Community Engagement Policy

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Responsible Officer	Director - Development & Community Services
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1. Purpose

1.1 Mid Murray Council is committed to engaging meaningfully, transparently and consistently with its community. This policy ensures that all engagement activities:

1.1.1 Meet or exceed the mandatory requirements of the Charter.

1.1.2 Enable community members to understand, influence and contribute to Council decision making that affects them.

1.1.3 Foster trust, encourage active participation and promote strong governance.

1.1.4 Support inclusive and equitable participation.

1.2 This policy establishes Council's approach to community engagement in accordance with Section 50 and 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) and the *Community Engagement Charter* (the Charter) published in the South Australian Government Gazette on 11 December 2025.

2. Definitions

2.1 **Community Engagement Charter (Charter)** is a statutory framework under Section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* that sets the principles and minimum requirements councils must follow when informing, consulting and involving their communities.

2.2 **Community Engagement** is a structured process whereby information is disseminated, and community members and stakeholders are formally invited to provide input on matters under Council consideration. It outlines the various degrees of involvement in the organisation's decision-making procedures.

2.3 **Community** refers to individuals or groups with a vested interest in Council's decision-making processes and who are impacted by Council outcomes. Such stakeholders may include residents, voters, ratepayers, business owners, customers, contractors and suppliers, community interest organisations, agencies, and people who may face barriers to participation or engagement.

2.4 **Council** is the elected body that makes decisions for the community and may sometimes delegate this authority to the Chief Executive Officer or staff.

2.5 **Priority Populations** refers to specific demographic or social groups identified by health, legal and government agencies as experiencing systemic barriers and disproportionately poorer health, economic or social outcomes.

2.6 **Stakeholders** include individuals and groups, such as businesses, governments, community organisations, and not-for-profits, who are interested in or affected by Council decisions. They may also contribute to policy development and service delivery.

2.7 **Submissions** are written contributions from community members, expressing opinions on issues and/or proposals that will be considered as part of Council's decision-making process, including those made via the Council's community engagement website.

2.8 **The Act** is the *Local Government Act 1999* (SA).

2.9 **The Charter** is the Minister for Local Government's Community Engagement Charter published in the South Australian Government Gazette on 11 December 2025.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to:

3.1.1 All Council staff and contractors preparing or delivering engagement activities.

3.1.2 All matters identified under the Charter that require community engagement.

3.1.3 Any additional matters where Council determines that engagement would benefit decision-making.

3.2 This Policy does not cover public notification in respect to development applications or other requirements associated with the planning system under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*.

4. Policy

4.1 Guiding Principles.

4.1.1 The preparation and adoption of this policy fulfil the council's obligations to prepare and adopt a policy under section 50(A) of the Act. The following principles in the Charter have been considered in the preparation of this policy:

4.1.1.1 Community members should have reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities to gain access to information about proposed decisions, activities, processes of councils and to participate in relevant processes;

4.1.1.2 information about issues should be in plain language, readily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation on an equal basis with others;

4.1.1.3 participation methods should seek to foster and encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and debate in relation to proposed decisions, activities and processes of councils;

4.1.1.4 participation methods should be appropriate having regard to the significance and likely impact of proposed decisions, activities and processes;

4.1.1.5 insofar as is reasonable, communities should be provided with information about how community views have been taken into account and reasons for decisions or actions of councils.

4.1.2 Council will undertake public consultation in accordance with the Act and the Charter.

4.1.3 Wherever possible, Council will seek to adhere to the IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum when developing its engagement activities. Council is committed to

4.1.3.1 **Inform** - Offer clear information to facilitate comprehension regarding decision-making processes, and where there is no opportunity to influence the outcome.

4.1.3.2 **Consult** - Seek input and feedback on preferences where multiple options are presented, and final decisions are being shaped.

4.1.3.3 **Involve/Collaborate** - Engage stakeholders collaboratively to identify and address all requirements and concerns and influence the decision.

4.1.4 Council supports innovative approaches to community engagement, tailored to the individual circumstances and may, in its absolute discretion, determine to undertake a step or steps in addition to those set out in this policy in relation to a matter for which it is required by the Act and/or the Charter to follow its community engagement policy.

4.1.5 However, council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any additional step or steps in relation to such a matter. A well-intentioned engagement that does not generate the anticipated level of engagement, is not, in itself, a breach of this policy.

4.1.6 Council will ensure that it meets its legislative obligations regarding public consultation by:

4.1.6.1 Meeting mandatory requirements in the Act and the Charter.

4.1.6.2 Using appropriate and cost-effective engagement methods which are relevant to the specific circumstances of each decision, activity or process.

4.1.6.3 Providing for participation by the local community, key stakeholders and interested parties, wherever possible and appropriate.

4.1.6.4 Using feedback to enhance decision making.

4.1.6.5 Insofar as is reasonable, providing information to our community about how community views have been taken into account and reasons for decisions or actions of council.

4.1.7 Council will endeavour, where possible and appropriate, to identify and engage priority population groups using methods suited to their circumstances.

4.1.8 Council may, from time to time, alter or substitute a new policy, following public consultation.

4.2 Engagement Categories

Pursuant to the Charter, Council is required to undertake particular types or levels of community engagement (as a minimum) in relation to the following:

4.2.1 Significant – Annual Business Plan and Rating Policy

Applies to:

- Adopting an Annual Business Plan - section 123(3)(b)
- Changes to basis of rating, declaring differential rates, imposing a separate rate, service rate or service charge, or changing the basis on which land is valued for the purpose of rating - section 151(5)(e)

Mandatory minimum actions include:

- Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a council website.

- Publish information about the matter in a local news publication (print where available, but otherwise digital) that circulates in the council area and is not produced by the council.
- Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.
- Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.
- In material prepared explain what the council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the council's decision.
- Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide a minimum community engagement period of 21 days to enable the community to provide feedback. Include a summary of community engagement feedback to the council ahead of the decision.
- Hold a public meeting where the community is invited to provide submissions (written or verbal) on the matter. The public meeting may be part of a council meeting or a separate event.

4.2.2 **Significant**

Applies to:

- Representation reviews - section 12(7)
- Status of council or change of various names - section 13 (2)
- Development and review of Strategic Management Plans - section 122(6)
- Changing use of differential rates and special adjustments - section 156(4a)(b)
- Revocation of classification of land as community land - sections 194(2(b)
- Community Land Management Plans - adoption - section 197(1)
- Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments - section 198(3)
- Alienation of community land by lease or license - section 202(2)
- Making of By-laws – section 249(1)
- Plans prepared pursuant to:
  - *Disability Inclusion Act 2018*
  - *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*
  - *SA Public Health Act 2011*

Mandatory minimum actions include:

- Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a council website.
- Publish information about the matter in a local news publication (print where available, but otherwise digital) that circulates in the council area and is not produced by the council.
- Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.
- Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.
- In material prepared explain what the council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the council's decision.

- Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide a minimum community engagement period of 21 days to enable the community to provide feedback. Include a summary of community engagement feedback to the council ahead of the decision.
- Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.

4.2.3 Standard

Applies to:

- Opening hours and place of principal office - substantial changes - section 45(3)
- Community Engagement Policy - section 50A(6)(b)
- Council behavioural support policies - section 75F(6)
- Access to meetings and documents - section 92(5)
- Power to make orders - section 259(2)(b)

Mandatory minimum actions include:

- Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a council website.
- Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the council area. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.
- Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide information about how community feedback will inform the council's decision. Ensure an appropriate period of time is provided to enable communities to provide feedback.

4.2.4 Local

Applies to:

- Prudential requirements for certain activities - section 48(2)d
- Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for more than 48 hours (with a detour in place) or where no detour will be available - section 223(1)
- Proposed planting of vegetation on a road – significant impact - section 232(b)

Mandatory minimum actions include:

- Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a council website.
- Consider how best to invite feedback from the community. Provide information about how community feedback will inform the council's decision. Ensure an appropriate period of time is provided to enable communities to provide feedback.
- Consider appropriate forms of notifications to the area within the council affected by the council decision or action. Consider whether additional information or notification should be made available to the local community to bring their attention to the matter and to support participation.

4.2.5 Inform (requiring Council to provide information only, not seek input)

Applies to:

- Opening hours and place of principal office – minor changes - section 45(3)

- Proposed permit or authorisation for alteration or use of a road for business purposes when there are works and traffic impeded for less than 48 hours and the council ensures that a detour is in place - section 223(1)
- Election information - section 13A (2) of the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999

Mandatory minimum actions include:

- Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a council website.
- Provide information to the whole of the council's community if it may be directly affected by the council decision or action.
- Provide information to the local community that may be directly affected by the council decision or action.

5. Other decisions, activities and processes

5.1 Council will undertake community engagement initiatives that support public participation regarding Council decisions, activities, or processes not specifically addressed in the Charter.

5.2 Council will typically conduct engagement activities for relevant matters, as well as in instances where the Act requires public notice, Gazette publication, or the provision of access to relevant documents. These are outlined below.

Requirement	LG Act	Description
Gazette Notice	Section 12 (15)	Composition and Wards
	Section 13 (1)	Status of council or change of various names
	Section 167(6)	Adoption of Valuation
	Section 192 (4)	Local Government Land
	Section 208	Ownership of public roads
	Section 54(6)	Vacancy in office of a member of council
	Section 56 (1)	Membership of a council falls below prescribed number in the prescribed time
Notice setting out the effect of the by-law	Section 238 (3)	Power to control access and use of land
Website Publication	Section 101	Record of CEO Delegations
	Section 105	Register of Salaries
	Section 119A	Register of Gifts and Benefits (Employees)
	Section 120A	Employee Behavioural Standards
	Section 131 and Schedule 4	Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements
	Section 188	Fees and Charges
	Section 196	Management Plans for Community Land
	Section 207	Register of Community Land
	Section 231	Register of Public Roads
	Section 259(1)	Order Making Policy
	Section 262B(1)	Behavioural Management Policy
	Section 270	Procedures for review of decisions
	Section 44	Record of Council Delegations and sub-delegations
	Section 49	Contracts and Tenders Policies
	Section 50A (6)(b)	Community Engagement Policy

	Section 68	Register of Interests
	Section 72A	Register of Gifts and Benefits (Members)
	Section 77(1)(b)	Member Expense Reimbursement Policy
	Section 79	Register of Allowances and Benefits
	Section 80A(2h)	Register - Training and Development
	Section 81 and 87	Frequency and timing of council and committee meetings
	Section 84 and 87	Notice and Agenda, Documents and Reports (including attachments and any referenced information or material) of Council and Committee Meetings
	Section 90A(4)	Record of Order that Information or Briefing Session be closed to the public
	Section 90A(7)	Record made by council or chief executive officer of the information that is required to be published as soon as practicable after the holding of an information or briefing session
	Section 91	Minutes and Recommendations adopted by Resolutions of Council and Committee Meetings
	Section 92(1)	Access to meetings and documents - code of practice
	Sections 246 and 252	By-Laws and Register
	Schedule 1B clause 13	Register of Building Upgrade Agreements
	Section 9	Fixing day of Poll - Local Government (Elections) Act 1999
Gazette and Website Notice	Section 13 (2)	Status of council or change of various names
	Section 141(4)	Gifts to a council
	Section 170	Public notice of declaration of a rate or service charge within 21 days
	Section 184(4)	service of notice of arrears and sale of land public notice
	Section 193(6)	Council resolution to exclude land from community land, or to classify land as community land that has previously been excluded
	Section 197(3)	Adoption - Management Plans for Community Land
	Section 198(4)	Amendment or revocation - Management Plans for Community Land
	Section 210(2)	Proposed public road declaration
	Section 219(4)	Assigning/changing name of a road or public place
	Section 219(7)	Adopting/altering a assigning of names policy
	Section 220(3)	Adopting, altering, substituting a numbering system
	Section 234A(6a)	Resolution prohibiting traffic/closing a street/road
	Section 237	Removal of vehicle
	Section 246(4) and (4a)	Code, standard or other document or part application of a By-Law provision
	Section 249(7)	Passing By-laws
	Section 250(7)	Making by-law/adopting model by-law
	Section 80A(2c)	Suspension of member

Section 80A(2e)	Suspension of member revoked
Section 93	public notice of time and place of a meeting of electors
Clause 1 and 3	Schedule 2 - provisions applicable to subsidiaries Part 1 - Subsidiaries established by one council
Clause 17 and 19	Part 2 - Regional subsidiaries established by two or more councils

6. Engagement Methods

6.1 Council will select engagement methods proportionate to the category and significance, which may include:

Inform:

- ☐ Your Say page
- ☐ Media Release
- ☐ Local Paper/Community Newsletter
- ☐ Mail out/Letter drop
- ☐ Council Customer Service
- ☐ Signage/Street Banner

Consult:

- ☐ Online survey
- ☐ Written Submissions
- ☐ Community Pop Ups
- ☐ Interview survey
- ☐ Online mapping
- ☐ Community forum/meeting
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☐ Phone and email enquiries
- ☐ Door Knocking
- ☐ Discussion Paper

Participatory (Involve/Collaborate):

- ☐ Meetings face to face
- ☐ Co-Design workshop
- ☐ Council meeting or public meeting

6.2 Where appropriate, Council may use targeted, place-based or community-led engagement methods to support participation by groups or localities that may otherwise be underrepresented in standard engagement processes, and to promote inclusion, accessibility and equality of opportunity.

7. Decision-Making and Feedback Reporting

7.1 Council acknowledges community views as one element of informed decision-making, alongside legislative requirements, budget, technical advice and prior decisions. Following engagement a summary of community feedback must be prepared.

7.2 Council will publish a "What We Heard" or “Submission Summary” report as appropriate to the engagement matter.

8. Evaluation

8.1 Council will assess the effectiveness of its engagement and communication through an Evaluation Survey. The evaluation will seek to assess the Appropriateness/ Implementation of the process, whether the engagement process reached the intended audience and whether there were barriers to participation for priority population groups that should be better supported in future engagement.

8.2 The Evaluation Survey will be conducted bi-annually on the engagements in the preceding half year to assess the effectiveness and determine improvements in the community engagement process and report to Council.

9. Delegation

9.1 The public consultation and community engagement activities in this policy are general in nature, to meet the minimum mandatory requirements in the Act and Charter.

9.2 Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or processes shall be determined on a case by case basis, by:

9.2.1 Council;

9.2.2 the CEO; or

9.2.3 a delegate with power to make the relevant decision or undertake the relevant activity or process.

9.3 Council, the CEO or a delegate is not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, any optional or additional engagement steps or employ optional or additional engagement methods. Such a decision is at the absolute discretion of the decision maker, such as for projects involving expenditure deemed 'significant' by the CEO; or matters likely to be of significant community interest.

9.4 Accordingly, public consultation and community engagement activities undertaken on a matter shall be considered compliant with the Act, the Charter, or this policy where they have been determined by Council, the CEO or duly authorised delegate, and:

9.4.1 for matters prescribed in the Charter – the decision maker considered the Charter requirements to have been adequately met, or

9.4.2 for other decisions, activities and processes not prescribed in the Charter – the decision maker considered the engagement provided adequate chance for the community to make their views known.

10. Policy Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring the proper operation of this Policy.

11. Availability/Accessibility

11.1 This Policy and Council's Fees & Charges Register are available to be downloaded free of charge from Council's website: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.

11.2 This Policy is available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours. Hard copies, for a fee in accordance with Council's schedule of Fees and Charges, can be provided upon request.

12. Legislative Framework / Other References

12.1 *Local Government Act 1999*

12.2 Community Engagement Charter (2025)

12.3 *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*

12.4 *Disability Inclusion Act 2018*

12.5 *SA Public Health Act 2011*

12.6 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

13. Document History

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

Version	Adopted	Minute	Description of Change
1	14 July 2026	C07-26/029	Adopted