing its whole of Council commitment to the process of open and authentic community engagement. To improve and advance community engagement, there are opportunities for more effective and inclusive participation in the decisions that affect the lives of the Mitchell community. This Framework aims to raise the profile, improve the quality and achieve better coordination of Mitchell Shire's community engagement.

“Through prior consultations our community has told us it values Mitchell Shire for its proximity to Melbourne as well as its parks and green spaces, vibrant atmosphere and sense of community and above all the people, which makes the area enjoyable to live”

Community Wellbeing survey 2017.



Positive Ageing Ambassador Workshop 2017.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCILLORS.

Local government is the closest level of government to the community. We also have legislated responsibilities for community engagement and the health and wellbeing of people in our municipality.

We have a critical role to help understand, plan and advocate for the needs of our community and we rely on the strength of our relationship with our community to do this well.

The Community Engagement Framework sets out our commitment to transparent processes and open communication. This helps us to work with our community to make good decisions in the interests of the municipality now and in the future.

The Framework also sets out our commitment to making it easy for people to participate in decision-making. We provide a range of tools for people to get involved. Some people prefer to have their say online, others prefer face-to-face contact and some prefer to provide written information and feedback.

There is no one way that will suit everybody. The Community Engagement Framework encourages staff to provide a number of ways for people to take part. It also builds in ongoing monitoring and evaluation so that we can learn from each project.

The Community Engagement Framework commits Council to best practice engagement principles and provides the basis for a consistent approach to engagement activities across the organisation.

This is our commitment to you. In return, we encourage community members to get involved in consultation opportunities - whether you're a ratepayer, a resident, a volunteer, someone who works or studies in Mitchell Shire, a business owner or operator, a visitor to our community or just an interested community member. Your input helps us to consider a range of views and interests to make more informed decisions on your behalf. This ultimately leads to better outcomes for our community and helps us deliver on our vision and mission – working with our community to build a great quality of life and a sustainable future.

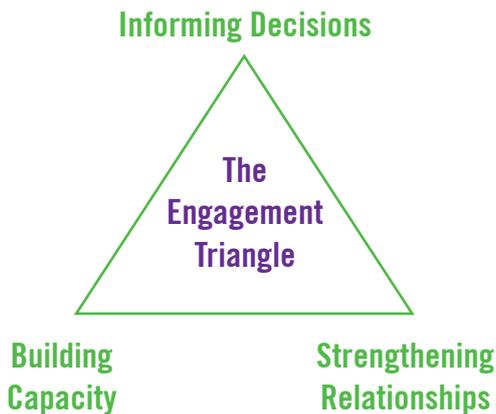


From left to right: Cr Bob Humm, Cr Bob Cornish, Cr Rob Eldridge, Cr David Lowe, Cr David Atkinson, Mayor Cr Rhonda Sanderson, Cr Fiona Stevens, Cr Annie Goble and Cr Bill Chisholm.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

Community engagement at Council is defined as:

“A process to build capacity, strengthen relationships and inform decision making”.



Informing Decisions: To provide opportunities for the community to contribute to decision making processes.

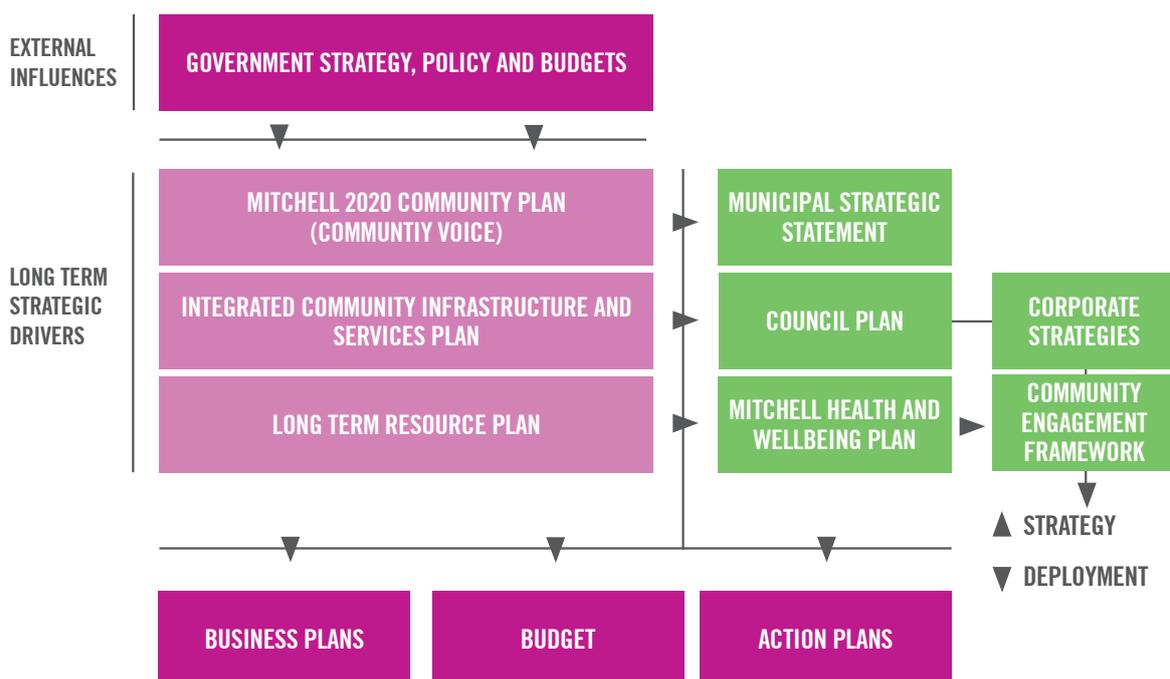
Building Capacity: To educate the community on a specific theme or issue to increase knowledge or change behaviours.

Strengthening Relationships: To build new relationships and/or improve relationships with the community.

Engagement Triangle, Capire Consulting: <http://capire.com.au/engagement-triangle/>

WHY DO WE NEED A FRAMEWORK?

All staff within Mitchell Shire Council undertake their work within the Mitchell Shire Strategic planning framework as shown below. This framework is led by the Council Plan’s overarching goals and objectives with the Community Engagement Framework influencing all aspects of Council’s work, from day to day activities and service provision to organisational policies and strategic directions.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK.

The Community Engagement Framework defines Council's commitment to the community and outlines the community engagement principles that drive Council's engagement practices.

Community Engagement Framework

Overarching vision, principles, approach, roles and responsibilities

Community Engagement Toolkit

Specific information and advice on 'how to' undertake different types of engagement with the community

The framework applies to all forms of engagement by Councillors, officers, volunteers and consultants acting on behalf of council including:

- > **The planning, implementation and evaluation of any community engagement activity**
- > **Engagement with the community regarding issues, proposals and Council decisions such as projects, strategies, plans, programs or service delivery**
- > **Engagement with key groups in the community including volunteers**
- > **Internal engagement within the organisation including Councillors**



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES.

The Community Engagement Framework 2018 principles are informed by the International Association of Public Participation's and reflect Mitchell Shire Council's organisational values of working together, respect, Customer service excellence, Accountability and Continuous improvement.

The framework responds to the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) Better Practice Guide: Public Participation in Government Decision-making[1]. It also takes into consideration Local Government Rate Capping and Variation Framework (Victorian Essential Services Commission) recommendations for good practice in deliberative community engagement.

Mitchell Shire Council has adopted the following principles to underpin how we engage with the community. The principles will help us to improve service delivery, identify and respond to changing local needs and maintain an ongoing dialogue with our diverse community.

WE WILL:

- > **Plan our engagements to be timely, open and easily understood.**
- > **Make sure engagement activities are inclusive, accessible and actively seek a diverse range of perspectives.**
- > **Be upfront about how much opportunity there is to influence a decision.**
- > **Define the community's role in any community engagement process using the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower).**
- > **Provide information to support meaningful community participation.**
- > **Use a variety of engagement techniques that meet the needs and interests of the community.**
- > **Let the community know how their input has influenced our decision and the outcomes (close the loop).**
- > **Learn from each experience to review and improve our practice**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE.

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

To determine the required level of engagement and activities to be applied, staff should review the project against the engagement spectrum. The spectrum has five levels of engagement:

	Level 1 Inform	Level 2 Consult	Level 3 Involve	Level 4 Collaborate	Level 5 Empower
Goal	Targeted communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened	Two-way communications designed to obtain feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform our decision making	Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views	Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision making	Final decision making placed in the hands of the community
Council's Approach	We will share information about a decision or direction	We will explore options, gain feedback and an understanding of your concerns and preferences	We will involve you in the process so your ideas, concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternative developed or the final decision	We collaborate with you so your advice, innovation and recommendations are included in the final decision that we make together	We will empower the community by placing the final decision with them and encourage community to lead initiatives
Role of Stakeholder/Community	Listen	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Lead
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fact sheets > Websites > Open days > Signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Public comment > Focus groups > Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Workshops > Drop in sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Community Advisory Committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ballots > Delegated decisions > Community plans

WHO DO WE ENGAGE WITH?

Community

Includes all those who live, work, volunteer, invest or play within Mitchell Shire.

Stakeholders

Includes businesses, service providers, volunteers, not-for-profit organisations, government agencies as well as other levels of government.

Harder to reach

Includes community members that may find it difficult to participate in engagement activities including homeless, newly arrived refugees, people with a disability, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities.



Wallan Community Garden.

HOW DO WE ENGAGE?

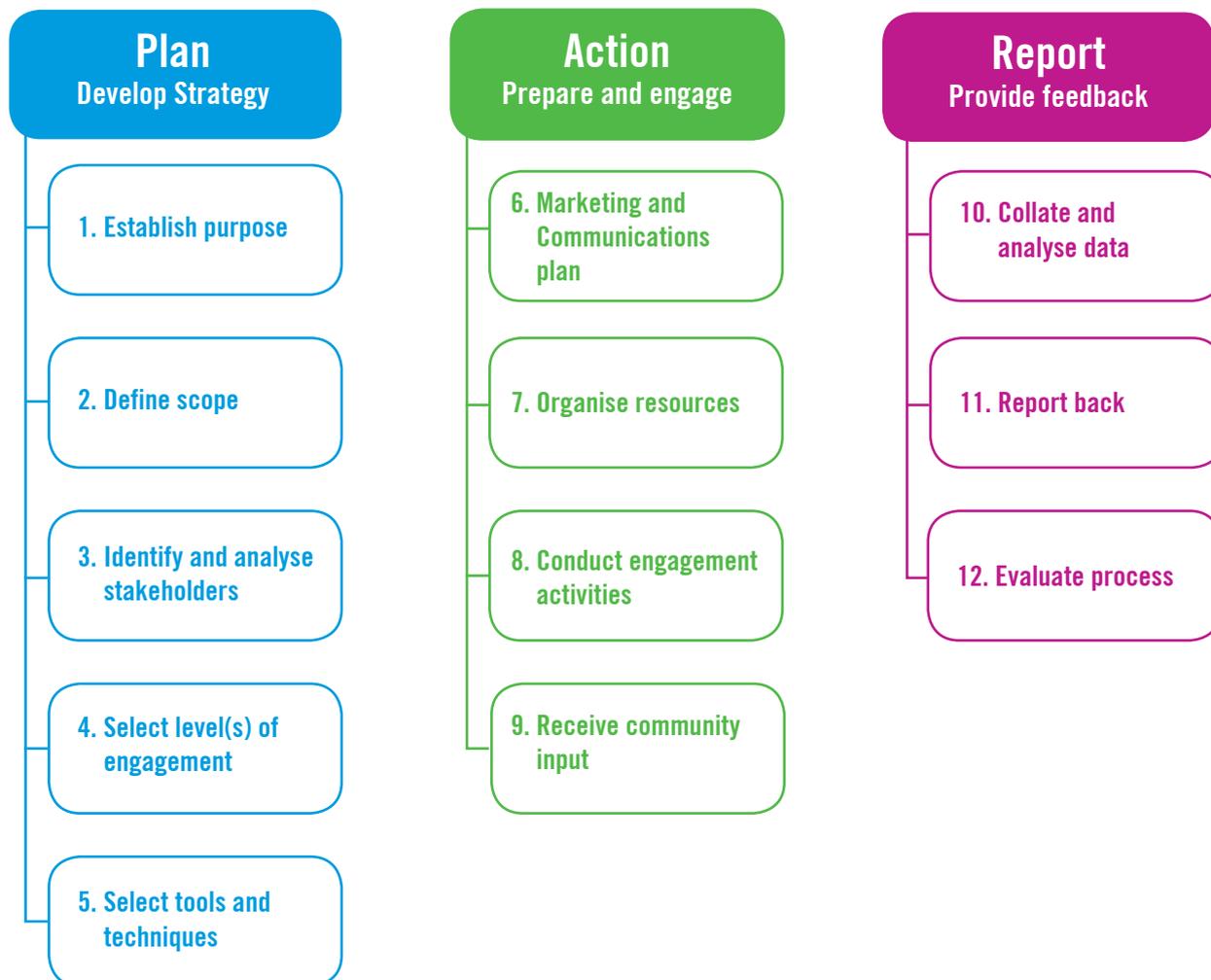
To ensure Council receives the best input possible from the community, Council will be clear about what it is trying to achieve, understand who needs to be involved, and will engage in different ways to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate.

Council commits to engaging in an open and honest manner, clearly communicating any restraints or limitations that may affect the engagement process as well as clarifying how much the community may influence the decision at hand.

Together with targeted engagement efforts, Council will also continue ongoing relationships with community and stakeholders through advisory committees and by providing support to community groups.

The implementation of the Community Engagement Framework will work together with the Community Engagement Toolkit for staff. The toolkit will include a variety of methods that can be used. Both the guidelines and the toolkit will be monitored and evaluated to make sure they meet the changing needs of the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS



HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY ENGAGE WITH COUNCIL?

Community engagement requires active participation from the community. There are many ways community members can get involved. These include:

- > **Face to face**
- > **Speaking with any Council staff or Councillor**
- > **Visiting your local Library and Customer Service Centre**
- > **Providing feedback via customer service (website, email, phone, letter)**
- > **Attending drop in sessions and or providing feedback on particular projects out for public comment**
- > **Attending Council's Community Questions and Hearing Committee**
- > **Surveys**
- > **Visiting Engaging Mitchell online engagement**
- > **Connecting via social media**
- > **Joining in local events and activities**
- > **Joining an Advisory Committee or the Community Voice Panel**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES.



> **Community Engagement Framework**



> **Community Engagement toolkit**

> **Engaging Mitchell website**

> **Mitchell Community Voice panel**



> **Community Engagement Champions**

> **Community Engagement Planning Calendar**



DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTING, MONITORING AND REVIEWING

The Community Engagement framework 2018 has been developed through evidence based best practice as well as a review of current organisational practices. Consultation took place with staff and Councillors to assist in the development of this Framework.

Implementation of this framework will be achieved through Council staff and Councillors utilising the Community Engagement toolkit.

This framework will be reviewed periodically to evaluate Council's community engagement activities and improve practice. Additionally, the community's satisfaction with community engagement will be monitored via feedback in the Annual Community survey.

Additionally Council will recognise the importance of closing the engagement loop and communicate to stakeholders and community about how their participation contributed to decision making.

	Customer Service (Enquiry Types and Statistics)		Consultation and Participation
	Public Engagement Events		Online Engaging Mitchell Activity Reports
	Engaging Mitchell Voice Panel		Independent Community Satisfaction Reports

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS.

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.

Delivery of community engagement beyond legally required levels will depend on the:

- > Decision to be made
- > Project/service to be delivered
- > Community's interest to participate
- > Need to understand the community's view
- > Opportunity for the community to influence the decision

Community engagement is required under the following relevant legislation:

- > *Local Government Act 1989*
- > *Road Management Act 2004*
- > *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- > *Planning and Environment Act 2007*
- > *Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- > *Commission for Children and Young People Child Safe Standards*



Broadford Library 2014.

REFERENCES.

- > *IAP2 Australasia 2014, Certificate of Engagement.*
- > *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) www.iap2.org.au*
- > *IPAA (2013) Stakeholder Engagement Manual*
- > *Forecast ID 2017*
- > *OECD Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation, PUMA Policy Brief No. 10, July 2001 and Department of Environment and Sustainability Effective Engagement: building relationships with community and stakeholders, Book 1, 2005*
- > *VAGO Better Practice Guide www.audit.vic.gov.au/publications/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf*
- > *Local Government Act 1989*
- > *Planning and Environment Act 2007*
- > *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- > *Hobsons Bay City Council (2015) Community Engagement Framework*
- > *Shellharbour City Council (2014) Community Engagement Toolkit*
- > *City of Ballarat (2016) Community Engagement Framework*
- > *City of Greater Bendigo (2016) Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit*
- > *City of Greater Geelong (2017) Community Engagement Policy*
- > *Wyndham City Council (2018) Community Engagement Framework*



If you would like to engage or provide feedback please contact Council:

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