

Council Meeting

Agenda

Tuesday, 9 July 2024

Council Chamber - Civic Centre and via
Videoconference and via Videoconference

Information for Councillors and the community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



COUNCIL VISION

Whether you live here or visit, you will see how much we care for country, how inclusive and connected our communities are, and how sustainable balanced growth makes this the best place in the world.

VALUE OF HISTORY

We acknowledge that history shapes our identities, engages us as citizens, creates inclusive communities, is part of our economic well-being, teaches us to think critically and creatively, inspires leaders and is the foundation of our future generations.

COUNCILLOR COMMITMENT

We'll be truthful, represent the community's needs, be positive and responsive and always strive to do better.

OUR COUNCILLORS

Billanook Ward: Tim Heenan
Chandler Ward: David Eastham
Chirnside Ward: Richard Higgins
Lyster Ward: Johanna Skelton
Melba Ward: Sophie Todorov

O'Shannassy Ward: Jim Child
Ryrie Ward: Fiona McAllister
Streeton Ward: Andrew Fullagar
Walling Ward: Len Cox

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & DIRECTORS

Chief Executive Officer, Tammi Rose
Director Built Environment & Infrastructure, Hjalmar Philipp
Director Communities, Leanne Hurst

Director Corporate Services, Andrew Hilson
Director Planning and Sustainable Futures, Kath McClusky

GOVERNANCE RULES

All Council and Delegated Committee meetings are to be conducted in accordance with Council's Governance Rules, which can be viewed at: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Council/Corporate-documents/Policies-strategies/Governance-rules>

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- making a verbal submission for up to 5 minutes on matters not listed on the agenda.
- submitting a question.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a specific item on the agenda. For planning applications and policy issues, the Chair will invite one person to speak on behalf of any objectors and one person to speak on behalf of the applicant. For other matters on the agenda, only one person will be invited to address Council, unless there are opposing views. At the discretion of the Chair, additional speakers may be invited for items of large interest.
- speaking for up to 5 minutes to a petition to be presented at a meeting.

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The Minutes produced after each Council Meeting form the official record of the decisions made by Yarra Ranges Council.

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In the case of an emergency during a meeting held at the Civic Centre, 15 Anderson Street, Lilydale, you should follow the directions given by staff and evacuate the building using the nearest available exit. You should congregate at the assembly point at Hardy Street car park.

CONTACT US

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Agenda

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | COUNCIL MEETING OPENED | 6 |
| 2. | ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY | 7 |
| 3. | INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS PRESENT | 8 |
| 4. | APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE | 9 |
| 5. | MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS | 10 |
| 6. | CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS | 11 |
| 7. | DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST | 12 |

In accordance with Chapter 7, Rule 4, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

- | | | |
|----|--|----|
| 8. | QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC | 13 |
|----|--|----|

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 57 and 59, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

- | | | |
|----|------------------|----|
| 9. | PETITIONS | 14 |
|----|------------------|----|

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rule 60, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--|
| 10. | BUSINESS PAPER | |
|-----|-----------------------|--|

Planning and Sustainable Futures

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---------|
| | 10.1 Waste Policy Review | 15 - 51 |
|--|--------------------------|---------|

Corporate Services

- | | | |
|--|--|---------|
| | 10.2 Revised Community Engagement Policy | 52 - 88 |
|--|--|---------|

Agenda

- Built Environment and Infrastructure
- 10.3 Birrarung Valley Walk - Memorandum Of Understanding 89 - 96
- 11. COUNCILLOR MOTIONS 97**
- In accordance with Chapter 3, Division 4, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*
- 12. ITEMS THROUGH THE CHAIR 98**
- 13. REPORTS FROM DELEGATES 99**
- 14. DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNING AND SEALING 100**
- In accordance with Clause 87 of the Meeting Procedures and Use of Common Seal Local Law 2015, as prescribed by Section 14(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020.*
- 15. INFORMAL MEETING OF COUNCILLORS 101 - 105**
- 16. URGENT BUSINESS 106**
- In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.*
- 17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS 107**
- In accordance with section 66(2)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020.*
- 18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING 108 - 109**

YARRA RANGES COUNCIL

**AGENDA FOR THE 607TH COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON TUESDAY
9 JULY 2024 COMMENCING AT 7.00PM IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE,
ANDERSON STREET, LILYDALE / VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE**

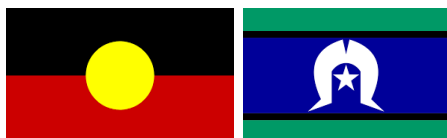
1. MEETING OPENED

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

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3. INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS PRESENT

OUR COUNCILLORS

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Director Planning & Sustainable Futures, Kath McClusky

4. APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

There were no apologies received prior to the commencement of this meeting.

5. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

6. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held Tuesday 25 June 2024, as circulated, be confirmed.

7. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Chapter 7, Rule 4, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The Local Government Act 2020 defines two categories of conflict of interest:

- *a general conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a general conflict of interest in a matter if an impartial, fair-minded person would consider that the person's private interests could result in that person acting in a manner that is contrary to their public duty", and*
- *a material conflict of interest, which is defined as "...a relevant person has a material conflict of interest in respect of a matter if an affected person would gain a benefit or suffer a loss depending on the outcome of the matter. The benefit may arise or the loss incurred (a) directly or indirectly; or (b) in a pecuniary or non-pecuniary form."*

In accordance with section 130 of the Local Government Act 2020, a conflict of interest must be disclosed in the manner required by the Governance Rules and the relevant person must exclude themselves from the decision-making process.

No Conflicts of Interest have been received prior to the Agenda being printed.

8. QUESTIONS AND SUBMISSIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 57 and 59, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

A person may make a submission to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. A submission may be on any matter except if it:

- (a) is considered malicious, defamatory, indecent, abusive, offensive, irrelevant, trivial, or objectionable in language or substance;
- (b) is substantially the same as a submission made to a Council meeting in the preceding 12 months;
- (c) relates to confidential information as defined under the Act;
- (d) relates to the personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer; or
- (e) relates to any other matter which the Council considers would prejudice the Council or any person.

At the time of the Agenda being printed there were no Questions to Council

9. PETITIONS

In accordance with Chapter 3, Rules 60, of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

A person may submit a petition to Council on matters that are not listed on the Agenda. Every petition or joint letter submitted to Council must:

- a) identify a 'Lead Petitioner' who Council can correspond with;
- b) be legible and in permanent writing;
- c) be clear and state on each page the matter and action sought from Council. Every page of a petition or joint letter must be a single page of paper and not be posted, stapled, pinned or otherwise affixed or attached to any piece of paper other than another page of the petition or joint letter;
- d) not be derogatory, defamatory or objectionable in language or nature;
- e) not relate to matters outside the powers of Council; and
- f) clearly state the names and addresses of at least seven (7) people who live, work, study or do business in the Municipal district.

There were no Petitions received prior to the Agenda being printed.

INFORMAL SIX-MONTH REVIEW: RESOURCE RECOVERY AND WASTE SERVICES POLICY

Report Author: Executive Officer – Resource Recovery
 Responsible Officer: Director Planning & Sustainable Futures
 Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidential information is contained in Attachment 2 to this report. This information relates to contractual matters and contains commercially sensitive information.

Any disclosure of the information included within the confidential report could be prejudicial to the interests of the Council or other parties. Report is confidential in accordance with Section 3(1)(g)(i)(g)(ii) of the *Local Government Act 2020*. This report provides details regarding approval to award a contract that complies with the Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

SUMMARY

On 8 August 2023, Council resolved to adopt a Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy with an informal review to occur at six months.

A key aim of the Policy is to meet State legislated environmental targets, principally related to landfill diversion.

The approach underpinning improving diversion rates is through a combination of increasing waste segregation and recycling options, whilst simultaneously decreasing landfill disposal.

The review commenced in October 2023 to align with changes to service delivery has been informed by six months of data, as well as feedback from the community. Data from the six months was then compiled and reviewed in April/May to inform the review.

To review the outcomes of the new service, Council:

- Monitored and investigated customer feedback, through requests, complaints, petitions, submissions, presentations to Council and broader sentiment shared on social media.
- Investigated bin capacity and contamination, including through physical audits of each bin stream.
- Monitored the volume changes of all waste streams.

The service review is contained in Attachment 1.

In summary, the first six-months of the Yarra Ranges service has shown that:

- Material progress toward State legislated targets has occurred with diversion of waste from landfill across all collection streams increasing from 46% to 73%, just below the 75% Council target for 2025.
 - Contamination rates of Food Organics and Green Organics (FOGO) bins are 0.49%.
 - Diverting waste from landfill to composting has avoided more than 3,127 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.
 - An additional 9,037 tonnes of organic material have been composted into usable products.
- During the transition period of June 2023 to February 2024, there was significant resistance to the services changes, particularly regarding the shift to fortnightly rubbish collections and the introduction of the universal FOGO bin.
- There has been no noticeable increase in dumped rubbish activity or increase in volumes within our street and park litterbin collections.
- The main residual requests following the transition period relate to opting out of the FOGO service and a return to weekly rubbish collection (particularly coming from households with a higher number of occupants as well as households with children in nappies).
- Other than FOGO liner requests, the average number of customer waste requests has reduced close to pre-transition levels.
- The service, in its current form and based on evidence of data, is functioning effectively for the large part of the community.

On balance of impact and outcome, this report recommends expanding bin size choice for community and prioritising behaviour change efforts for those facing difficulties in adjusting to the new services.

In addition, it recommends delaying the rollout of a glass service from 1 July 2025 to commence on 1 July 2026 (2026-2027 Financial year), based on:

- Assisting the community with current cost-of-living pressures.
- Enabling a stronger focus on the recent service changes (Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service and reduced rubbish collection frequency).
- Providing an opportunity to assess the impact of the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) on the glass collection service.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council

1. *Notes the findings and recommendations of the six-month review.*
2. *Maintains the fortnightly rubbish collection frequency and though contract variation discussions progress the provision of additional bin size options for each waste stream.*
3. *Progress investigations for alternative options for Multi-Unit Developments with limited storage space, including shared user arrangements and/or 240L bins.*
4. *Endorse a deferral of the Glass Collection service to commence in July 2026.*
5. *Hold consideration of an individual property opt-out option for FOGO for properties that have systems in place to manage FOGO on the property until state service standards for municipal collections are finalised.*
6. *Support the extension of the reusable nappy workshop program for a further 12 months.*
7. *Advocates to the Government for improved outcomes for managing soft plastics.*

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

- Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan adopted by Council on 13 June 2023.
- Adoption of Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy on 8 August 2023.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

This report responds to an informal review of Council's Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy 2023 in accordance with the Council resolution of 8th August 2023.

The report details the effectiveness of the service in achieving its stated aim via increasing the diversion of waste from landfill and increasing organic matter reuse and addresses feedback regarding the impacts of the service changes raised by the community.

The service review is provided as Attachment 1.

Background

The complete service review, including detail of resident feedback, performance data and costs is contained in Attachment 1. This section outlines:

- The current State context, including draft State Government Service Standards
- The strategic and policy context relevant to Yarra Ranges Council
- The broader context with respect to other councils waste services
- The National Best Practice Approach for Optimising Waste Recovery Rates.

The Current State Context

State legislation requires councils to provide residents with a four-stream waste collection service by 2030, including:

- Rubbish service
- Food & Garden Organic (FOGO) service
- Recycling service
- Glass service.

Individual local government authorities are responsible for transitioning to the new system as well as determining levels of service based on individual contract arrangements and local context. As part of the draft guidelines the state has indicated that the above timelines for implementation may be bought forward.

Table 1. Targets from Recycling Victoria: A New Economy Policy

<i>Diversions from landfill</i>	<i>Waste Generation Reduction</i>	<i>Organics to landfill reduction</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% by 2025 • 80% by 2030 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% per capita by 2030 from 2020 levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% reduction by 2025 • 50% reduction by 2030

Proposed Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard

The State Government has recently released for public feedback a proposed Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard. The basis of the standard is to include direction on:

- The acceptable service arrangements a council must provide

- What waste items can be included in each bin type
- Whether liners in FOGO bins will be accepted or encouraged
- An option for households to opt out of the FOGO service providing there are effective controls in place by the council to ensure FOGO material does not enter the general rubbish stream. This could include allowing home composting and re-use of compost on the property.

The consultation period closes on 14 August 2024 and a submission on the proposed service standard along with the new regulations and regulatory impact statement will be prepared.

Yarra Ranges Council Context:

Yarra Ranges Council provides a range of waste services to meet regulatory requirements and community needs. The service encourages avoidance, reuse and recycling with an objective of minimising disposal of waste to landfill. The costs of the services are recovered through the Waste Service Charge.

Yarra Ranges Council’s Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030 (CWRRP) responds to the State legislated four-stream waste service requirements. The Plan which is available on Councils website, identifies reduction and recovery targets as well as service levels to achieve these targets.

Table 2. Council’s waste reduction targets from the CWRRP.

<i>Diversion from landfill</i>	<i>Waste Generation Reduction</i>	<i>Organics to landfill reduction</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% by 2025 • 90% by 2030 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% per capita by 2030 from 2020 levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% reduction by 2025 • 60% reduction by 2030

The 2023 Yarra Ranges Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy sets out significant changes to waste collection services to comply with the following:

- *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*
- *Recycling Victoria A New Economy Policy 2020*
- *Local Government Act 1989 & 2020.*

The Policy details how the waste charges are applied, the bin types and bin sizes for Councils kerbside collection services and the targets for waste reduction and material recovery.

Council provides kerbside collection services to approximately 62,000 residential properties plus a further approximately 2,500 non-residential services. The costs of the services are recovered through the Waste Service Charge.

Prior to the Policy, Council offered a municipal wide weekly rubbish collection, fortnightly recycling collection and an optional fortnightly garden organic service to most of the municipality.

Broader context with respect to other Councils waste services

Out of 79 Local Governments in Victoria, 52 have a rubbish, recycling and universal FOGO service. Further to this:

- There are 24 other councils with weekly FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collections.
- There are 28 councils that have a weekly rubbish collection and universal (every household) FOGO collection.
- Four councils have an 'Opt Out' option for FOGO. Two are general opt-outs (with set criteria), one is for Building Managers and Owners Corporations properties only, and one is for properties less than 400m².
- Eight councils currently have an Opt-In model.

Knox City Council considered and adopted a decision at the 25 March 2024 Knox Council Meeting to revert to weekly rubbish collection. This decision was then [rescinded at the 22 April 2024 Council Meeting](#) and the original position of service delivery levels upheld which consists of a weekly FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collection service.

Nillumbik Shire Council provides a weekly FOGO and fortnightly landfill and recycling collection service, which has been in place for approximately a decade.

National Best Practice for Optimising Waste Recovery Rates

Achieving the State and Council targets requires a combination of policy measures and community behaviour change. A key strategic objective for Sustainability Victoria's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan is 'Drive the uptake of key circular behaviours in our communities'. A means of achieving this is to make circular actions easy for citizens and to tackle the top behaviours identified to drive waste avoidance.

As considered in the National Waste Report 2022, the accepted best practice for high diversion rates is:

- Weekly collection of FOGO waste
- Fortnightly collection of rubbish
- Fortnightly collection of recycling.

Research by Monash University's Behaviour Works Unit has highlighted that consistency is the key to fostering positive behaviour change. By making the right action convenient and habitual, the community is supported to separate waste effectively, efficiently and for the greatest environmental impact.

Council's Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan emphasises waste reduction options, with landfill disposal as the last resort (Figure 1).

By adopting best practice service frequencies and emphasising waste education, the community can conveniently prioritise higher ranked alternatives from the waste hierarchy, contributing to the Council and State's diversion and reduction targets.

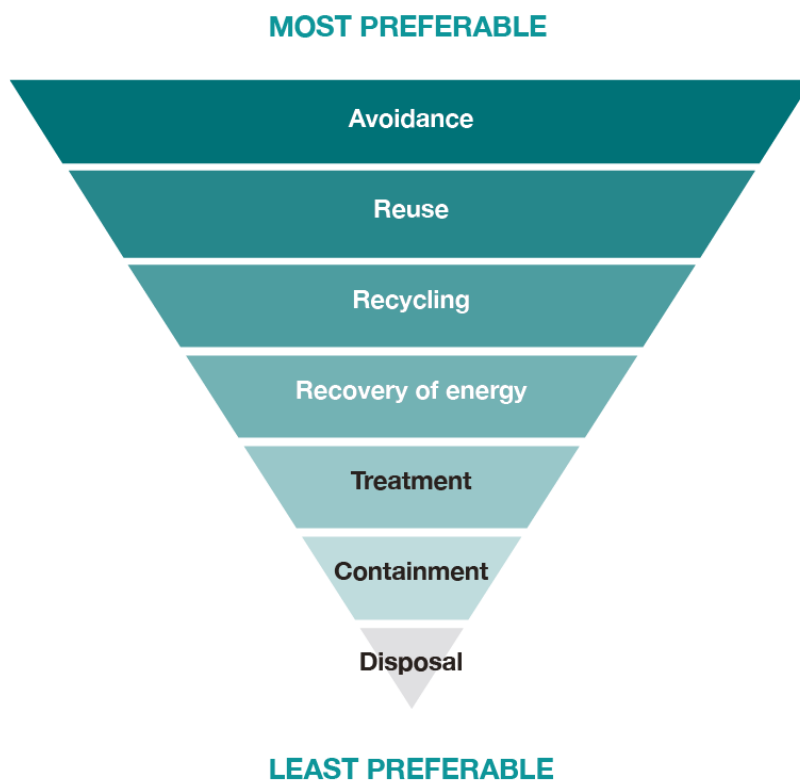


Figure 1. Waste Management Hierarchy from Council's CWRR Plan.

Options considered

Service options and corresponding analysis is contained in section 3 of the review (Attachment 1).

Options have been considered against:

- Key areas of community concern

- Existing options already in place for residents
- Potential impact on diversion targets
- Potential impact on waste charge (both quantum and equity).

In response to community feedback, the recommended options to progress under each waste stream are as follows:

Rubbish:

- A wider range of bin size options including larger 240L bins as the base service.
- Alternative additional bin options, such as 2 x 80L or additional 80L bin.
- Continuation of the re-usable nappy trial for a further 12 months.
- Investigate alternative options for users with limited storage space for shared bins (relevant to all waste streams).

Reverting to weekly rubbish collection is not recommended based on impact on diversion targets and additional cost imposed onto the majority of the community.

FOGO

- A deferral of the decision for an 'opt-out' until state guidelines released.
- Offer additional bin size options including 80L as a base bin size and 80L or 120L as the additional bin size (120L or 80L)

Glass

- Introducing another major change with the commencement of the Glass collection service from 1 July 2025 will increase the change fatigue of community.
- Deferring the glass collection service will assist the community with cost-of-living pressures and enable a stronger focus on the Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service and reduced rubbish collection frequency. The delay will also provide an opportunity to assess the impact of the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) on the glass collection service.

This suite of recommendations minimises the increases to the waste service charge for 2025/2026. There are some unavoidable increases due to the EPA landfill levy increase and rising costs of landfill disposal. However, by focusing on behaviour change to support high diversion rates, this increase will be offset by cost savings from the cheaper organic processing costs.

Advocacy

Separate to this review, the resource recovery team will identify advocacy items to be raised with state government to improve services and reduce waste generation.

Items will include but not limited to:

- The production, use and recycling of soft plastics
- Participate in the state government's Household Waste and Recycling Service Standard document consultation

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Changing from a fortnightly to a weekly Rubbish collection would increase the service cost to the community, resulting from doubling the number of rubbish trucks, fuel and labour required to increase service frequency.
- Introducing an Opt-out option for FOGO would see the cost for residents who continue to use the service increase as the main costs of trucks, fuel and labour will still apply and need to be covered. There will also be costs associated with implementing and monitoring an opt-out model which would include property and bin inspections/audits which would be more than the savings of individual properties opting out of the service. Inspections and audits are required to ensure properties are using the services the way they are intended and not putting food waste in the rubbish bin. This is also required to ensure we are meeting landfill diversion targets set by council and the state government.

Any costs associated with changes to the waste services as outlined in this report would increase the cost of providing the service and increase the waste service charge. All costs need to be covered through the Resource Recovery budget and recovered through the Waste Service Charge which is a separate charge to properties on the Rates notice.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan:

Protected & Enhanced Natural Environment - A healthier environment for future generations.

High Performing Organisation - An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.

This report also contributes to the following plans:

Councils Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan (CWRRP)

Yarra Ranges Liveable Climate Plan

RELEVANT LAW

The outcomes associated with this report relate directly to the requirements outlined in the State Government's Recycling Victoria Policy – A new Economy and are related to the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 and the Local Government Act 1989 & 2020*.

Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)

In 2021 a comprehensive community survey was undertaken to gain information about all waste services offered by Council at the time, and feedback on some proposed changes and options to those services.

People with different requirements all access these waste services. The current waste services are flexible, allowing customers to choose the bin size combination that suits their waste needs best. They can choose between a 120L or 240L FOGO and recycling bins, and an 80L or 120L rubbish bin. They may also choose to have an additional bin in any of the waste streams – the charge is for the cost of that bin and its annual collection.

There are some extra accommodations made within the waste services offered for mobility, manual handling and medical needs including:

- Wheel-in and wheel-out service (for mobility impacted residents) where in agreement with the resident and contractor, bins can be left at the property boundary and the waste collection drivers will get the bins for collection and return them to the property boundary.
- Medical needs waste service allows for a free rubbish or recycling bin (subsidised by other waste service fees) via an application process for a person with a medical condition, disability or illness that generates unavoidable additional waste.
- In some locations where the terrain is difficult or unsafe there are Common Collection Points where residents' bins can remain permanently, and the contractor will empty bins at these agreed locations.

For people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and for vision impaired people there are some limitations with the service offered. The information and supporting material associated with the waste services is only available in English.

There is some awareness to provide images as well as text in the education materials. Some other councils have added braille to their bin lids to assist visually impaired customers use the correct bins – there is more Yarra Ranges could be doing in this space.

Research from Sustainability Victoria (SV) has found the people most likely to be managing household rubbish, sorting recycling and FOGO into the correct bins are young and middle-aged women. SV has been working to target men and older men and women in their marketing campaigns for improved recycling. To date Yarra Ranges Council has had considerably more 'one size fits all' approach and not gender targeted any of the waste services communications.

However, Council has an existing advisory committee that would be a good reference point for future reviews of the waste services and of the Policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic Implications

The review supports the municipal wide service that recovers waste material, diverts waste from landfill, avoids unnecessary generation of harmful greenhouse-gas emissions and will assist in the strengthening of a circular economy and a reduction of natural resource use.

By reusing material that is currently in our economy, we see greater value in products due to a sustainable footing for growth over the long term. Economic impacts have been considered as part of finalisation of the Community Waste Plan.

Social Implications

The review outlines a fair and equitable system for allocation of costs for waste collection services provided by Council for all residential customers and optional services for non-residential customers.

Environmental Implications

Environmental impacts of the new waste collection service are outlined in detail in Section 3 of the review (Attachment 1) The six-month review demonstrates that changes to waste collection services have reduced environmental impacts by reducing waste to landfill, increasing resource recovery resulting in a reduction of the community's greenhouse gas emissions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The review (Attachment 1) considered feedback received and an analysis of customer requests and correspondence since the introduction of the service changes and Policy update.

After the completion of the service review, Council received correspondence from Council Watch which had two petitions attached. The sentiment in the petitions was similar to other feedback Council has received from Community which was to establish an opt out for FOGO and bring back weekly rubbish collections. The petition included signatures from both residents who live in Yarra Ranges and residents who did not live in the municipality.

One petition was undertaken prior to the Waste Services Policy being adopted and when changes were announced, and the other was undertaken more recently.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The six-month review has undertaken benchmarking with other council waste services, to identify options to modify Councils Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy and service delivery to maximise benefits to Yarra Ranges residents and businesses as well as achieve broader environmental goals.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The kerbside collection services provided to the Yarra Ranges community is for residential and non-residentially rated properties.

The recommendations in this report are consistent with State standards and continue to maximise diversion from landfill.

Making any major change to service provision prior to the adoption of the State Government Service Standard would increase Council risks in having to make further changes once the standards are released. Premature changes, that may need to be reversed will also create undue confusion for community.

Changing services now could also undermine the behaviour change program in place which may have flow on impacts on the recovery rates already achieved in the first six months of this service.

Financial Risks

Making changes to the current rubbish bin collection frequency and or implementing a FOGO opt-out option will have contract variations that will need further consideration, both from a waste charge quantum and equity perspective.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Resource Recovery and Waste Services Six Month Informal Review
2. Confidential Attachment

Resource Recovery and Waste Services Review June 2024



This report is an informal review of the Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy 2023 as requested by Council resolution on 8 August 2023.

The report provides an overview of community sentiment and customer experience, the effectiveness of the service with regard to environmental outcomes including the legislated diversion of waste from landfill and options for considerations for ongoing service delivery and monitoring.

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

Contents

1. What have we heard?	3
2. How are we performing?	10
3. What could we do differently?.....	12

1. What have we heard?

The introduction of the new waste service has seen an array of responses and feedback from community. During the transition period of June 2023 to February 2024, there was significant resistance to the services changes, particularly regarding the shift to fortnightly rubbish collections and the introduction of the universal FOGO bin.

The review commenced in October 2023 to align with changes to service delivery has been informed by six months of data, as well as feedback from the community. Data from the six months was then compiled and reviewed in April/May to inform the review.

This section summarises the feedback that has been received and captured through one formal petition received by Council at the time of this review and one submission to Council, customer requests, complaints, targeted follow up phone calls from our customer experience team and monitoring of social media channels.

Social Media Data

While social media isn't a voice for all of community, it does provide a snapshot of community sentiment around community matters. Social media monitoring of council posts and online interactions during the transition period demonstrated a diverse range of sentiment and commentary towards the service transition.

There was a mix of concerns expressed by residents alongside other feedback including excited, curious and supportive.

The most common feedback related to the service changes, in particular the inclusion of an opt-out option to FOGO. The breakdown of reasoning for an opt-out option included:

- The cost of the FOGO service
- The use of home disposal mechanisms such as composting and/or chickens
- Rubbish collection frequency and overfilled bins leading to littering.
- Residents who have reduced their landfill volumes and advocated for an even more infrequent collection.
- A perceived lack of the need for the FOGO service.
- The concern that community was not given a choice about the new waste services overall.

Capacity and odour were main reasons provided for wanting a weekly rubbish service.

Since the implementation of service changes in October 2023, social media responses by residents have decreased substantially, but the response to the new service remains mixed.

Community Petition

A petition received by Council on 14 May 2024, garnered 459 responses and requested:

- return to weekly rubbish collections, and
- an opt-out option for FOGO

Data presented to Council at the 14 May 2024 Council Meeting associated with the SurveyMonkey survey (undertaken by residents) included;

- Residents want weekly rubbish collection
- The survey supports residents’ rights to Opt-out of the FOGO service
- 83 percent said they would support an Opt-out option
- 81 percent would like to see the weekly rubbish collection reintroduced, which increased to 92 percent for households with five (5) or more people
- 85 percent of people saw little or no reduction in general waste, which increased to 90 percent when considering larger households.

While the survey was not undertaken by Council, for completeness this data has been considered as part of the overall mix of feedback. Council officers do not have access to the full survey or its data to analyse any further.

Submission to Council

One submission has been received by Council in April 2024 which requested reverting to weekly rubbish collection on the basis that taking out food waste from rubbish bins removes mass but very little volume.

In addition, since the implementation of the new service Council has received several public questions to Council Meeting, seeking clarification on elements of the service and waste collection.

Service Requests

Collection services are provided to over 65,000 properties.

Service data has been collected during the waste transition period and after the service has come into effect. Waste related customer requests increased significantly during the transition period when compared with the same period in 2022-2023.

Table 1 shows the separation of request types. This data shows that while there was an increase in FOGO related requests, general requests (unrelated to FOGO) also increased. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of general request types and compares the data through the service transition phases.

Table 1. Number of council requests

Request types	Oct 22 to Mar 23	Oct 23 to Mar 24
Excluding FOGO categories (This covers all categories - Waste, Recycling, Litter, Hard waste bundled branches, landfill.)	10,712	11,569
FOGO Liner requests		899
FOGO Requests		3,381
TOTAL Requests	10,712	15,849

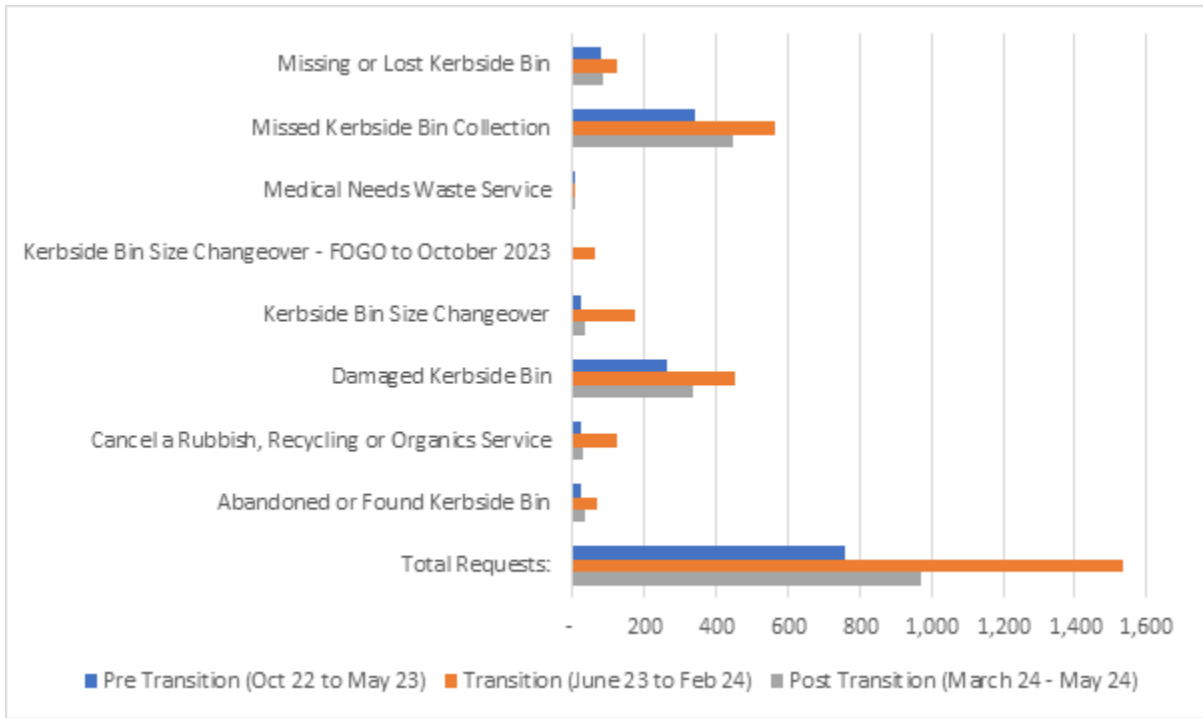


Figure 1. Average customer requests by category of the pre-transition to post-transition periods, excluding requests for FOGO liners.

Since the service changes came into effect, there has been a substantial decline in general requests, trending toward pre transition numbers as shown in Figure 1.

Customer Complaints

Formal complaints relating to waste services recorded by the Customer Experience team are shown in Figure 2. Recorded complaints are those that have escalated to a formal complaint, beyond the normal action of a request. This figure shows a decline in formal complaints since the service change implementation and the monthly average trending downward.

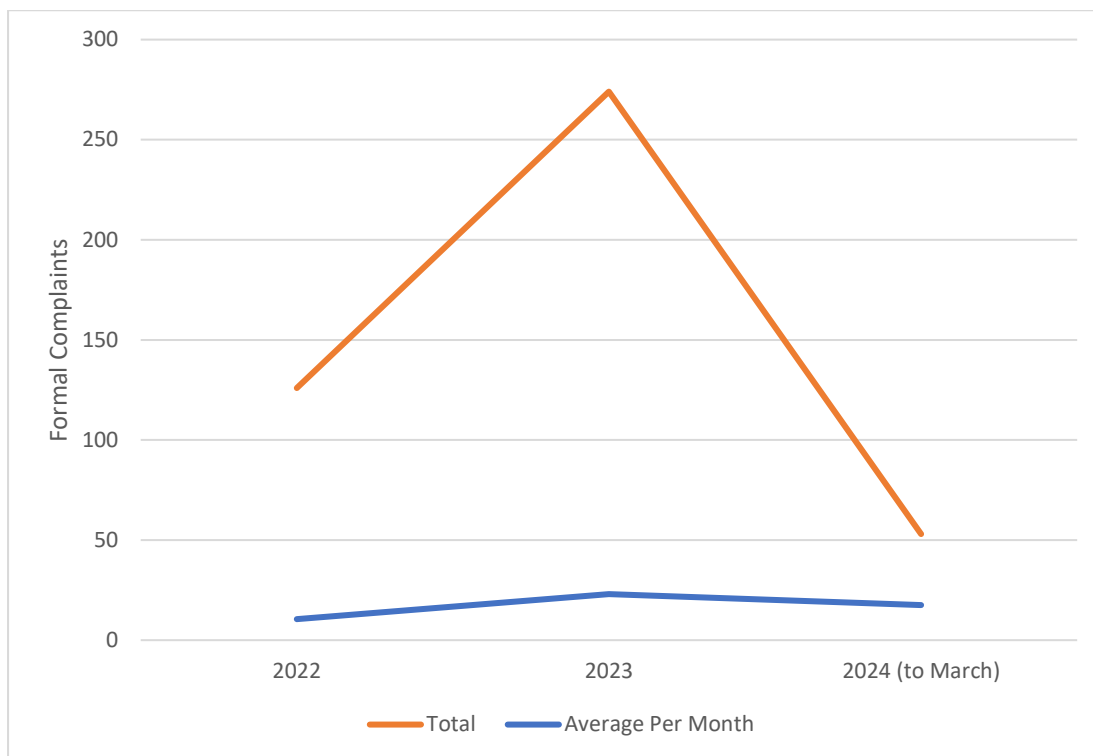


Figure 2. Formal complaints relating to waste services.

At the time of the service transition, there was a significant increase in enquiries regarding service changes. Whilst the number of calls received is known, at the time call logs did not separate complaints from general enquiries or requests for service changes.

This data will continue to be monitored and consideration given to how the topic of a particular enquiry can be tracked ongoing to support future reviews.

Table 2. Total calls received in 2022/2023 and 2023/24 relating to waste enquiries.

<u>Incoming calls</u>	2022/2023	2023/2024
Calls for general waste enquiry to the contact centre	12,874	21,022
Calls for general waste and FOGO/new service enquiries to the waste admin team	2,127	2,971
Calls for FOGO/new service enquiries to the FOGO transition team (temporary in 2023/24)		1,401

Customer data and community sentiment show two key points of interest for different reasons, including:

- the return of weekly rubbish collections, and;
- an opt-out option for FOGO.

Other Customer Feedback – Medical, Nappies and Non-Residential

Medical needs waste services

Historically an additional medical needs rubbish bin has been available to all residential customers at an additional charge. In 2023, 32 customers used this service.

During the service transition, 150 people contacted Council expressing concerns about disposing of medical waste. Follow up phone calls after the fortnightly rubbish service commenced revealed that the majority of people that expressed concern were able to manage and no longer felt the need for an additional bin.

Many metropolitan councils provide a free or subsidised rubbish bin for medical needs. On 30 November 2023, Yarra Ranges Council CEO approved an amendment to the *Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy* to accommodate medical needs. This includes the provision for an additional rubbish or recycling bin, at no charge, for a residential property where additional waste disposal is required due to a medical condition, disability or chronic illness upon receipt of a medical certificate.

Since the introduction of the fortnightly rubbish service, 29 properties have applied for the new medical needs waste service. (This includes some of the original 32 customers who used the service pre-transition). The accessibility of this service is crucial for community members who rely on additional support from the waste service and is in line with Council's Equity Access and Inclusion Strategy. The cost of providing this service is minimal in the context of the broader waste services provided.

Waste services for households with children in nappies

Yarra Ranges registers 1,825 new births on average annually. In 2021 there were 9,298 children aged 0-4 (ABS) likely to use nappies in Yarra Ranges.

Having participated in a Sustainability Victoria funded cross-council project, providing information and education has been recommended over financial incentives to achieve behaviour change on what alternatives are available to assist in supporting new parents. The nappy workshops run in 2023 were well received with 70 attendees from Yarra Ranges. Each participant received a free trial pack of reusable nappies and nappy alternatives information.

Following the introduction of the new service, Council's Maternal and Child Health Services have reported no feedback or requests from the community for additional rubbish bins for children in nappies.

Non-Residential Rubbish Services

Non-Residential customers include – Commercial traders, public facilities and any property that is not rated as Residential.

Non-residential customers are able to opt-in to use councils waste collection services or use private waste collection services. Before the service changes, when using councils service, non-residential properties could opt for up to two weekly collections of rubbish or equivalent for remote areas for an additional charge. Since October 2023, rubbish bin collection has shifted to fortnightly, reducing frequency of the rubbish bin to up to 25 per cent of the former service plus the inclusion of the weekly FOGO collection for the same waste charge. A weekly FOGO bin collection is provided for the organic material.

Feedback from traders has been mixed with some smaller businesses being able to manage with the change where as others advising that the new service did not meet their needs, the FOGO bins would get too heavy, health concerns regarding cumulation of rubbish. This reduction in service has prompted some businesses to switch to private waste services.

Feedback from non-residential customers, primarily businesses and organisations, such as schools, has indicated that:

- A 240L rubbish bin is preferable to the 120L bin due to fortnightly collection.
- A 120L FOGO bin is preferable for the additional bin as weights often exceed the 75kg allowance and this size helps to avoid manual handling risks, including on challenging terrain.

Service Data

To gain a greater understanding of how resident feedback aligns with how the service is actually operating, analysis was undertaken on bin capacity and contamination.

Bin Capacity

Issues relating to bin capacity since the introduction of the fortnightly service have been investigated. Table 3 highlights data from periods 2022/23 and 2023/24 which provides a comparative data set. Whilst the number of overfilled rubbish bins has increased, the occurrence in comparison with the total number of services remains very low (0.01% to 0.03%).

Table 3. Reported issues for rubbish collection

Rubbish Weekly Issues Data	October '22 to March '23	October '23 to March '24
Total services	61,556	31,113
Bin overfilled	10	11
Bin too heavy	0	0
Major contamination	2	0
Minor contamination (emptied)	2	3
Resident refilled bin	1	1
Waste stuck in bin	6	3
Total reported issues	20	18

In addition to the weekly reported data, Council's waste contractor conducted a specific audit in April 2024 over a two-week period across the municipality to establish how many bin lids were not fully closed for all collection service streams as an indicator of overfilling.

All bins that were not fully closed were recorded into two categories.

1. Bins that were full but not overfull (bin lids only slightly ajar).
2. Overfilled bins where the bin lid was fully open, or the bin lid was shut but bin contents strewn around bin at the time of collection.

The results indicate that 1 in every 115 bins presented was overfilled. Of the 65,675 bins collected:

- 417 were full (lids slightly ajar) – (0.63%)
- 569 were Overfull – (0.87%)

Combining both overfilling metrics shows that 1.5% of the total bins collected could be considered overfilled.

This bin capacity information can be collected regularly and be used to inform targeted communication opportunities for properties that repeatedly present overfull bins.

Traders and commercial businesses have raised that the fortnightly 120L rubbish bin collection is not sufficient and larger bin capacity would be preferred. The 240L FOGO bin also creates concerns as a full FOGO bin cannot be lifted and exceeds the trucks lifting capacity and impacts the safety of staff in putting bins out. Smaller 120L bin required as additional bins.

Some Multi Unit Developments (MUD's) are having difficulty with bin storage and placement for collections due to large bin numbers and limited space.

2. How are we performing?

An assessment of the environmental success of the new service has been considered with regards to State legislated and Council Policy waste targets.

Council's current position with respect to these targets are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Performance against State and Council Targets

State and Council Targets	Baseline to October 2023	Post Service from October 2023
State diversion from landfill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 72% by 2025 • 80% by 2030 	46% Diversion Rate	73% Diversion Rate (27% increase)
Council diversion from landfill: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% by 2025 • 90% by 2030 		
State waste generation reduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% per capita by 2030 	347kg	244kg (29% reduction)
Council waste generation reduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% per capita by 2030 		
State organics to landfill reduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% reduction by 2025 • 50% reduction by 2030 	45% Organics to Landfill	32% Organics to Landfill 14% reduction to date
Council organics to landfill reduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% by 2025 • 60% by 2030 		

Prior to the service change, the diversion rate of recoverable materials (e.g. recyclables and organics) for the kerbside collection services was 46 per cent, substantially below State and Council targets.

In the six months since the universal weekly FOGO service and change to fortnightly rubbish collection, the diversion rate has increased to 73 per cent, just below the 2025 Council target. All Council's calculations are based on measurements using weight as the industry standard. (Trucks are weighed at disposal sites and collection contracts are formulated around weight, not volume).

The reduction in the amount of rubbish disposed per household and a corresponding increase in the recovery of organic material is shown in Figure 3 and Table 7.

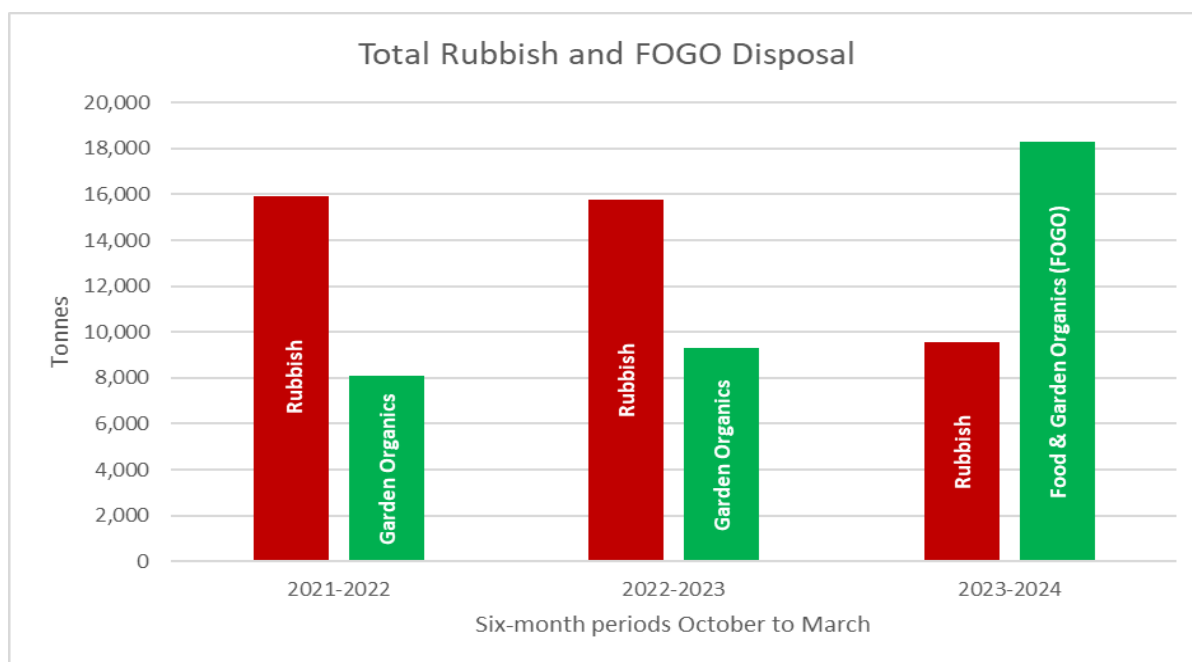


Figure 3. Comparison of rubbish and FOGO disposal rates over three consecutive periods.

Table 7. Collection of FOGO and rubbish before and after service changes.

	Oct 22 to Mar 23 (Tonnes)	Oct 23 to Mar 24 (Tonnes)	Change
Total amount of FOGO collected (compared previous year Garden Organics)	9,280	18,317	97% increase
Total amount of rubbish collected	15,780	9,532	40% reduction

This data shows that the changes to services has reduced waste to landfill, alongside increasing recovery of organic material. It can be reasonably inferred that the reduction in rubbish is a result of both the removal of organic material into the FOGO stream and behaviour changes resulting from training and education as part of the service transition.

Contamination

Contamination rates impact diversion targets and therefore can be used as an indicator of the gap to meet diversion targets. Contamination rates of garden organics material prior to the service changes was less than three percent. It was originally anticipated that the contamination rate would rise to 10 per cent following inclusion of food waste given experiences of other councils.

Bin composition audits undertaken in May 2024 at the FOGO receival company showed a 0.49% contamination rate, which is very low.

3. What could we do differently?

Council currently provides the following bin options for its kerbside services:

- Fortnightly Rubbish 80L or 120L
- Fortnightly Recycling 120L or 240L
- Weekly FOGO 120L or 240L

Currently, additional bins are restricted to the largest size within a particular category. Existing rebates and incentives currently provided are:

- Free additional rubbish or recycling bin for medical needs waste
- Up to four free recycling bins for schools (including FOGO from July 2024)
- A reusable nappy education program
- Free or subsidised bins to community groups and events through Council's small grants.

Overall, the sentiment from the community highlights the need to consider a wider range of bin size options. In response to this aspect of community feedback, one prompt change could be to offer the choice of any size from the existing range, with respective adjustments to the fees and charges.

Cost implications of changing the service level have been estimated but will need a formal contract variation response from Council's collection contractor.

The following table summarises the key areas of concern raised by community, existing options, alternative options and considerations for any service change. Further detail is added for each waste stream after the table.

Table 8. Summary of options for consideration based on areas of community concern.

Key Area of Concern	Existing Options	Alternative Options	Considerations for Change
<p>Return to a weekly rubbish collection</p> <p>Weekly Rubbish Collection/ Overfilled Bins</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 40</p>	<p>Existing options 80L or 120L.</p> <p>Pay for an additional 120L bin, collected fortnightly.</p>	<p>1. Return to a weekly service at 120L</p>	<p>1. Diversion targets not able to be met. Significant contract/waste implications and inequity for those embracing existing service. Contract variation would have an increase in cost per household <i>Not recommended</i></p>
	<p>Exemption for all waste services for properties over 4ha.</p>	<p>2. Return to a weekly service but with smaller 80L bin</p>	<p>2. Would require large scale bin change over and therefore contract variation. Significant contract/financial implications from reverting to weekly. Some impact to diversion targets, but less than (1). Contract variation would have an increase in cost per household <i>Not recommended</i>.</p>
		<p>3. Offer an opt-in weekly service (user pays)</p>	<p>3. While some higher cost would be consistent with disincentivising rubbish disposal, collection costs would be spread over those opting in, so will be individually significant. <i>Not recommended</i></p>
		<p>4. Larger alternative bin sizes (240L).</p>	<p>4. 240L bins encourages higher rubbish volumes through disposal of larger items so some impact to diversion target may occur, but likely minor given scale of current community feedback and FOGO & recycling options. Policy updates would be required to reflect new fees and charges with minimal likely contract/financial implications. Contract variation would likely have an increase in cost per household if take up the larger bin size <i>Recommend progressing</i></p>

Key Area of Concern	Existing Options	Alternative Options	Considerations for Change
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative additional bin options, such as 2 x 80L or additional 80L bin 	<p>Additional bins have predominantly been the larger bin size. Include all bin sizes as additional options – to be costed accordingly.</p>
<p>FOGO Opt Out</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 41</p>	<p>Existing options 120L or 240L bin sizes</p> <p>Pay for additional 240L bin</p> <p>Exemption for all waste services for properties over 4ha.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative base Bin Size (80L) Alternative additional bin size (120L or 80L) Offer an unregulated opt-out option Offer an opt-out option based on property size Offer an option - based on a conditional application process 	<p>1 & 2. Budget/Policy updates to reflect new fees and charges with minimal contract/financial implications. <i>Contract variation would be required for inclusion in 80L bin size for FOGO Recommend progressing</i></p> <p>3, 4, 5. Significant contract/financial implications. Risk given the State Service Standards not yet finalised that may not align with Council decision & cost of monitoring and managing the opt-outs would cost more than the savings of properties not using the service. <i>Recommend delay decision until after State Service Standards are finalised</i></p> <p>In addition, progress toward organics to landfill targets will be compromised under option 3 & 4 because no alternative organics disposal offered. <i>Recommend defer decision until after State Service Standard is finalised.</i></p>
<p>Multi-Unit Developments</p>	<p>Standard Service Options or Exemption through Planning permit with Minimum waste service charge</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Shared bin usage agreements. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Budget/Policy updates to reflect new fees and charges with minimal contract/financial implications. Will be based on site specific requirements. New provision type for Council rates. <i>Recommend progressing</i>
<p>Glass collection</p>	<p>Continue with 1 July 2025 commencement date</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Defer to 1 July 2026 commencement date 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal financial/contract implications, positive outlook for cost-of-living pressures. <i>Recommend delaying the commencement of the glass service until 1 July 2026</i>

Key Area of Concern	Existing Options	Alternative Options	Considerations for Change
Disposable nappies	Order an additional rubbish bin (charge applies)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A program aimed at addressing barriers, use of Reusable nappy products and the options available for using disposable nappy recycling services 2. Use of a private disposable nappy recycling service 	1 & 2. Any consideration of subsidising this additional service would increase the waste charge for residents not requiring this service.
Non- Residential service (commercial traders & public facilities)	Order additional rubbish bins (charges apply)	Provide a 240L rubbish bin option	Contract variation discussion to be undertaken to consider larger 240L rubbish bin

Rubbish

In response to community feedback, the recommended options to progress are a wider range of bin size options, (240L) and all bin sizes (80L, 120L & 240L to be available as additional bins.

It is also recommended to continue the re-usable nappy trial for another 12 months, and continue education aimed at addressing barriers regarding use of Reusable nappy products and private disposable nappy recycling services.

To work on a process and system to allow for shared usage agreements for larger Multi-Unit Developments for all bin collection streams.

- The fortnightly rubbish collection frequency has been a key factor in progress toward State targets.
- Most households have responded positively to the current system, and alternative bin options are available for those needing extra capacity.
- Odour emanating from organic matter is currently addressed through weekly FOGO collection. The resident cohort who remains unsatisfied are generally those with babies and disposable nappies.
- Some households with residents with medical conditions generate more waste or recycling due to packaging from management and treatment as a result of additional packaging. They have the option of a free additional bin (Rubbish or Recycling) as part of the Free Medical service provided by council.
- The following items if considered will all have additional costs:
 - A re-introduction of a weekly rubbish collection – going from a fortnightly collection to weekly will mean double the trucks and resources to collect. Providing two bins to all properties would also increase the truck and resource numbers. This will also be compounded by increased disposal costs for increased waste including landfill levy increases by the State Government
 - Additional bins for those requiring additional bin space – the additional costs are based on provision of bin, disposal of additional waste and additional time/labour and trucks for the additional collections.
 - Extension to the Reusable Nappy Workshops

Swapping Fogo and Rubbish collection frequencies so FOGO is collected fortnightly, and Rubbish is collected weekly will have serious impacts on bin odour in FOGO as food will be sitting around for two weeks. As a result, some food will then end up back in the rubbish bin and increase landfill disposal. This will have a significant impact on recovery rates and waste reduction targets.

- A 240L rubbish bin may be appropriate for shared premises like multi-unit developments (MUDs) where the bin storage is challenging, Non-Residential properties (commercial traders and public facilities).
- Including a 240L bin for residential properties would increase the risk of larger items being included in the bins through property cleanouts. Continuing the option

for additional 120L bins for residential properties is the preferred method for properties that require additional capacity.

- Some residents yet to have the Red lid change over occur, there have been over 90 per cent replaced and this will continue to be worked on.

Shared Usage Agreements

Council's Policy does not currently allow bin sharing. Other councils offer this option to residents in multi-unit developments (MUDs) and non-residential customers, where bins storage space poses challenges. Bin storage will become even more critical when a kerbside glass service is introduced.

Discussions have taken place with MUDs and retirement villages about removing bins, but individual fees and charges still apply. Exploring shared bin usage agreements to distribute service costs among property owners requires further investigation.

FOGO

In response to community feedback, the recommended option to progress at this stage is a smaller bin size option of an 80L bin and all bin sizes (80L, 120L & 240L) to be available as additional bins.

The State Services Standards for waste have been recently released for consultation. The draft standards include consideration of a FOGO opt out for properties that have systems in place to manage FOGO on the property. Yarra Ranges will need to consider the guidelines and the impact on the waste charge. At this stage it is recommended that Council hold off on a decision on the possibility of a FOGO opt-out until state guidelines are finalised. In the meantime, contract variation pricing on property opt-out scenarios will be sought and subsequent impact on waste charge modelled in preparation for a state position.

Under section 3.1 of the current Waste Policy, properties over four (4) hectares can currently seek an exemption for entire Council waste services, not limited to FOGO, if the owner/occupier:

- Has an alternative method for disposing of residential waste that complies with EPA regulations and does not cause a nuisance.
- Aligns with the resource recovery goals outlined in the Recycling Victoria a New Economy Policy 2020.
- Satisfies Council's requirements.

Currently, 16 rural residential properties have exemptions from kerbside services. Additionally, 98 multi-unit residential properties have private waste collection services which is stated in the approved Planning Permit for each development. These properties do not use or pay for the kerbside bin collection component but pay the minimum Waste Service charge as per Council's policy.

- The dispersed and diverse communities of Yarra Ranges differ significantly from other metropolitan councils, impacting waste service delivery, especially in rural areas. While 70 per cent of residents live in urban areas (expected to rise to 85% by 2030), this constitutes only three per cent (3%) of the municipal land area.
- Introducing an unconditional opt-out option for the FOGO service (i.e. if a resident does not need to demonstrate they have alternate & satisfactory onsite processing options) is likely to impact diversion rates; however, after the initial six month period of the new service, it remains unclear at which thresholds these rates will be affected.
- If a high number of exemptions are granted, FOGO disposal costs will decrease, but not necessarily proportionately to the service numbers. This discrepancy arises because a significant portion of the cost is associated with the collection service and the distance from rural properties to the FOGO receival facility.
- There would be management and monitoring requirements for opt-out properties which would cost more than the savings of properties not using the service. This cost would be more than the savings of individual properties opting out of the service. Inspections and audits are required to ensure properties are using the services the way they are intended and not putting food waste in the rubbish bin. This is also required to ensure we are meeting landfill diversion targets set by council and the state government.
- Notably, composting a tonne of organic waste is currently 27 per cent cheaper than landfill disposal.

- Alternative to an application process, the Policy could be revised to exempt certain property categories, such as those greater than four (4) hectares. This would reduce administrative costs but would not eliminate collection charges. Notably, there is no evidence correlating property size with appropriate organic waste disposal and this approach would prevent smaller properties from opting out.
- Knox and Port Phillip Councils already offer an “opt-out” option for their FOGO service. These councils are significantly smaller in geographical size and don’t service rural communities.
- If Council adopts changes before the release and approval of the State Service Standard, it could result in substantial costs and confusion if additional modifications to opt-out provisions become necessary once those standards take effect.
- A FOGO opt-out would see all properties continuing with the service subsidising the cost of properties that opt-out. This is due to contract costs for vehicles, labour and fuel still required for trucks needing to travel past all properties.
- A smaller 80L FOGO bin choice could be provided (with proportionally lower cost) for those residents who feel they generate a lower volume, or have alternate (onsite) processing means.

The Following items if considered will all have additional costs:

- A FOGO opt-out would see all properties continuing with the service subsidising the cost of properties that opt-out.
- Administration of an opt-out arrangement which would include property and bin inspections

Recycling

Our recycling service has remained the same throughout this transition period and at this stage there are no proposed changes to this service.

- Given the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) only commenced in November 2023, it is recommended to hold off on any changes until direct reduction data on recycling figures are confirmed. The introduction of the Glass service will also impact volumes in the recycling bin when collected in the separate bin. It is proposed to wait before acting on any service change.

Glass

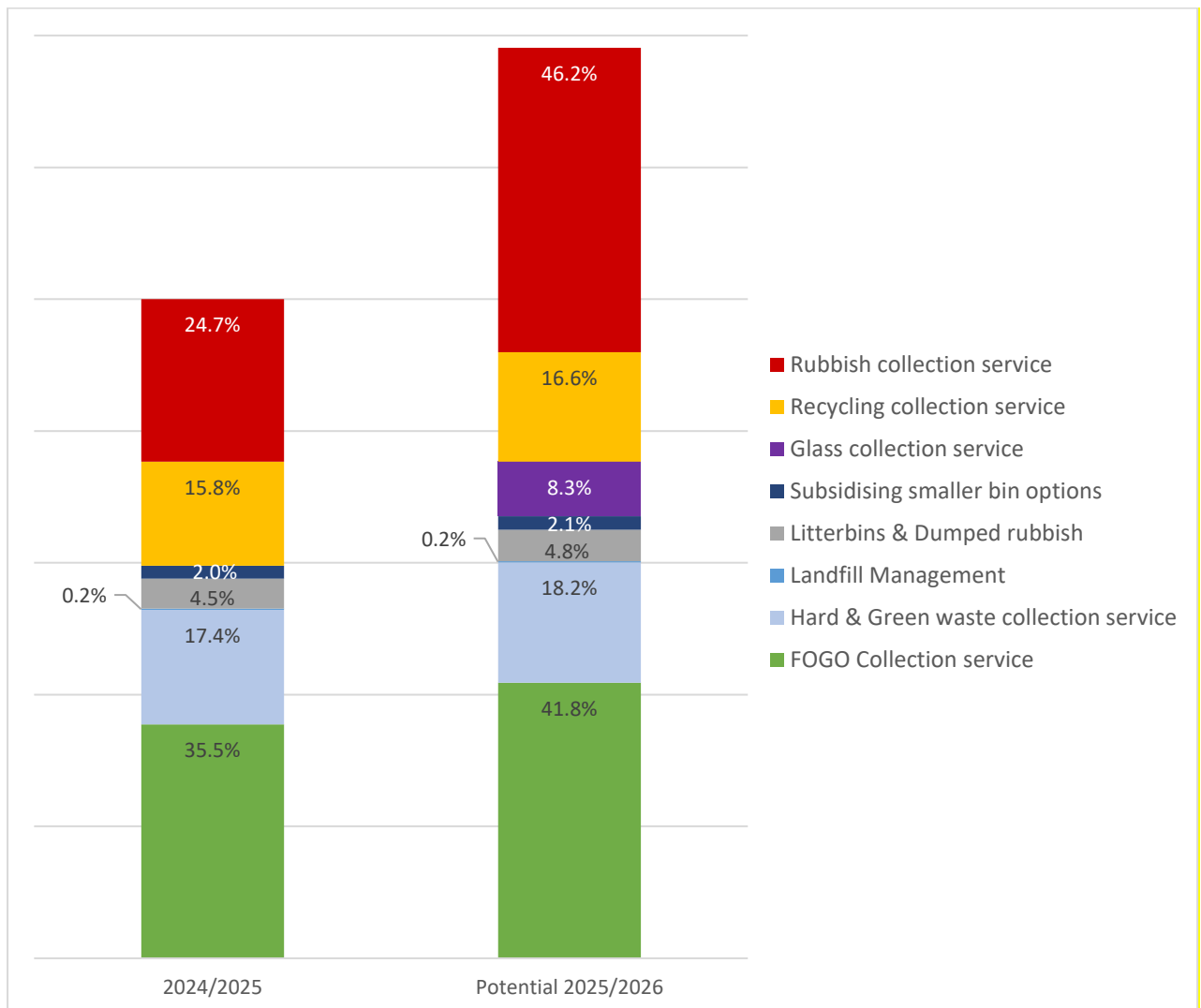
To support a successful implementation of a new kerbside glass collection, it is recommended to defer commencement of the service until 1 July 2026.

- The Recycling Victoria: A New Economy Policy requires all Victorian Councils to offer glass collection by 2027. In June 2023, Council adopted plans for glass service implementation in the 2025/2026 year.
- At the same time, the State Governments Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) commenced in November 2023 with its full impact yet to be determined.

- Council's ten-year Kerbside Bin Collection Contract with JJ Richards (from 2023) mandates glass service implementation in the 2025/26 financial year. JJ Richards requires an 8-month lead time for glass service vehicle procurement, and bin production (68,000 glass bins).
- Due to cost-of-living pressures and the introduction of Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO), it is recommended to delay commencement of glass collection until July 2026.
- Consultation with JJ Richards in February 2024 revealed:

Glass collection rates are contractually defined for periods up to and including a 2025/2026 introduction. If a glass service is not introduced in June 2026, a contract variation is needed to write off bin and truck capital value.

- Glass bins will be amortised over 36 months, trucks amortised over the contract term.
- A delay would increase 2025/2026 rates by around 7.5 per cent, plus standard Rise & Fall (based on CPI).



Confidential Item

REVISED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Report Author: Coordinator Community Engagement
 Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services
 Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

Council endorsed the current Community Engagement Policy (the Policy) on 27 April 2021.

Since adopting the Policy, Council has planned and delivered over 240 formal community engagement projects, aligning with the Policy. The lessons learned from these projects, feedback from the community, internal focus groups and consultation with advisory groups, have informed the revised Community Engagement Policy.

Council approved the release of the Draft Revised Community Engagement Policy (the Draft) for public engagement on 26 March 2024. The draft was open for feedback between 27 March and 5 May 2024. Feedback was considered and changes were made where relevant.

Council officers are now seeking consideration by Council to approve and adopt the revised Community Engagement Policy.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve and adopt the revised Community Engagement Policy.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

The current policy was endorsed by Council on 27 April 2021. At the Council meeting on 26 March 2024, Council endorsed the public exhibition of the draft revised Community Engagement Policy for approximately six weeks, ending on 5 May 2024.

DISCUSSION

Purpose

This report provides an overview of proposed changes made to the current Policy, based on community feedback and officer recommendations, that have informed the draft policy for Council consideration.

The outcome of the policy revisions is a clearer Policy for the organisation and community, outlining Council's commitment to meaningful, transparent, and appropriate community engagement.

The draft revised Policy meets Council's legislative requirement under the *Local Government Act 2020* s.3.1.55.1 stating, 'A Council must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy.' It also strengthens Council's commitment to meaningful, transparent, and appropriate community engagement, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Council in seeking community input to inform decision-making.

Background

In the lead-up to the development of the new Council Plan and the 2024 Council elections, the lessons from the last three years of Policy implementation and project delivery have been considered and addressed in the draft revised Policy.

The key changes to the draft revised Policy include:

- Addition of clear roles and responsibilities for implementing the policy.
- Clarity on the definition of community engagement at Yarra Ranges and when Council will conduct formal processes.
- Highlighting the role of community engagement in Council decision-making.
- Stronger and clearer alignment with legislative requirements.
- Removal of the process detail for planning and delivering community engagement. Related practical guidelines and information have been developed and are available for Council officers internally.

Following community feedback during March and April 2024, additional changes have been made to the revised draft (Attachment 1), including:

- Including the role of communication to support community awareness of engagement opportunities.
- Introducing a commitment to improved transparency on how decisions on planning community engagement and resource allocation are reported to the community.

- Including people experiencing homelessness as a cohort of people to consider when planning engagement.
- Highlighting the role of continuous improvement, training and capability building within Council to improve practice and outcomes for the community.

Recommended option and justification

Officers recommend that Council approves and adopts the revised Community Engagement Policy as per Attachment 1 to meet the *Local Government Act 2020* requirements.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

There are no immediate financial implications from considering the revised policy.

However, as the policy reinforces Council's commitment to meaningful community engagement, departments must consider allocating sufficient engagement budgets to identified projects.

In addition, due to high levels of community interest in Council's formal engagement activities, it is recommended that teams quantify the resourcing, excluding officer time, expended in communications and engagement, in their reporting.

Also, to support the commitment to improve the measuring of the effectiveness and impact of Council's engagement activities, resources will be allocated from existing budgets to conduct an external evaluation of identified community engagement projects in the next financial year.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

The Policy contributes to each of the five strategic objective(s) in the Council Plan by ensuring that Council decisions in all areas are informed by the community where relevant.

The specific action in the Council Plan relates to:

High Performing Organisation: Improve the community's connection with Council through more meaningful and inclusive community engagement and innovative approaches to communication.

No regional, state or national plans and policies apply to the recommendation in this report.

RELEVANT LAW

The *Local Government Act 2020* s.3.1.55.1 states 'A Council must adopt and maintain a community engagement policy.' This review will ensure that the policy is being maintained and meeting the needs of the organisation and the community.

The review had a gender lens applied and the Community Engagement team worked closely with the Gender Equity team to ensure relevant legislation is reflected in the updated policy.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

This policy supports the organisation to plan and deliver more meaningful and transparent engagement practises across Council. Effective community engagement builds trust and strengthens Council's relationship with the community, assists with determining community priorities and supports better decision-making.

There are no direct economic or environmental impacts associated with this policy.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Input into the revised policy came from the following phases of engagement:

Phase one:

- Benchmarking and research into industry standards.
- Consultation with the Disability Advisory Committee.
- A workshop with the Youth Advisory Group.
- Three internal focus groups with participants ranging from high users to those who had never applied the Policy.
- Community sentiment from community engagement projects and conversations with officers during the 36 Community Engagement Roadshow activations in 2023.
- Professional expertise within the Community Engagement team, considering lessons learnt from supporting over 240 projects since April 2021.

Phase two:

The draft revised policy was available for feedback from the community on the Shaping Yarra Ranges web page from 27 March to 5 May 2024.

Ten submissions were received during the engagement period. The reach of the communication, interactions with the activities, submissions and responses are

compiled in Attachment 2 – Engagement Summary Report for Draft Revised Community Engagement Policy.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The review of the Policy demonstrates strong continuous improvement. The review looked at the implementation of the Policy since its adoption in 2021. Officers from all directorates were consulted regarding how the Policy could be improved to better support meaningful and transparent community engagement practice at Yarra Ranges.

The review aligns with the strategic work the Community Engagement team is undertaking to improve community engagement outcomes across the organisation. The associated Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit will be released internally in 2024 to strengthen the implementation of the Policy and related practices by all departments.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Since the beginning of 2023, there has been increased scrutiny of Council's community engagement activities by some sections of the community. The changes in this revised policy aim to increase community understanding and support Council with clear roles and responsibilities related to formal community engagement.

Community expectations may be managed more effectively with support from the Community Engagement team and all identified levels of Council, to consistently apply the policy and improve related practices across the organisation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Revised Community Engagement Policy
2. Engagement Summary Report for Draft Revised Community Engagement Policy



Yarra Ranges **Council**

Community Engagement Policy 2024–2028

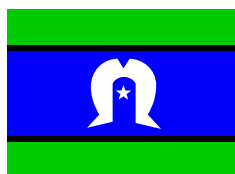
Meaningful and Transparent
Page 57

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region.

We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



Revision history

Version	Date	Summary of revisions
2021 - 1.0	April 2021	Community Engagement Policy (Original)
2023 - 1.0	2024	Updates include the addition of key roles and responsibilities and how community engagement contributes to Council decision making. Some language and concepts have been simplified. Endorsed by Council (Insert date)

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a minor update to legislation or a website link, which does not have a material impact. Any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

Effective Date: Insert date endorsed by Council

Review Date: June 2028

Contents

Introduction	5
Purpose	6
Scope	6
Levels of responsibility	7
What is community engagement?	8
How does community engagement contribute to Council decision making?	10
Community engagement principles and commitments	12
When Council will engage	14
Who Council will engage	15
How Council will engage	16
Deciding the level of engagement	16
Selecting the engagement approach	17
Deliberative engagement	17
Participatory engagement	18
Section 223 process	18
Determining the tools for engagement	19
What does consistency look like?	19
Informing the community of engagement outcomes	20
Evaluation and performance	20
Legislative context	21
Local Government Act 2020	21
Gender Equality Act 2020	21
Charter of Human Rights	21
Other relevant legislation	21
Relationship with Council Plan	22
Other relevant Council policies	23
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	23
Privacy and Health Information Policy	23
Definitions	24
Appendix 1: Extracts from relevant legislation	25

Introduction

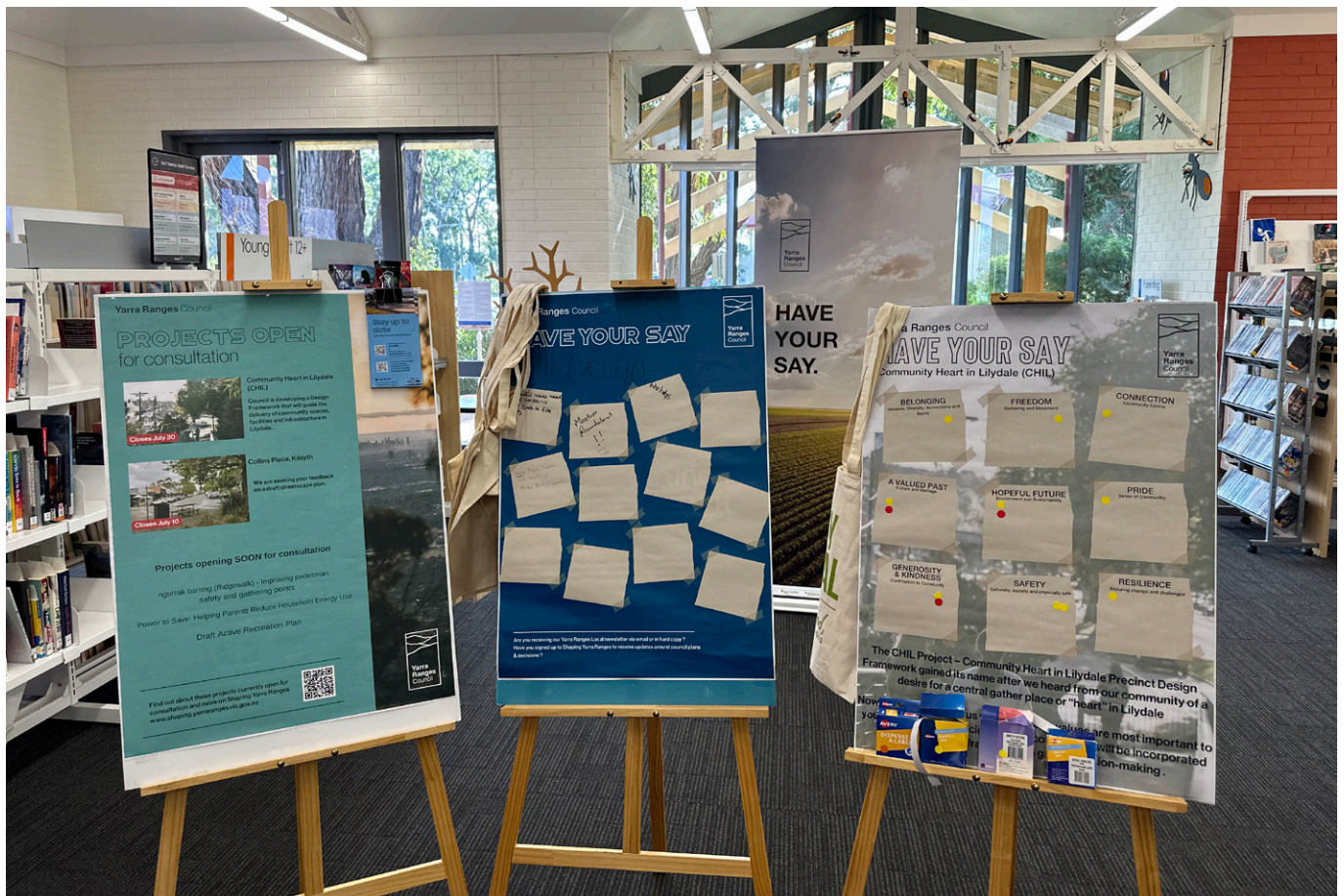
Community Engagement at Yarra Ranges Council includes a wide range of activities aimed at involving the community in Council's decision-making processes.

While community engagement is a legislative requirement under the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act), it also plays a critical role in ensuring Council decisions reflect the needs and expectations of the community and other stakeholders. Meaningful community engagement provides valuable information and insights, to assist Council when making decisions and helps to make sure our plans meet the current and future needs of our community.

Yarra Ranges is the largest local government area in Melbourne with over 55 townships and almost 160,000 people. We are made up of many varied and diverse communities, which is why we love living and working here, but this can also make hearing from all those who want to get involved challenging at times. We are committed to constantly reflecting on and improving the ways we hear from our communities and embedding a culture committed to meaningful engagement with our communities.

This policy is our commitment to engaging in a meaningful way about decisions that affect our community. It also demonstrates the value we place on our community's feedback and their right to be involved in the Council's decision-making processes.

We want to acknowledge community, key stakeholders and council staff who provided input into both the original and revised version of the Policy.



Purpose

The purpose of the Policy is to outline Yarra Ranges Council's commitment to meaningful community engagement and how we put into practice the community engagement principles prescribed by the Act.

The Policy:

- ✓ reflects the value we place on our community's feedback and their right to be involved in Council's decision-making processes.
- ✓ guides council staff responsible for planning, designing and implementing formal community engagement, to hear from the community and inform decisions of Council.
- ✓ promotes a coordinated, accessible and consistent approach to community engagement.
- ✓ is related to formal community engagement processes that are purposeful, intentional and planned.
- ✓ outlines how Council will keep the community informed about the outcomes of processes.
- ✓ aims to improve community confidence about the processes involved in providing feedback to Council.
- ✓ details the commitment to gender equity, diversity and inclusion by valuing diverse voices and understanding that people in our community are impacted by Council decisions in different ways.

Scope

The Policy applies to the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of formal community engagement activities delivered by Council.

It does not apply to consultation activities prescribed in other legislation, such as those related to planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments, governed by the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The Policy outlines the considerations behind who, when and how we engage, and supports Council as an organisation to apply a coordinated and consistent approach, keeping community at the centre of our decision making.

Complying with the Policy is the shared responsibility of all employees, Councillors, contractors and external consultants acting on behalf of Council.



Levels of responsibility

Who	Roles and responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the outcomes of the community engagement, together with other key information when making decisions. • Champion the commitment and principles of engagement through leadership, modelling best-practice and measured decision-making.
CEO and Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm matters under consideration are informed by the appropriate level of community engagement. • Champion better practice community engagement through policy, process and leadership. • Monitor implementation and compliance with the policy.
Managers and Executive Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage areas of responsibility to make sure community engagement is consistent with the policy. Ensure that community engagement and communication activities are a budgeted for.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake community engagement activities with the policy and build capacity through training opportunities.
Community Engagement team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the policy. • Provide advice to the organisation on implementing the policy as required.
Contractors and external consultants acting on behalf of Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake community engagement activities consistent with the policy.

The Policy is one of several resources available to support Council officers to plan, deliver and evaluate community engagement projects and processes.

Guidelines and advice are available for council staff on the internal **Community Engagement Hub** and by connecting with the **Community Engagement** team. Training and professional development opportunities for staff are also available, to support the continuous improvement of community engagement planning and delivery at Yarra Ranges.

What is community engagement?

The term 'community engagement' can be used in many ways. At Yarra Ranges Council and in the Policy, it is defined as

'An intentional, planned process to provide opportunities for people to have a say on decisions by Council that will have an impact on them now or into the future'.

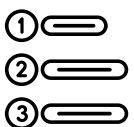
Community engagement



provides an opportunity for the community to shape the plans and decisions that affect their current and future needs.



helps inform Council's strategic direction, planning and decision making.



provides Council with a better understanding of community priorities and sentiments on important issues.



considers accessibility and diversity to make sure a range of voices are heard.

Formal community engagement processes, as referred to in the Policy, seek community input to inform decisions.

These processes are only one way our community can have a say on matters that are important to them and get involved in the work of Council. We are committed to building strong community relationships and welcome community participation. Other ways the community can become involved with Council include:

- attending community events delivered by Council
- attending Council meetings
- nominating to be part of an advisory group or committee
- registering on Council's **'Shaping Yarra Ranges'** platform to find out about community engagement opportunities
- sharing opportunities to get involved within local networks
- signing up for regular e-newsletters to keep informed about Council projects and news
- volunteering in Council programs for the community

Further information on these opportunities can be found at www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au





How does community engagement contribute to Council decision making?

Yarra Ranges is the largest local government area in Melbourne geographically with over 55 townships and is home to just under 160,000 residents.

Council provides over 120 services across the municipality and has many legislative, regulatory and community responsibilities.

Our broad municipality, with distinct regions and identities, often presents diverse community needs and opinions from residents and others impacted by Council decisions, including businesses, service providers, community organisations and visitors.

From the beginning of a community engagement process we will be transparent with the community about how the feedback will be considered by decision-makers. Depending on the type of decision required, the decision makers may be Councillors, Executive or senior officers within council with delegated authority.

The findings from community engagement will be presented to the relevant decision makers with officer recommendations based on analysis of the engagement outcomes, community feedback gathered from other sources within council, reference to any legislative requirements, consideration for Council's roles, responsibilities and available resources.

The results of all community engagements need to be balanced with the following elements to inform decision making.



Community engagement

- Community input into decision making
- Impact on the local neighbourhood and community as a whole
- Balanced needs of the community
- Guided by this policy and organisational guidelines



Legislation, strategies and policies

- Local Government Act 2020 and other relevant legislation
- Priorities established in existing Council strategies and plans
- Organisational policies
- Recognised best practice



Evidence and data

- Research
- Benchmarking
- Customer insights
- Service and usage data
- Costs or savings related to the outcomes



Professional expertise

- Operational experience
- Technical expertise
- Advice and recommendations from Advisory Committees and officers
- Short-term and long-term implications of decisions
- Risk Analysis

Community engagement principles and commitments

All community engagement within the scope of this policy is informed by the community engagement principles, set out in Section 56 of the Act. We have built on these principles to demonstrate Council's commitment to community engagement and reflect the expectations of the Yarra Ranges community.



Community engagement principles, defined in **the Act**¹

Yarra Ranges Council's commitment: **We will...**

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

- Be clear about the objectives and scope of all community engagement projects, including each relevant phase.
- Be clear about why, how and who we are seeking input and feedback from.
- Be clear about the level of engagement.
- Make sure community engagement is meaningful to participants and can inform decision making.

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

- Provide adequate information about the context of each project and what is negotiable/non-negotiable to support participants to provide informed feedback.
- Provide clear, impartial and easy-to-understand information about the project and the engagement process.
- Give participants enough time to learn about the project and how to get involved.
- Give participants clear ways to ask questions about the project or community engagement process

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

- Make sure those who are or may be affected by a decision are given an opportunity to inform that decision.
- Seek a range of perspectives from a broad cross-section of community.
- Respect diverse views and request mutual respect between all parties.
- Actively listen without judgment to what people say.

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

- Plan inclusive, equitable and accessible engagement activities.
- Use a range of engagement tools to reduce physical, social and cultural barriers to participation.
- Consider the needs and perspectives of all groups that may want to be involved in the process and provide accessible information to support meaningful participation.

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

- Be clear about how much opportunity there is for the community to influence a decision, as described in the IAP2 spectrum.
- Clearly communicate the stages in the process and how input will be used.
- Where possible, provide feedback on where the input has not been incorporated into the outcome and explain the reasons for the decision.
- 'Close the loop' with the community on what we heard, in a timely manner.

¹ Local Government Act (VIC) 2020, Part 2., Division 1, 9/(b)

When Council will engage

The following is a list of criteria to assist when planning for and delivering meaningful, transparent and appropriate community engagement.

In situations when a project or issue meets criteria in both sections, the determining factor will be if there **is/ is not** a genuine opportunity for input to inform, change or influence a decision.

Council will engage when:

- ✓ There is a genuine opportunity for input to change or influence a decision.
- ✓ Reviewing or creating strategic plans that will guide the future direction of Council.
- ✓ Developing major capital works and infrastructure projects.
- ✓ There is a statutory requirement to do so under the Local Government Act 2020.
- ✓ A decision is likely to have major impact on the health and wellbeing, environment or economy of the community, or an identified portion of the community.
- ✓ Local experience, information and evidence is needed to make an informed decision.

Council will not engage when:

- ✗ There is no opportunity for input to change or influence a decision.
- ✗ During the time immediately before a Council election or by-election, in line with our **Election Period Policy**.
- ✗ Decisions or actions need to be made immediately, due to an unacceptable risk to the community or council staff. For example, in an emergency or due to occupational health and safety.
- ✗ When Council is not the decision maker.
- ✗ Where legal or commercial in confidence restrictions prevent it.
- ✗ Decisions are related to Council's day-to-day organisational operations.

When Council is not directly seeking feedback from the community under the conditions outlined above, wherever possible we will still provide relevant information to our community and stakeholders.

Who Council will engage

Community engagement seeks to connect with a diverse range of community members and stakeholders, to make sure people who may be impacted by Council decisions are given the opportunity to be involved in the process.

Some projects might impact the whole community and others may be more localised or only impact certain groups in our community. As a result, **stakeholder mapping** is a key part of planning for any community engagement process. This is done to make sure we reach relevant groups and individuals in the community, who have the potential to be impacted by the project or decision.

When planning for community engagement, consideration will be given to how we can reach and hear from a range of people with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. This will include but is not limited to:

- men, women, girls and boys and gender-diverse people
- young people
- older people
- families
- First Nations people
- culturally and linguistically diverse people
- migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- people with disability and their carers
- people experiencing social isolation or socio-economic disadvantage
- people experiencing homelessness
- people who identify as LGBTIQ+

Additional barriers that also need to be considered when planning include:

- levels of literacy
- access to technology and internet
- physical access to attend in-person activities
- access to transport and distance to in-person activities

We will design engagement processes to be as accessible as possible, so everyone has an opportunity to participate and provide their input. We are committed to providing reasonable accommodations to support people to participate on request, wherever possible.

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, Council must consider the gender impact of its policies, programs and services. To do this, Council is required and committed to doing Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) on relevant projects.

GIAs apply an **intersectional approach**, to consider how gender inequality can be compounded by other disadvantage or discrimination a person may experience, based on factors such as Aboriginality, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Community engagement practices and principles outlined in this policy support this approach and the GIA processes complement the planning required for community engagement.

How Council will engage

Deciding the level of engagement

Yarra Ranges Council's community engagement is based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Engagement, illustrated in the table below. This spectrum identifies and defines five levels of engagement and details our promise to the community for each level of engagement.

Levels of engagement may be different for separate phases of a project and for different stakeholders based on interest, influence and impact.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community Engagement Goal				
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the public
Council's promise				
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to, and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decisions	We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decisions	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Tools for each engagement level may include, but are not limited to:				
Social media, Council website, Media, Newsletters, Emails, SMS,	'Shaping Yarra Ranges', Surveys, Submissions, Roadshow popups,	Focus groups, Workshops, Advisory Committees	Community panels, Stakeholder meetings	Ballots, Delegated decision

Communicating engagement opportunities

Each level of engagement is supported by communication (Inform) about the opportunity to get involved in the related community engagement activities. Methods for informing the community about engagement opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Council's website, e-newsletters, *Shaping Yarra Ranges* (engagement platform)
- Direct mail, emails and text (SMS) messages
- Flyers, posters and signs
- Media releases and newspaper articles,
- Social media promotion.

Decisions on which communication methods are applied are based on many factors including, the scale and impact of the project, allocated budget, staffing resources and more.

Selecting the engagement approach

When planning community engagement many things influence the type of engagement selected. Council is guided by the community engagement principles in the Act, our commitments in this policy, and where prescribed, under the other relevant legislation or regulations.

There are two main approaches to community engagement in local government.

Deliberative engagement

Deliberative engagement is a principles-based approach to community engagement, ideally suited to tackling complex and challenging matters. It involves **representative engagement**, made up of a group of people with diverse views, deliberating on a complex issue or problem.

There are several ways deliberative engagement processes can be delivered, however, key characteristics of the approach include:

- ✓ extensive information provided to participants
- ✓ access to subject matter experts to gain deeper insights
- ✓ time to absorb, debate and discuss the information
- ✓ time to consider the problem, usually delivered over several sessions
- ✓ the group aims to arrive at an informed consensus, decision, or recommendation/s
- ✓ a neutral facilitator (not Council) to guide the session.

An example of a deliberative practice includes representative Community Panels.

Deliberative engagement has been identified for specific projects within the Act, however, it may also be used for other relevant projects requiring deep, considered informed responses to complex issues. At Yarra Ranges, deliberative engagement processes will be part of a broader community engagement plan to make sure the community also have an opportunity to contribute and learn about the process.

Participatory engagement

This approach invites the community to share their ideas, views or feedback for consideration by Council when making decisions. This may include asking the community for local knowledge or experiences when starting a project or providing opportunities to give feedback on already prepared draft plans, designs or documents.

The specific tools (e.g. surveys, polls, focus groups, workshops etc) will be determined depending on the context of each specific project.

Section 223 process

Section 223 of the Local Government Act 1989 legislates the right to make a submission to Council and outlines the steps of this form of engagement; this is often referred to as a 'Section 223 process'. The steps include but are not limited to; publishing a public notice, being open for exhibition for a minimum 28 days and establishing a special committee to hear formal submissions. With the introduction of the Act this prescriptive approach is no longer necessary for several Council matters. On matters previously governed by a Section 223 process, Council will develop an appropriate engagement approach based on legislative requirements and by applying the Policy.

Below is a list of council matters and the relevant engagement approach based on legislation. This list is by no means exhaustive, and all community engagement projects must be discussed with the Community Engagement team, as part of the planning phase to determine the most appropriate approach.

Policy, process or project

Deliberative engagement, identified in the Act for the development of the following:

- Asset Plan
- Council Plan
- Community Vision
- Long Term Financial Plan

Participatory engagement, required by the Act and/ or other relevant legislation:

- Acquiring or selling land
- Lease agreements (Appendix 1)
- Annual Budget
- Making and amending a local law (Appendix 1)
- Changing Council's system of land valuations for Council rates
- Naming or renaming a street/community facility
- Declaring a special rate or special charge
- Policy development/review
- Disability Action Plan
- Road Management Plans
- Domestic Animal Management Plan
- Health and Wellbeing Plan

This policy does not apply to the following:

- Planning scheme amendments, public exhibition outlined in the Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Statutory planning, including planning permit applications, as directed under the Planning and Environment Act 1987

Determining the tools for engagement

With a municipality as diverse as Yarra Ranges, there is no 'one size fits all' way of hearing from our community. All engagements will differ, because our communities, needs and concerns are all different.

Engagement tools can include, but are not limited to:

- creative activities e.g. art, writing or photography
- drop-in sessions to meet with technical experts
- focus groups
- interviews or vox-pops
- polls
- pop-ups
- facilitated public meetings and forums
- Shaping Yarra Ranges, Council's digital platform
- stakeholder meetings
- surveys
- workshops

Any combination of these tools may be applied in planning for meaningful, transparent and appropriate community engagement. In most cases, it is appropriate to use more than one type of tool to reach different stakeholders.

Determining the most appropriate tools involves considering the following:

- legislative requirements
- level of resourcing available
- outcomes of stakeholder mapping, including potential barriers for participants
- the ability of the community to influence the decision
- the complexity of the issue
- the potential impact on the community

What does consistency look like?

It is important to note that while the approaches and tools for each engagement project may look different, there will be consistency for community through the application of the principles and commitments outlined in the Policy, including:

- ✓ clear objectives and scope
- ✓ clear ways to ask questions about the project or process
- ✓ being clear about how much opportunity there is for the community to influence a decision
- ✓ communicating the stages in the process and how input will be used
- ✓ 'closing the loop' with the community on what was heard, in a timely manner

Informing the community of engagement outcomes

Council will inform participants of engagement processes and the broader community about updates and outcomes, through our online engagement platform 'Shaping Yarra Ranges.'

We will also inform participants who have asked to be kept informed and provide their contact details directly.

When the outcome requires a decision by Council, a community engagement summary will also be available with the relevant report, available on Council's website.

Evaluation and performance

Council is committed to measuring and evaluating the reach and effectiveness of our community engagement practices. Resources will be allocated to support evaluation activities of identified projects and related outcomes. The evaluation outcomes will be reported back to Council and the community.

We are also committed to ongoing continuous improvement and innovation in community engagement. An overview of key improvements will be documented in the Council Annual Report.

Future reviews of this Policy will incorporate considerations of the impact of the policy on practice; in designing, planning and implementing meaningful community engagement.



Legislative context

Local Government Act 2020

The Act sets out the overarching governance principles, role, purpose, responsibilities and powers of local governments, including the provision of significant long-life infrastructure. The Act requires an integrated strategic reporting framework that includes:

Community Vision:	describes Council's aspirations for the future of the municipality.
Council Plan:	as Council's principal strategic document, which includes Council's long-term strategic objectives. The Council Plan is further supported by a long-term Financial Plan and Asset Plans to help guarantee sustainable service delivery.
Financial Plan:	the key financial planning document that is governed by a series of financial strategies and accompanying performance indicators that Council considers and adopts.
Asset Plan:	sets out how Council proposes to manage the assets under its control, to help achieve the objectives defined in the Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Act also outlines the legislative requirement for Council to develop and maintain a Community Engagement Policy.

Gender Equality Act 2020

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020, Council must consider the gender impact of its policies, programs and services. To do this, Council is required and committed to doing Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) on relevant projects. GIAs apply an **intersectional approach**, to consider how gender inequality can be compounded by other disadvantages or discrimination a person may experience, based on factors such as Aboriginality, sexuality, age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Community engagement practices and principles outlined in this policy support this approach and the GIA processes complement the planning required for community engagement.

<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020>

Charter of Human Rights

Council must act in a way that is compatible with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. This policy has been assessed as being consistent with that Act and promotes the rights of the community to:

- not to have their privacy interfered with (section 13)
- have freedom of expression (section 15)
- take part in public life (section 18)

Other relevant legislation

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Bill 2021
- Disability Act 2006
- Domestic Animals Act 1994
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2004
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
- Road Management Act 2004

Relationship with Council Plan

Being aware of and informed by the current and emerging needs of our community is vital for Council to deliver on the Key Strategic Objectives as detailed in the Council Plan.

Community engagement is one fundamental way Council gains insight to support informed decision making.

Figure 1 - Council's key strategic objectives



Connected and Healthy Communities

Communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected. Quality services are accessible to everyone.



Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places

Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned and are hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation



Protected & Enhanced Natural Environment

A healthier environment for future generations.



Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism

Our tourism, agriculture, health, manufacturing and other industries are leading and dynamic. Strong investment and attraction underpins sustainable economic growth and job creation.



High Performing Organisation

An innovative, responsive organisation that listens and delivers quality, value for money services to our community.

Other relevant Council policies

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Council acknowledges the importance of empowering children and young people to be active participants in their programs and services, through seeking and taking their voices seriously. Council also strives to hear children and young people's voices as active community members and service users, by involving them and their parents or carers and families when making complaints and decisions, especially about matters that affect them.

Council embraces our role in promoting children and young people's participation and in ensuring the community understands the importance of promoting safety and preventing abuse and harm.

Privacy and Health Information Policy

Council views the protection of an individual's privacy and the appropriate use of their personal and/or health information as a demonstration of its commitment toward openness, accountability, and integrity in all our activities and programs. We have adopted a Privacy and Health Information Policy which outlines how we will collect, use, disclose and store personal and health information and this will apply to all community engagement activities undertaken by Council.



Definitions

Community Engagement	An intentional, planned process to provide opportunities for people to have a say on decisions by Council that will have an impact on them now or into the future.
Community	A community can refer to a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic, interest, affiliation or identity in common.
Community members	when talking about community engagement, they are people who have opted to participate in the process. In other transactions or connections with Council, they may be referred to as clients or customers.
Council	Yarra Ranges Council.
Deliberative engagement	A principles-based approach to community engagement, involving a representative group with diverse views, deliberating on a complex issue or problem.
IAP2	The International Association for Public Participation a member association that seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation or community and stakeholder engagement. Yarra Ranges Council is a member of IAP2.
Intersectional approach	the idea that different social identities, such as Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes, combine and overlap to create different types of oppression for individuals and groups.
Local Government Act 2020 (VIC)	referred to in this policy as the Act.
Representative engagement	Actively seeking out and involving individuals or groups impacted by Council's activities, projects or decision-making to make sure a range of viewpoints and values are considered.
Stakeholder	Individuals, groups of individuals, organisations or political entities who are interested in or impacted by a Council outcomes or decision.
Stakeholder mapping	a process of identifying and listing all the stakeholders of a project and their respective levels of involvement, strategies for reaching and hearing from them as part of the community engagement.

Appendix 1:

Extracts from relevant legislation

Leasing land:

Details for community engagement on Lease of Land (the Act, Part 5, 115)

(3) A Council must include any proposal to lease land in a financial year in the budget, where the lease is—

- (a) for one year or more and—
 - (i) the rent for any period of the lease is \$100 000 or more a year; or
 - (ii) the current market rental value of the land is \$100 000 or more a year; or
- (b) for 10 years or more.
- (4) If a Council proposes to lease land that is subject to subsection (3) and that was not included as a proposal in the budget, the Council must undertake a community engagement process in accordance with the Council's community engagement policy in respect of the proposal before entering into the lease.

Proposing a local law:

Details for community engagement on Proposing a local law (the Act, Part 3, 73)

- (1) Before a Council makes a local law it must comply with the following procedure.
- (2) The Council must make a local law in accordance with its community engagement policy.
- (3) The Council must publish a notice stating—
 - (a) the objectives of the proposed local law; and
 - (b) the intended effect of the proposed local law; and
 - (c) that a copy of the proposed local law is available for inspection—
 - (i) at the Council's office; and
 - (ii) on the Council's Internet site; and
 - (d) the community engagement process that applies in respect of the making of the local law.

For further details see the Act.

Yarra Ranges Council
PO Box 105
Lilydale VIC 3140

1300 368 333 | mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au
yarraranges.vic.gov.au



**Draft revised Community Engagement Policy.
Community engagement summary, March – May 2024.**

Project background:

Yarra Ranges Council (YRC) is reviewing their current Community Engagement Policy (the Policy). The final consultation on the changes proposed in the Draft Revised version was open between 27 March – 5 May 2024.

The purpose of the engagement was to seek feedback about the Draft Revised Community Engagement Policy. A summary of the consultation process and feedback received is provided below.

Methodology:

The table below outlines the various methods and techniques used to inform the changes in the policy and engagement activities.

Phase one: Desktop review and targeted engagement

Method /technique	Stakeholders engaged
Desktop research	Reviewing over 30 Community Engagement policies from both local government and industry.
Internal focus groups	3x focus groups with internal staff from across Council.
Projects delivered under the current policy	Insights gained from the over 230 projects delivered since April 2021. The focus was on feedback related to community engagement processes and suggestions for improvements.
Consultation with Council Advisory groups	Youth Advisory Group (x1) and Disability Advisory Committee (x2)
Council pop-ups	Feedback from 36 Roadshow activations
Questions to Council	Consideration of questions to Council meetings, related to community engagement.

Phase two: Broad engagement

Method /technique	Stakeholders engaged
Project page on Shaping Yarra Ranges	- 2,190 members of Shaping Yarra Ranges received a project launch email. - 241 people visited the project page
Online feedback form	- 10 contributions were submitted, by 9 people
Social media	- Two Facebook posts: reaching an average of 3,656 people - Two Instagram posts: reaching an average of 400 people
Council newsletters	- Included in the fortnightly e-newsletter 3 times, with over 11,000 recipients

The level of feedback for phase two was comparable with similar engagements on Council policies. Changes proposed are based on community sentiment, professional expertise and industry standards.

Summary of Feedback:

Below is the summary of the formal feedback received in phase two, and how it has been incorporated into the policy.

#	Submission	Response
1	<p>As a long-term resident who is interested and involved in my community, I feel there is a strong bias toward online engagement including knowing popups, for example, are happening only through online promotion. The data gained will always be biased against those who don't engage in this way.</p>	<p>Thank you for recognising the importance of communications, when informing the community about opportunities to get involved.</p> <p>Your feedback has been noted and shared with the Communications team. The method of communication used for each project is outside the scope of this policy. However, the significance of communications in community engagement is recognised and it has been added to the Draft policy, under the section 'How Council will engage', pg. 12.</p>
2	<p>I may have missed this, but I didn't see any reference to how YRC will train, upskill and support their staff in understanding and applying community engagement principles in their everyday work.</p> <p>It is not a given that staff know how to do this, which strategies to employ at any given circumstance and how to communicate well with stakeholders.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback concerning building the capability of Council officers to plan and deliver effective community engagement. This is a priority for Council and a key role of the function of the Community Engagement team. Recognition of this has been added to the 'Scope' section, pg. 5.</p>
	<p>In theory the policy sounds good but unfortunately isn't practiced. In my experience, community engagement is a purely box ticking procedure.</p> <p>By the time community engagement is sought, countless amounts of hours, money, have already been spent & the council representatives sent to "engage" have little to no interest & quite often, no knowledge of the area(& it shows). No information is taken & its basically just a chat.</p> <p>If YRC truly wanted to engage with the local communities, there would be more meetings held in local halls to listen to & take notes of what the community wants.</p>	<p>Thank you for your contribution.</p> <p>The policy is Council's commitment to meaningful and transparent community engagement. We have definitely heard from our community that we must improve. Capability building of staff across the organisation has been included in the 'Scope' section, pg. 5.</p> <p>Specific methods of community engagement, i.e. town hall meetings, are outside the scope of this policy. We do acknowledge a strong desire across Yarra Ranges for localised engagement on local issues. Therefore, considerations made when selecting methods of engagement for</p>

#	Submission	Response
	<p>I live out at East Warburton & there's a desperate need for basic infrastructure (drains, roads etc), work crews sent to perform tasks, DON'T but no-one is interested. YRC needs to get back to basics as you don't build a structure from the roof down but rather from the foundations up.</p>	<p>projects will be incorporated into future reporting on projects.</p>
3	<p>Hello, I've read through the Community Engagement Policy and think that it is fundamentally a good working and reference document - I have circulated it to my local [redacted] group for their individual review and comments.</p> <p>However, I'm frustrated by the power exerted over Councils now by politically and/or activist motivated groups/individuals that seem to distract councils from their day/day ratepayer focused activities and wonder if you can include something in this document that would help you/us all, to help control/contain their views, such that they cannot become the overriding focus of any engagement with community (or indeed in any in council debates)?? thanks</p>	<p>Thank you for your contribution and for sharing the document within your networks to broaden the opportunity for people to get involved in providing feedback.</p> <p>We appreciate your concerns about hearing from 'louder voices' in community engagement over others. Identifying key stakeholders and impacted communities is an important consideration when planning and delivering engagement activities. Encouraging more members of the community to get involved, by signing up for notifications (Shaping Yarra Ranges, enewletters etc) is one way to get broad feedback and involvement.</p> <p>In addition, the revised Draft has a new section, 'How does community engagement contribute to Council decision making?', pg. 7. This section highlights the many considerations that go into decision making at Council including the balance of legislation, data, research, insights and engagement feedback.</p>
4	<p>Reads as a mix between guidelines and policy. The two should be split for clarity.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback.</p> <p>This draft revised policy has far fewer operational notes than the current policy. Please feel free to forward any specific examples you have for consideration in future updates of the policy.</p>
5	<p>You have missed people experiencing homelessness in your list of people you will engage in the policy. You may think it is easy to add them to the socially disadvantaged, but not everyone homeless is socially disadvantaged. It would be best if you</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback.</p> <p>'People experiencing homelessness' has been added, 'Who Council will engage', pg. 11.</p>

#	Submission	Response
	started recognising this demographic in our region, as it is increasing.	
6	<p>Council engagement needs to be seen as more than a "box-ticking" exercise. It needs to hold proper "sit down" community meetings on issues/projects (pop ups are useless), held in the respective towns as many don't have the means to travel to Lilydale & the region goes a lot further than the public transport network.</p> <p>Meetings need to held at various times to be accessible to all members of the community. (people work & have other responsibilities) Big project/issue?</p> <p>Saturate the town, letterbox drop information & hold a week of community meetings morning, afternoon, evening to enable each & every person the opportunity to attend & provide feedback.</p> <p>Having satellite store front set ups in the more remote areas where people can drop in to voice a concern/raise issues & look over documentation for upcoming projects in their area.</p>	<p>Thank you for your contribution.</p> <p>Specific methods of community engagement, i.e. town hall meetings, are outside the scope of this policy. We do acknowledge a strong desire across Yarra Ranges for localised engagement on local issues. Therefore, considerations made when selecting methods of engagement for projects will be incorporated into future reporting on projects.</p> <p>Thank you also for recognising the importance of communications, when informing the community about opportunities to get involved.</p> <p>Your feedback has been noted and shared with the Communications team. The method of communication used for each project is outside the scope of this policy. However, the significance of communications in community engagement is recognised and it has been added into the Draft policy, under the section 'How Council will engage', pg. 12.</p>
7	<p>It would be great if when the public engaged with Council through the Council website, email etc, enquirer received an email acknowledgement with a reference number which could then be followed up. It wouldn't be hard to set up. It would be beneficial to both Council and the enquirer.</p>	<p>Thank you for your contribution.</p> <p>This feedback is outside of the scope of the policy.</p> <p>Many of our systems, particularly requests through our Customer Service team, do generate a reference number. In order for any reference number or email response to be provided, we must collect contact details. This is not done on Council's main website unless you complete a web form for a particular action/event or activity.</p> <p>Council's engagement website, Shaping Yarra Ranges, uses a variety of ways to reach people. Some consultations include registering interested participants via email however this can be a barrier for some people from providing feedback, so Council offers a variety of ways of reaching and seeking feedback for various consultation projects which does not always involve</p>

#	Submission	Response
		collecting email addresses. When we haven't collected an email address on Shaping Yarra Ranges, there is unfortunately no way to reply to a submitter.
8	<p>Some opportunities to improve the policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is very focused on informing decisions and highlights that when there is no level of influence you don't engage. This is concerning as engagement can also be about capacity building and building trust and a relationship with community. A decision can hugely impact community with little to no opportunity to influence but it is important we are still taken along the journey and have the opportunity for 2 way conversation to either build our understand or trust on government. - it would be good to see how level of impact is considered in determining the engagement approach of effort. To the point once made above I recognise that council can't engage us on everything and they do need to think about appropriate allocation of effort but my view is that impact on community should be considered as part of that alongside level of influence. If impact is high but it is still sitting at the inform level then a letter is not a good enough form of communication. - it would be good to see some indicators in the evaluation section so build some transparency around how you evaluate and be able to then report back on the implementation of the policy. 	<p>Thank you for your feedback.</p> <p>Through community development, service delivery and project teams, officers work continually to build relationships with the community and stakeholders, to inform the work of Council. However, within the scope of the policy, it is important to define community engagement at Yarra Ranges Council as 'An intentional, planned process to provide opportunities for people to have a say on decisions by Council that will have an impact on them now or into the future'. This assists in managing expectations of both the practice and outcomes of formal community engagement activities.</p> <p>The level of impact on the community and stakeholders is considered in the planning. Supporting improvements in identifying impact and reporting against it, is part of the capability building program for staff. Reference to training staff for continuous improvements has been added to the 'Scope' section, pg. 5.</p> <p>The 'Evaluation and performance' section, pg. 16, of the Draft has been expanded to include a stronger commitment to evaluating the processes and outcomes of community engagement activities at Yarra Ranges, and the application of the policy at an organisational level.</p>
10	<p>For households who have more than two people, council must bring in large red topped general rubbish bins. This will stop people dumping rubbish. Kind regards.</p>	<p>Thank you for your contribution. This feedback is outside of the scope of the policy.</p> <p>Council is currently preparing an informal review of recent waste changes. As your feedback is directly relevant to Waste Services, this submission has been forwarded to the relevant team for further consideration.</p>

Next steps:

Following the endorsement of the revised Policy by Council, the Community Engagement team will continue to support the application of the policy across Council. This will be achieved by providing advice, training and practice resources available for all staff.

The new policy will be added to Council's website and Shaping Yarra Ranges.

The Policy will be formally reviewed in 2027-28.

Continuous improvement in community engagement practice at Yarra Ranges Council, based on internal and community feedback, will be incorporated into processes and documented for future reviews of the policy.

BIRRARUNG VALLEY WALK - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Report Author: Cathrine Bennett, Paul Goodison, Phil Murton
 Responsible Officer: Director Built Environment & Infrastructure
 Ward(s) affected: O'Shannassy; Ryrie;

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an update on implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan (Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo) and the Birrarung Valley Walk proposal, and
- seek endorsement to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. to support the Birrarung Valley Walk project.

Council, as one of 15 Responsible Public Entities (RPE), endorsed the Yarra Strategic Plan at its ordinary meeting on 11 May 2021.

The Minister for Water (the Minister) approved and publicly released the Yarra Strategic Plan on 11 February 2022.

In addition to being an active participant in the Yarra Collaborative Committee (YCC) alongside the other RPEs, Council has completed or is progressing a number of projects along the Birrarung that contribute to the Yarra Strategic Plan.

The Birrarung Valley Walk Inc., an Incorporated Association, is seeking to link existing walking tracks and paths from the mouth of the Birrarung (Yarra River) to the Upper Yarra Reservoir for the purpose of protecting, enhancing and promoting the natural environment and First Nations culture of the Birrarung Valley. This is the first “whole of river” project to be endorsed by the Yarra Collaboration Committee.

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. is asking each of the RPEs to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly progress and support the Project.

No financial commitment is required to enter the MoU. Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. will be using the signed MoUs to seek philanthropic support for the project.

Some in kind support from Council officers will be required to assist in planning the

trail alignment and scoping the implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council authorises the Chief Executive Officer to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (Attachment 1) with Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. to support the Birrarung Valley Walk project.

RELATED COUNCIL DECISIONS

11 May 2021 – Yarra Strategic Plan Endorsement (Council Meeting)

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Background

Yarra Strategic Plan Implementation

The Yarra Strategic Plan is legislated under the *Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017* (the Act).

Under the Act, Melbourne Water is the Lead Agency responsible for coordinating implementation of the Yarra Strategic Plan and Yarra Ranges Council is one of 15 Responsible Public Entities (RPEs) (eight local councils, five government agencies and two Traditional Owner Corporations).

The Yarra Strategic Plan Implementation Plan 2023-2025 includes the following Council projects: Indigenous Heritage Visibility, Yarra Valley Trail and the Yering Billabongs Project.

Council officers attend quarterly meetings with the Yarra Collaboration Committee (at which each RPE is represented) and undertake rigorous annual reporting to demonstrate efforts and achievements against the Implementation Plan.

One of the most important requirements of the Yarra Strategic Plan is to adhere to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC) Burndap Birrarung burndap umarkoo (BBBU) Engagement Framework which ensures appropriate engagement with the Wurundjeri for all works affecting the Birrarung.

The combined efforts of all RPEs are presented in a comprehensive report to the Victorian Parliament each year.

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc.

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. is an Incorporated Association (the Association) that seeks to link existing walking tracks and paths from the mouth of the Birrarung to the Upper Yarra Reservoir.

The Association will create and make available the information needed to enable walkers to plan and undertake the 220+km, multi-day continuous walk with the key purpose being to protect, enhance and promote the natural environment and First Nations culture of the Birrarung Valley.

Birrarung Valley Walk seeks to connect existing trails into a continuous path that allows walkers to tread lightly on the land:

- The Birrarung Valley Walk is to be on public land.
- Each section of the trail is to be agreed with the relevant landowner.
- First Nations cultural mapping and environmental analysis to identify significant sites – some to visit and some to protect.
- Birrarung Valley Walk will provide the information needed to enjoy multi-day walks. Including a digital app with downloadable maps that can be used offline will guide walkers, along with minimal waymarking signage in the landscape.

Prior to incorporating, the Association spent 15 months engaging with the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (WWCHAC). The project was endorsed by the WWCHAC Board of Directors in August 2023.

Since then, the Association has incorporated, the project has received endorsement from the YCC (in December 2023) and the team is investigating appropriate routes and identifying appropriate technology and apps that can be used by walkers to navigate the route and identify special features and places along the way.

All key decisions will be made by the stakeholders (RPEs), who will form the “decision making” body for the project.

The Project provides Council with the opportunity to promote local features such as cultural heritage, local townships and the Yarra River.

The Association is asking each of the RPEs to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Options considered

Not applicable.

Recommended option and justification

It is recommended that Council enter a MoU (Attachment 1) with Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. to support the Birrarung Valley Walk project. The MoU will:

- Provide a basis on which the parties can jointly progress and support the Project.
- Document a commitment by each party to work together to:
 - Agree on a defined route for the walking path, using existing pathways and trails wherever possible, on public land;
 - Maintain and promote a waymarked walking path from the mouth of the river to the Upper Yarra Reservoir.
- All stakeholders to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the principles of collaboration.
- All signatories to join the steering committee, which will be the decision-making body for the project.
- Unanimous approach to decisions.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

No financial commitment is required by entering the MoU. The Association will be using the signed MoUs to seek philanthropic support for the project.

In kind support from Council officers will be required over time, to ensure the best outcome for each RPE.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

This report contributes to the following strategic objective(s):

Yarra Ranges Council Plan: 2021-2025

- **Connected and Healthy Communities:** Ensuring communities are safe, resilient, healthy, inclusive and socially well connected. Quality services should be accessible to everyone.
- **Quality Infrastructure and Liveable Places:** Quality facilities and infrastructure meets current and future needs. Places are well planned hubs of activity that foster wellbeing, creativity and innovation.
- **Vibrant Economy, Agriculture and Tourism:** Ensure tourism, agriculture, health and other industries are leading, dynamic and thriving, with strong investment and attraction to underpin sustainable economic growth.

Active Recreation Plan

There are four action areas that will help increase the number of people meeting their physical activity guidelines in Yarra Ranges. This project primarily relates to:

- Action area 1: Improving safety and accessibility.

CONNECTED Yarra Ranges Integrated Transport Strategy (2020-2040)

Increase opportunities for people to walk and cycle to local destinations.

RELEVANT LAW

Gender Impact Assessment

Section 9 of the Gender Equality Act 2020 states Council, as a defined entity, must conduct a Gender Impact Assessment for policies, strategies, plans, programs, and services that are new or up for review and have a direct and significant impact on the public.

A Gender Impact Assessment was not required for this Report because the Report did not result in the creation or review of a Council led project, strategy or plan that had a direct and significant impact on the public.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The Birrarung Valley Walk will help immerse users in the environment and further enhance education and awareness of areas in the Yarra Ranges of environmental and cultural significance.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the Birrarung Valley walk planning progresses the Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. will be leading community engagement.

No community engagement is required for the MoU.

COLLABORATION, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Collaboration has been led by Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. with Wurundjeri, State Government Agencies and other Local Governments.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The MOU states that it is the intention of each Party that this MoU is not legally binding but rather it constitutes a statement of the mutual intentions of the Parties.

There are not considered to be any direct legal or financial issues from entering into the MoU. However, there would be reputational and lost opportunity risks associated with not entering into the MoU.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No officers and/or delegates acting on behalf of the Council through the Instrument of Delegation and involved in the preparation and/or authorisation of this report have any general or material conflict of interest as defined within the *Local Government Act 2020*.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. Birrarung Valley Walk Memorandum of Understanding

Birrarung Valley Walk

Memorandum of Understanding

Between the Parties

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc.
Level 32, 360 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

and

Yarra Ranges Shire Council
Anderson St
Lilydale VIC 3140

Introduction

The object of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to record the support of all project partners to identify, maintain, protect, preserve, and enhance the walking path to be known as the Birrarung Valley Walk (working title).

As a cornerstone of this MOU, the Parties agree to:

- Establish a relationship based on mutual trust.
- Share a common intention to achieve each Party's outcomes.
- Ensure openness, promptness, consistency, and fairness in all dealings.
- Commit to maximising efficiency, cost effectiveness and sharing of ideas.

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc.

Birrarung Valley Walk Inc. is an Incorporated Association that seeks to link existing walking tracks and paths from the mouth of the Birrarung (Yarra River) to the Upper Yarra Reservoir. The Association will create and make available the information needed to enable walkers to plan and undertake the 220+km, multi-day continuous walk. A key purpose is to protect, enhance and promote the natural environment and First Nations culture of the Birrarung Valley.

Purpose of MOU

The purpose of this MOU is to:

1. Provide a basis on which the parties can jointly progress and support the Project;
2. Document a commitment by each party to work together to:

- Agree on a defined route for the walking path, using existing pathways and trails wherever possible, on public land;
- Maintain and promote a waymarked walking path from the mouth of the river to the Upper Yarra Reservoir.

Authorised Representatives

Each party will nominate an Authorised Representative to sign the MOU. Each party commits to nominating a representative to join a steering committee, which will make all key decisions for the Walk. BVW will provide secretarial services to the committee.

Intention not to be Legally Binding

It is the intention of each Party that this MOU is not legally binding. This MOU merely constitutes a statement of the mutual intentions of the Parties.

This Memorandum of Understanding is executed as follows:

Signed on behalf of Birrarung Valley Walk Inc.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Signed on behalf of Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

11. COUNCILLOR MOTIONS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Division 4 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Councillor motions received prior to the Agenda being printed.

12. ITEMS THROUGH THE CHAIR

13. REPORTS FROM DELEGATES

14. DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNING AND SEALING

In accordance with Clause 87 of the Meeting Procedures and Use of Common Seal Local Law 2015, as prescribed by Section 14(2)(c) of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Documents for Signing and Sealing listed for this meeting prior to the Agenda being printed.

15. INFORMAL MEETINGS OF COUNCILLORS

Report Author: Governance Officer
 Responsible Officer: Director Corporate Services
 Ward(s) affected: All Wards

The author(s) of this report and the Responsible Officer consider that the report complies with the overarching governance principles and supporting principles set out in the Local Government Act 2020.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This item is to be considered at a Council meeting that is open to the public

SUMMARY

Chapter 8, Rule 1, of the Governance Rules requires that records of informal meetings of Councillors must be kept and that the Chief Executive Officer must ensure that a summary of the matters discussed at the meeting tabled at the next convenient Council meeting and recorded in the Minutes of that Council meeting.

An 'informal meeting of Councillors' is defined in the Governance Rules as a meeting of Councillors that:

- is scheduled or planned for the purpose of discussing the business of Council or briefing Councillors;
- is attended by at least one member of Council staff; and
- is not a Council meeting, Delegated Committee meeting or Community Asset Committee meeting.

The records for informal meetings of Councillors are attached to the report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the records of the Informal Meetings of Councillors, copies of which are attached to the report, be received and noted.

ATTACHMENTS TO THE REPORT

1. 12 June 2024 – Disability Advisory Committee
2. 18 June 2024 - Council Forum
3. 18 June 2024 - Council Briefing

Informal meeting of Councillors

Public Record



Meeting Name:	Yarra Ranges Council Disability Advisory Committee	
Date:	12 June 2024	Start Time: 1.00pm Finish Time: 3.00pm
Venue:	Conference Room A	
Attendees:	<p>Councillors: Cr Len Cox</p> <p>Other attendees: Marie Pleuger, Tracey Wannet, Lisa McIlpatrick, Michelle McDonald, Isabella O'Hare, Jackson Ellis, Shek Kho, Lesley Grimes, Paul Stoney</p> <p>Officers: Amanda Wilson, Lea Russell, Rachael Giddens, Tamara Meadows, Sarah Brophy, Methni Dahanayake, Dani Amiet</p>	
Apologies	Cr Richard Higgins, Amanda May, Lisa McIlpatrick, Bella O'Hara, Julie McDonald, Corinne Bowen, Shek Kho, Paul Stoney, Michelle McDonald, Renae Purcell, Lesley Grimes, Elizabeth Newton, Carolyn Haack	
Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:	None	
Matter/s Discussed:	1.1	Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners
	1.2	Acceptance of Previous Minutes and Declarations of Interest
	1.3	NDIS updates
	1.4	Update on Lions Park upgrades
	1.5	YRC Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy Update and Goals Discussion
	1.6	Member updates
	1.7	Other Business
Completed By:	Lea Russell	

Informal Meeting of Councillors

Public Record



Meeting Name:	Council Forum	
Date:	18 June 2024	Start Time: 5.30pm Finish Time: 10.34pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference	
Attendees:	<p>Councillors: Cr S Todorov (Chair), Cr D Eastham (Deputy Mayor)(From 5.32pm), Cr A Fullagar(From 5.37pm), Cr R Higgins, Cr F McAllister(From 5.37pm), Cr J Child, Cr T Heenan (Exited at 10.22pm) Cr L Cox (Exited at 10.36pm)</p> <p>Via Zoom: Cr J Skelton</p> <p>CEO/Directors: Leanne Hurst, Tammi Rose (From 5.32pm), Andrew Hilson, Phil Murton and Hjalmar Philipp</p> <p>Officers: Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Alanna Ford, Chris Long, Katie Douglas, Bumeke Jayasinghe, Diwakar Pokharel, Graham Brew, Ameer Cooper, Lisa Keedle, Sarah Bond, Alison Fowler, Kathy Baltas, Nathan Islip, Corinne Bowen, and Tom Meek</p> <p>Via Zoom: Jane Sinnamon, Simone Marais, Stuart Wilson, Pete Tatterson, Lauren Poulton, Lisa Loulier, Sarah Love, Bill Yob, Dani Gaitely, and Bonnie Isbester</p> <p>Externals: Kat Panjari (Director of Strategic Foresight and Partnerships) - Municipal Association of Victoria</p>	
Apologies	Nil	
Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nil 	
	1.3	Action and Agreement Record – 4 June 2024
	2.1	YR-2023/594 - 443 Maroondah Hwy (9 Janson Place) Lilydale - Planning Report
	3.1	Amendment C212 Monbulk DDO Request for Authorisation
	4.1	Review of the Public Agenda for Council's Meeting of 25 June 2024
	6.1	External Presentation - Kat Panjari (Director of Strategic Foresight and Partnerships) - Municipal Association of Victoria
	6.2	Fire as a Land Management Tool Policy

Assembly of Councillors

Public Record



	6.3	Informal Six-Month Review: Resource Recovery and Waste Services Policy
	7.0	Mayor & CEO Update
	8.0	Councillor Discussion Time
	9.0	General Business
	9.1	Aged Care Transition Update
	10.1	Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability - Draft Submission
	10.2	Rivers and Ridges Quarterly Update
	10.3	Indicative Forum & Council Meeting Schedule
Completed By:	Gina Walter	

Informal Meeting of Councillors

Public Record



Meeting Name:	Council Briefing	
Date:	18 June 2024	Start Time: 6.23pm Finish Time:6.40pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference	
Attendees:	<p>Councillors: Cr S Todorov (Chair), Cr D Eastham (Deputy Mayor), Cr A Fullagar, Cr J Skelton, Cr R Higgins, Cr F McAllister, Cr J Child, Cr T Heenan and Cr L Cox</p> <p>Via Zoom: Cr J Skelton</p> <p>CEO/Directors: Tammi Rose, Andrew Hilson, Leanne Hurst, Hjalmar Philipp and Phil Murton</p> <p>Officers: Gina Walter, Beck Stevens, Alanna Ford, Chris Long, Ameer Cooper and Lisa Keedle</p> <p>Via Zoom: Stuart Wilson</p> <p>Externals: Nil</p>	
Apologies:	Nil	
Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nil 	
Matter/s Discussed:	This briefing covered the following items of business to be considered at the 25 June 2024 Council Meeting.	
	10.1	2024-2025 to 2027-2028 Budget for Adoption
	10.2	2024-2025 Council Action Plan
	10.3	Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability – Submission Planning and Sustainable Futures
	10.4	YR-2023/594 - 443 Maroondah Highway (9 Janson Place) Lilydale - Planning Report
	10.5	Procurement Policy Review
	10.6	Audit & Risk Management Committee - Independent Member Appointment
Completed By:	Gina Walter	

16. URGENT BUSINESS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

17. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

In accordance with Chapter 3 Rule 24 of the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

There were no Confidential Items listed for this meeting.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Council is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 23 July 2024 commencing at 7.00pm, at Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Anderson Street, Lilydale and via videoconference.



In providing for the good governance of its community, Councillors are reminded of their obligation to abide by the provisions as set within the Local Government Act 2020 and the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

When attending a Council Meeting, Councillors should adhere to the procedures set out in the Governance Rules developed by Council in accordance with section 60 of the Local Government Act 2020.

The following is a guide for all Councillors to ensure they act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of Yarra Ranges as a whole.

1. Councillors will respect the personal views of other Councillors and the decisions of Council.
2. Councillors may publicly express their own opinions on Council matters but not so as to undermine the standing of Council in the community.
3. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council.
4. Councillors will incur expenditure in a responsible manner and in accordance with the Councillor Expenditure and Policy.
5. Councillors will avoid conflicts of interest and will always openly disclose any direct and indirect interests where they exist.
6. Councillors will act with integrity and respect when interacting with Council staff and members of the public.
7. Councillors will demonstrate fairness in all dealings and conduct and be open with and accountable to the community at all times.
8. Councillors will conduct themselves in a manner that does not cause detriment to Council or the Yarra Ranges community.