

# COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

August 2018

## About the Progress Report

Council adopted its first Community Engagement Strategy (2016-2020) in August 2016, with 850 community members contributing to its development. The Strategy outlines what is important to community members, Council's vision for community engagement, and how we plan to achieve our goals.

We reviewed the implementation of the Strategy and prepared a Progress Report in February 2018. The Progress Report outlines our achievements so far, as well as key issues and recommendations for the future. The Progress Report was then shared with the Community Engagement Strategy's key stakeholders, including community members, staff, and Councillors in March – May 2018.

## About the community survey

The survey was shared with the community via the Community Engagement Register newsletter, Council's online engagement platform Have Your Say, social media, and through Council's community networks in April – May 2018.

Eight community members filled in the survey. 60% of respondents were involved in the development of the Community Engagement Strategy (2016-2020) in 2016, and 50% have participated in a community engagement activity since the Strategy was adopted.

## Summary of community feedback

While the number of respondents is too low to ensure feedback are representative of broader community sentiment, overall, the survey results reinforce the findings reported in the 'Community Engagement Strategy Progress Report' (2018). Survey feedback suggests that members of the community recognise that Council is making a concerted effort to improve in community engagement, however there remains significant distrust that Council will actually listen to community feedback or use this to inform decision making. This suggests that Council should proceed with the recommendations in the Progress Report to address community concerns and continue to improve in our engagement practice.

Please see below for a summary of community feedback, and relevant recommendations from the Progress Report which address concerns. This summary is organised according to the four key principles that underpin the Community Engagement Strategy (2016-2020), based on issues of most importance to the community: genuine participation in decision making; transparency and the need for trust; fairness and equity; and effective planning and management.

## 1. Genuine opportunity to participate in Council’s decision-making

### What we are doing well

- Council has visibly increased in its efforts to involve communities.

### How we can improve

Survey feedback	Progress Report recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure engagement is genuine and listen to what the community says</li> <li>• Follow through and make sure community feedback informs decision making.</li> <li>• Increase number of engagement opportunities overall</li> <li>• Increase number of departments engaging with community.</li> </ul>	<p>1.4 Ensure the new Community Engagement Policy outlines when community engagement is required, encourages staff to use multiple methods, and mandates that engagement is always genuine, and uses an appropriate level of the IAP2 spectrum</p> <p>1.5 Community Engagement Officer to continue to provide advice, training, and resources to increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community, staff and Councillor understanding of genuine and effective engagement</li> <li>• o the number of engagement opportunities, participants and methods used.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the influence community members have over the process and outcome (i.e. higher end of the IAP2 spectrum: involve/collaborate/empower).</li> </ul>	<p>1.1 Explore options for Council to implement more collaborative approaches, including deliberative processes for major projects over the next three years</p> <p>1.5 Community Engagement Officer to continue to provide advice, training, and resources to increase proportion of processes which use a higher level of the IAP2 spectrum (involve, collaborate, empower).</p>

## 2. Transparent about both the community engagement and Council’s decision-making processes

### What we are doing well

- Council is ‘making good use of social media’.

### How we can improve

Survey feedback	Progress Report recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with community in a more accessible manner ‘absent of management speak and clichés’.</li> </ul>	<p>2.5 Communication and Marketing team to work with staff managing engagement projects to provide more specific information in Gazette articles about community engagement</p> <p>2.6 Community Engagement Officer and the Communications and Marketing team to provide ongoing promotion of the new Community Engagement Register.</p>

Survey feedback	Progress Report recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve honesty and transparency, including more comprehensive minutes of Council meetings</li> <li>• Ensure Council engages when we promise we will, and communicates clearly when timelines change (concerns about lack of engagement promised by Council on specific projects including Inverleigh trees and Structure Plan, Riverstone Estate Batesford).</li> </ul>	2.1 Managers to take responsibility for ensuring all engagement processes are transparent by communicating openly with the community about the engagement and decision-making processes, and the influence of the community feedback on the final outcome.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication around engagement opportunities.</li> </ul>	2.3 Community Engagement Officer to continue to work with the Communications and Marketing team to promote the Have Your Say platform through social media, the Gazette, the new community engagement e-newsletter, and other communications methods.

### 3. Fair and equitable opportunity for all affected community members to be involved

#### What we are doing well

- Engagement opportunities are 'more accessible to the community'
- There is more visible engagement in the community.

#### How we can improve

Survey feedback	Progress Report recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors and staff to get out and be more visible in the community.</li> </ul>	3.6 Explore developing a regular calendar of conversation posts, attended by Councillors and Senior Managers, held at least four times per year to provide a predictable opportunity for accessible engagement; while continuing to hold conversation posts organised by individual teams on an as-needs basis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the proportion of community members who have the chance to participate in accessible opportunities (e.g. pop-up conversation posts).</li> </ul>	3.4 Community Engagement Officer to continue to provide support and advice for staff to increase proportion of engagement processes that utilise existing opportunities in the community.

### 4. Community engagement processes are well planned and managed by Council

#### What we are doing well

- Appointment of a Community Engagement Officer is 'an excellent move'.

#### Learn more

[www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/consultations/community-engagement-strategy-implementation-review](http://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au/consultations/community-engagement-strategy-implementation-review)