



# Community Engagement Strategy 2018–2023



# Community Engagement Strategy

The City of Armadale's Strategic Community Strategy states that the community vision is:

**“A liveable city that is responsive to community values, appreciative of our natural environment, and provides a choice of lifestyle and work.”**

Community and Stakeholder engagement is central to being a Council that is ‘responsive to community values.’

The Community Engagement Strategy outlines the City's commitment to engagement, how we define quality and what we are planning to do over the next five years to implement engagement in a consistent way across the organisation.

## Our Commitment to Quality Engagement

Community engagement is based on the understanding that those impacted by a decision have a right to have their views heard and for Council to consider those views when decisions are being made.

Engagement, when done well, results in greater community participation, better decision making and greater accountability of the City to its community. When done poorly, it can be tokenistic and a waste of time and resources that does little to inform good decisions, and can result in frustration for all involved.

Defining quality engagement assists the Community, Councillors and City Officers to understand and have confidence in the process and value the feedback received. Quality planning and evaluation of engagement processes will be fundamental in ensuring that good outcomes and decisions are achieved.

The level and nature of community engagement will change depending on the issue, level of impact and topic. Quality engagement recognises that effective governance is not about engaging on everything all the time. At times decisions need to be made and Councillors, with advice from City Officers, have the responsibility for balancing opposing views in the community with the reality that an overall consensus may not be achievable.

There are different forms of community engagement including where the City has a statutory obligation, within which it is required to make decisions. Those forms of community engagement have limitations where community feedback can influence decisions due to legislative implications and this needs to be recognised by all involved.





The City's Community Engagement Strategy is underpinned by the City's values of Honesty, Accountability, Respect and Professionalism (HARP).

VALUE	WHAT IT MEANS AND WHAT WILL WE DO?
<p><b>Honesty</b></p> <p>We are honest, consistent, open and transparent in our dealings with our stakeholders and are committed to building mutual trust and respect.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication about the level of influence the community has over a decision and any constraints to options under consideration.</li> <li>• Accurate and up to date information to participate in a meaningful way.</li> <li>• Adequate time to consider issues and provide feedback.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability</b></p> <p>We set high performance expectations and hold ourselves accountable for the quality of our work and the results we achieve as individuals, as team members and as an organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process.</li> <li>• Feedback on how input is used and how community influenced decisions.</li> <li>• Design and document a transparent engagement process that is accountable to the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Respect</b></p> <p>We are sincere, fair and forthright, treating others with dignity and respecting individual differences, feelings and contributions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An inclusive process that captures the diverse opinions of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Opportunities for respectful debate and deliberation.</li> <li>• Actively empower people from diverse backgrounds to have their voices heard.</li> <li>• An unbiased approach to reviewing and using input from the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professionalism</b></p> <p>We show pride, enthusiasm and dedication to delivering high quality service and advice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear purpose for engagement that provides direction and realistic expectations about the focus and influence being offered.</li> <li>• A well designed engagement process that seeks out relevant stakeholders and provides meaningful opportunities for participation.</li> <li>• Officers engage in evaluating and continually improving community engagement practices.</li> </ul>





## Roles in Community Engagement

Community engagement provides a valuable link between the Community, Councillors and City Officers in being aware of community views and expectations of what influences decision making.

**Community** includes people who live, work and visit the City as well as key stakeholders including businesses, service providers and other levels of government. They are entitled to their views and opinions on matters that affect them. Their role is to participate in community engagement opportunities either formally or informally with the expectation that those views are valued.

**Councillors** are elected to represent the community and are the governing body that directs and controls the local government's affairs and performance. As a Council they are responsible for overseeing the allocation of finances and resources as well as determining local government policies. They are in a unique position whereby they are involved in their community and have regular contact with individuals, groups and organisations. Individual Councillors, and the Council as a whole, need strong linkages into the Community so that they can correctly judge what its needs are and what issues they should become involved with. They are the essential ambassadors and champions of community engagement as a means of informing their decision making.

**City Officers** advise the Council in relation to the functions of a local government in accordance with legislation and written laws. They ensure that advice and information is available to the Council so that informed decisions can be made and implement those decisions. Officers generally undertake most of the formal community engagement and are responsible for

planning, developing and implementing opportunities and encouraging participation. They are required to keep Councillors aware and informed in the process and to present information that represents all views with fair and unbiased advice.

Whilst all have a role in community engagement, it is fair for all to expect to be treated with respect so any outcomes involve the shared wisdom of Community members, Councillors and City Officers.

## When will we engage?

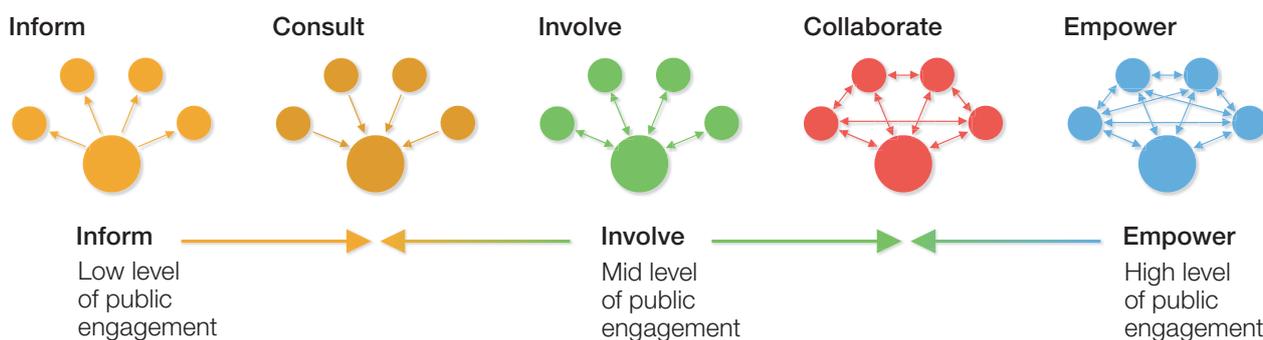
The City regularly engages with the Community with customer surveys on its services, co-ordinates reference working groups and service provider networks as well as holding workshops and information sessions. There are many instances where the City's everyday business requires community engagement whether it is development applications, reviews of local laws, elector representation reviews or proposed rates for example.

The City's major community engagement occurs when it reviews its Strategic Community Plan every four years and seeks community perceptions every second year. Specific community engagement is important for matters like development of strategies, changes in service delivery and community facilities (halls, community centres) upgrades and refurbishments that affects users.

The City's approach is aligned with the international standard for engagement, International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). IAP2 suggests community engagement as any process that involves the Community in problem solving or decision making and uses community input to make decisions. It is represented in the spectrum (next page) where engagement levels range from low to high.



## Public Participation Spectrum



Source: International Association for Public Participation's Public Participation Spectrum.

The level of engagement will be determined based on the impact and risk of the issue or project using the table below. This helps inform who needs to be involved and what methods should be used.

	LIMITED IMPACT/RISK	LOW IMPACT/RISK	MEDIUM IMPACT/RISK	HIGH IMPACT/RISK
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcomes won't involve any substantial changes.</li> <li>Limited impact across community.</li> <li>No potential for cultural or historical offence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome likely to be perceived as having a low impact.</li> <li>The impacts/benefits affect only a narrow section of the community.</li> <li>No potential for cultural or historical offence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome likely to be perceived as having a moderate impact.</li> <li>Multiple views on the preferred outcome, but more points of agreement than disagreement.</li> <li>Potential for cultural or historical offence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome likely to be perceived as having a significant impact.</li> <li>Multiple conflicting views on the preferred outcome.</li> <li>Significant potential cultural or historical offence.</li> </ul>
<b>Technical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple decision; there are very few solutions with no technical or regulatory challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncomplicated decision; there are very few technical solutions with a few technical or regulatory challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complicated decision; there are several technical solutions with a few technical or regulatory challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly complicated decision; there are several technical solutions, with several technical or regulatory challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No economic benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal economic benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate economic benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant economic benefit or impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No environmental benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal environmental benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate environmental benefit or impact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant environmental benefit or impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Political</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No media and political interest.</li> <li>No competing interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal media interest.</li> <li>Minimal competing interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some media interest.</li> <li>Some local political interest.</li> <li>Some community action/groups present.</li> <li>Some competing interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant media interest.</li> <li>Significant local, state or federal political interest.</li> <li>Strongly supported by community action/groups.</li> <li>Multiple competing interests.</li> </ul>

## How will we engage?

There is no one size fits all approach to community engagement. It will often be necessary to combine two or three complementary methods to ensure all key stakeholders are reached, in the way which suits them best in order to achieve the best outcome.

As part of the Community Engagement Strategy the City has developed a Community Engagement Toolbox which guides City Officers and will be rolled out with specialist training and support to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.

The City will use a variety of mediums including social media, digital platforms, stakeholder workshops, face to face interviews, surveys and information sessions. We will always be on the lookout for new and innovative ways of encouraging the community to be involved and participate.

## Reporting and Accountability

The City will commit to ensuring the community is aware of how their views are being used.

- Community Engagement results will be included in relevant reports to Council.
- Major Community Engagement projects will have a feedback loop to participants.
- Where appropriate, Community Engagement results will be available on the City's website.
- The City's Annual Report will include an overview of Community Engagement activities.



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