Port Phillip in Partnership:

Our commitment to community engagement



proudly port phillip

Our vision is simple:

An engaged and empowered community that actively contributes to Council's decision-making.

Cover photo courtesy Chatterbox Projects.

Why community engagement matters

At City of Port Phillip, we believe that a vibrant, liveable city is built on the voices of its people.

Our approach to community engagement is about more than just gathering feedback – it's about creating genuine partnerships with our community and empowering people to shape the future of their city.

This brochure outlines how we engage with our community, what guides our actions, and how we ensure everyone has a meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them.

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is a planned, two-way process that invites people to influence and participate in Council decision-making. It's impartial, inclusive, and designed to ensure every interested person has the opportunity to participate.

Our commitment

As our city grows and changes, so do the needs and perspectives of our community. We will listen, learn, and adapt, ensuring everyone has a voice in shaping Port Phillip's future.

Our guiding values, principles and commitment

Our approach is grounded in the values and principles set out in our Community Engagement Policy. These guide every interaction and set clear expectations for how we work with our community.

Our values are:

Inclusivity
We strive to reach all parts of our diverse community.

Transparency
We are open about how feedback will be used.

Accessibility
We remove barriers to participation.

Responsiveness
We listen and adapt based on what we hear.

Accountability
We report back on the impact of community input.



Photo courtesy Conversation Co.

Community engagement principles

As per the *Local Government Act 2020*.

PRINCIPLE 1

A community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- We'll make a plan for each project that involves the community.
- Each plan will explain what the project is about and what parts you can help shape.
- We'll only ask for your thoughts on things that can actually be changed.

PRINCIPLE 2

Participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- We'll give you clear, fair, and easy-to-understand information at the start so you know what's going on.

PRINCIPLE 3

Participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- We'll make sure the people most affected get a chance to have their say.
- We'll try to hear from lots of different people using different ways to connect.
- We'll keep track of who gives feedback.
- We'll use different tools and networks to reach more people.

PRINCIPLE 4

Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- We'll work with you to find out what makes it hard to join in and try to fix that.
- We'll ask how you prefer to take part and make sure it's easy, safe, and fair.
- We'll offer a range of options to make sure you can join in a way that suits you, including online and in person.
- We'll be respectful of different cultures.
- We'll meet you where you feel comfortable.
- If needed, we'll translate information or provide interpreters.

PRINCIPLE 5

Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU:

- We'll explain what the engagement is for and what it covers.
- We'll tell you what you can and can't help influence.
- We'll let you know what we heard from the community and how it helped shape decisions.
- We'll explain that your input is one part of the decision-making process.
- We'll share the final outcomes and how your feedback made a difference.



Our Port Phillip communities

We consider what makes our Port Phillip communities unique and tailor our engagement approaches to our local context.

Age profile

Nearly half (48.1 per cent) of residents are aged 25–49, indicating a predominantly young to middle-aged adult population. Engagement strategies should leverage digital channels and flexible participation options to suit working-age adults and young professionals.

Cultural diversity

One third (33.1 per cent) of residents are born overseas, higher than the Victorian average. Engagement materials and events should be culturally sensitive, potentially multilingual, and inclusive of diverse backgrounds.

High proportion of renters and apartment dwellers

Almost half (48.8 per cent) of residents rent their homes. Engagement approaches should consider the mobility and different needs of renters and apartment dwellers. This could include providing information direct to home addresses, offering placed based activities, using inclusive language such as ‘residents’ or ‘renters’ and offering a range of channels for participation.

Place of intersecting traditions

The area we now call Port Phillip has been home to Bunurong, Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri people for over 55,000 years. There are currently 0.5 per cent of the population who identify as Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander. Engagement practices should be culturally safe and responsive to our First Nations communities.

21%
Speak a language other than English

48.8%
Rent their homes



48.1%
Residents aged 25–49

33.1%
Are born overseas





Household structure

The average household size is 1.9 people, with a significant number of single-person and small households. Engagement should be accessible to individuals as well as families, and not assume traditional family structures.

Socioeconomic diversity

There are pockets of disadvantage, such as in South Melbourne, alongside areas of relative affluence. Engagement should be designed to reach both higher and lower socioeconomic groups, possibly by partnering with local service providers and using both online and face-to-face methods.

Population growth and change

The population is growing and expected to become more diverse over time. Ongoing engagement efforts should be adaptable and regularly reviewed to respond to demographic shifts.

Language and communication

One fifth (21 per cent) of residents speak a language other than English. The multicultural nature of the community suggests a need for plain English and translated materials, as well as outreach through multicultural community groups.

LGBTIQA+ communities

Port Phillip is home to one of the largest and most vibrant LGBTIQA+ communities in Victoria. Compared to the Victorian average, a higher proportion of our community identify as LGBTIQA+. The area has a strong history of support and celebration of these communities. Engagement programs should prioritise accessibility, inclusivity, safety, and equity to encourage participation.

Digital readiness

The age profile and urban setting suggest high digital literacy, supporting the use of online engagement platforms, but this should be balanced with non-digital options for older adults and those less digitally connected.



How we engage: Our model in action

We use a variety of tools and methods to connect with our community, including:

Have Your Say website and digital tools

Place-based engagement in local neighbourhoods

Advisory Committees of Council

Community engagement **newsletters**

Tailored methods for specific projects and audiences

How we developed our approach

Our engagement approach is shaped by:

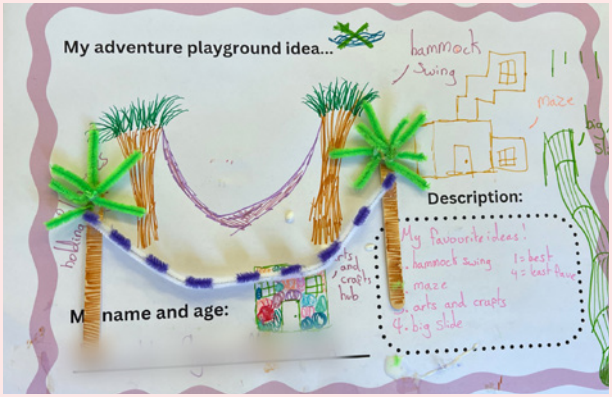
- Ongoing conversations with our community
- Benchmarking against best practice and other councils
- Reviewing relevant legislation and policies
- Analysing operational data and learning from past experience.

In November 2024, 290 people told us what would make it easier for them to share ideas with Council. They asked for wider range of engagement and communication methods, better promotion, and more inclusive practices, especially for those most impacted by Council decisions.

We used this feedback to create a draft approach and checked with our community in September 2025 to see if we got it right.

Our Community Engagement Policy and approach were created to reflect what the community told us. They're designed to help people get involved, feel confident sharing their views, and have a real impact on Council decisions.

Our approach is supported by clear guidelines, templates, and annual plans to ensure consistency and quality.



Focus area 1:
Hearing from a wide variety of people

Objective: Ensure feedback reflects the diversity of our community.

How:

- Offer a range of ways to participate – like online, in person, or using paper surveys.
- Meet people where they are - like at local events, community groups, and public spaces.
- Collect demographic information to make sure we're reaching a wide mix of people, and change our approach if needed.
- Ask how people want to participate and tailor our programs to suit their needs.
- Offer activities in various neighbourhoods, and give people opportunities to meet their councillors.

Success looks like: More first-time participation that reflects the diversity of those impacted.



Focus area 2:
Communicating clearly

Objective: Make it easy for everyone to know how and when to get involved.

How:

- Use clear and simple language so everyone understands.
- Share opportunities through a wide range of ways – like newsletters, flyers and social media.
- Work with community leaders and networks to spread the word.
- Make our online engagement site easier to find and use.
- Help people learn how they can get involved in Council decisions.

Success looks like:
More people are aware of Council's engagement opportunities.



Focus area 3:
Making engagement targeted and inclusive

Objective: Remove barriers so everyone can participate, especially those at risk of exclusion.

How:

- Identify who is impacted and who may be excluded, and design engagement accordingly.
- Partner with trusted community leaders and organisations.
- Develop guidelines and trial new methods for engaging under-represented groups.
- Offer incentives or compensation, where feasible, to encourage participation from specific cohorts.

Success looks like:
Increased participation from groups who have traditionally been less involved.



Focus area 4:
Reporting back and closing the loop

Objective: Show how community feedback makes a difference.

How:

- Publish engagement reports summarising what we heard and how it influenced decisions.
- Update the community at key milestones and after decisions are made.
- Explore new ways to share outcomes and next steps, broadening reach.
- Ensure we report back in a timely and effective manner.

Success looks like:
Consistent, timely reporting back on every project.

Roles and responsibilities

Councillors: Consider all feedback, respect process impartiality, and make decisions in the community's best interest.

Staff: Plan and deliver engagement that is appropriate and inclusive.

Community: Stay informed, participate, and share opportunities within networks.

Our goal is to foster a culture of learning and improvement, ensuring that our engagement is meaningful, effective, and trusted by the community.

Monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement

We regularly collect and analyse data from a range of sources to assess the effectiveness and quality of our engagement program. This process is aligned with the principles and commitments outlined in our Community Engagement Policy.

Continuous improvement

Annual reviews:

Each year, we conduct a thorough review of our engagement activities, outcomes, and processes. This includes analysing data, reviewing feedback from participants and staff, and benchmarking against best practice.

Public reporting:

We share the results of our monitoring and evaluation through annual public reports on our Have Your Say website, ensuring transparency and accountability to our community.

Adaptive practice:

Insights from our monitoring and evaluation inform updates to our engagement methods, tools, and training. We remain flexible and responsive, adapting our approach as the needs and preferences of our community evolve.

Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter:

haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au/register

Scan the QR code

Register for our monthly e-newsletter

Provide feedback on Council's projects:

haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au

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Have Your Say on Council projects

have your say

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National Relay Service

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have trouble speaking, you can phone us through the National Relay Service (NRS):

- TTY users, dial **133677**, ask for **03 9209 6777**
- Voice Relay users, phone **1300 555 727**, then ask for **03 9209 6777**

accesshub.gov.au

Language assistance

廣東話	9679 9810	Ελληνικά	9679 9811	Polska	9679 9812
普通話	9679 9858	Русский	9679 9813	Other	9679 9814

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