



Council Policy (WCC.004)

Community Engagement

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1 Purpose

This Policy aims to improve Council relationships with our community and stakeholders by providing clarity relating to the engagement activities conducted by Council.

2 Objectives

The West Coast Community Plan 2025 vision strongly articulates Council's intent to engage the community on major issues affecting the future of the West Coast region and activities that have significant impacts on the communities within the region. The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Clarify the matters for which Council will engage with the community.
- Identify the types of engagement that Council will utilize in general and in specific cases.
- Clarify the aim and method of Council engagement in general and in specific cases.
- Inform the community of the ways in which they can receive information from Council and provide information to Council.
- Ensure the process allows for participants to know how their input has been included in decision making.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all West Coast Council employees and provides guidance to West Coast Councillors.

4 Policy

4.1 Introduction

It is essential that Council has a clear and consistent approach to community engagement. This will ensure that community expectations relating to engagement are aligned to the capabilities and resources of Council and that all have awareness of how to communicate with Council.

Where there is not a clear and consistent approach it is likely that community trust will deteriorate through unmet expectations.

4.2 Relationship to Legislation

The *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas) and many of the other acts under which Council operates have specific requirements for how Council informs or engages with the community. Where legislative provisions exist, they will be the primary determiner of how and when Council engages. This policy is not

intended to supplant any legislative requirements.

4.3 The Role of Councillors

The West Coast Council is a representative government, where Councillors represent the community. Councillors make decisions on behalf of the community in accordance with the requirements of *the Local Government Act 1993* (Tas), except where they sit as a Planning Authority.

This means that the primary method for the West Coast Council to engage with the community is through Councillors. Councillors have a role in seeking and understanding community views and providing the community information on Council decisions. When they decide, they do so considering those views. All Councillor contact details are available on the West Coast Council Website <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>, at the Council Offices by calling on 03 6471 4700, or via email wcc@westcoast.tas.gov.au. Providing input to Councillors is our primary method of receiving feedback from the community with other methods secondary to their important representative role.

4.4 The Role of Council Staff

Council staff, through legislation and delegation from Council, have specific roles in informing the community and engaging with the community and stakeholders. Council conducts formal and informal community and stakeholder engagement in order to provide advice and information that assists in decision making.

4.5 Why Engage?

The reasons that the West Coast Council engages with the community and stakeholders are to:

- build trust.
- manage expectations more effectively.
- maintain relevant and current contacts.
- make more informed and robust decisions, demonstrating good stewardship of Council resources.
- build partnerships and create ownership of Council decisions.
- provide opportunity to review consultation processes and develop tools that will support a transparent governing environment.

4.6 Principles Framework

The level of engagement undertaken relates directly to the level of community involvement required and should always be appropriate to the nature, complexity and impact of the matter, plan, or strategy. Council will endeavour to ensure that its engagement processes are appropriate, clear, and accessible.

The following framework will guide Council's engagement activities and the methods that may be used:

| | Inform | Engage | Involve | Collaborate | Empower |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| Participation Goal | One-way communication to provide information to improve understanding about something that is going to happen or has happened | Two-way communication designed to obtain ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform Council decision-making | Participation designed to identify issues and views to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered prior to Council decision-making | Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision-making | For community and stakeholders to be active in the decision-making process |
| Council's Undertaking | To share information about a decision or direction | To explore options, gain feedback and an understanding of concerns and preferences | To involve community/ stakeholders in the process so ideas, concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed or the final decision | To collaborate with community/ stakeholders so advice, information and preferred solutions are considered | To provide mechanisms to help with decisions and implement what is decided |
| Community/ Stakeholder Role | Listen | Contribute | Participate | Partner | Influence |

This framework, in conjunction with relevant legislative requirements and available resources guides decisions on how Council engages on specific issues.

4.7 Engagement Guidelines

This section provides guidance on how Council intends to engage in specific contexts. It does not cover informal engagement, nor the primary role of Councillors in understanding the community. While the

guidelines represent our intention, specific activities may be varied if required.

4.7.1 Information on Council Activities

Council will provide updates on its activities through:

- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- West Coast Council Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Responses to public questions on, or without, notice at each Ordinary Council Meeting.
- Council maintained email lists.

West Coast Council social media specifically for interruptions to services via service providers, roadworks, parks and tracks closures.

4.7.2 Council Documents

Important Council documents including meeting agendas, Council policies, strategies and reports will be available to the public through:

- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- Council Offices.

4.7.3 Council Meetings

Council meetings will be advertised in the Advocate, on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/> and on Council's Facebook. The agenda and minutes will be available from <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

The public will be able to attend or view Council Meetings and ask questions in person or through Councillors or the General Manager.

Council is always open to feedback and ideas. They can be provided through:

- Contacting Councillors, or the General Manager.
- Via email wcc@westcoast.tas.gov.au.
- Via letter to Council Offices.

4.7.4 Ten Year Strategic Plan

The ten-year strategic plan (eg. *West Coast Community Plan 2025*) as the key guiding document is created in partnership with the community. This involves an advertised process for community input, which includes:

- Surveys.
- Workshops.
- Reference Groups.

The process is advertised for a period of at least 4 weeks through:

- The Advocate.
- Flyers in Council Agencies.
- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Council maintained email lists.

The draft ten-year strategic plan is provided for public submissions for a period of at least 6-weeks. The request for submissions is advertised as above. Submissions are provided to Council and shared with the community on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

Reviews of the ten-year strategic plan will be conducted by Council with the draft plan provided for public submissions for a period of at least 6 weeks. Council will determine the engagement process at the time.

4.7.5 Annual Plan

The Annual Plan will be created by Council with community involvement. This will be conducted through a survey. The survey will seek the community's views on priorities for the upcoming financial year. The survey will be available on:

- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- In hard copy at Council Offices and agencies.

The survey will be open for a period from the first Monday in November to the first Monday in February each year. Details of the survey will be advertised on:

- Flyers in Council Agencies.
- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- West Coast Council Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Council maintained email lists.

Submissions will be received via survey.

The results of the survey will be shared with the public on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

The Annual Plan will be included in the public Council documents for the June ordinary meeting and once

adopted provided on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

4.7.6 Strategies

Strategies created by Council will be with support from a reference group or selected stakeholders.

Participation may be advertised publicly by invitation.

Draft strategies will be provided for public comment for a period of at least 4 weeks, with the request for comment advertised by:

- Flyers in Council Agencies.
- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- West Coast Council Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Council maintained email lists.

The public comment will be included for Council consideration at the relevant ordinary meeting.

Submissions will be received via mail, at the Council Office, email, or survey (where applicable).

The strategy, once adopted, will be provided on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

4.7.7 Education and Health Related Strategies

For strategies relating to health or education the default reference group will be the relevant Council Committee.

For strategies relating to health - Liveable Communities Advisory Committee (LCAC)

For strategies relating to education - Education and Training Committee (ETC)

4.7.8 Plans or Policies that significantly alter or reduce a Council service or infrastructure

Where a plan or policy to be adopted or implemented by Council involves a significant reduction in service or infrastructure it will be provided to the community for public submissions prior to adoption or implementation.

The determination of whether a plan or policy to be adopted or implemented by Council involves a significant reduction in service or infrastructure will be made by the General Manager in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors.

Public submissions will be invited for a period of at least 3 weeks, with the request for comment advertised by:

- Flyers in Council Agencies.
- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- West Coast Council Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Council maintained email lists.

Submissions will be received via mail, at the Council Office, email, or survey (where applicable).

The public comment will be included for Council consideration at the relevant ordinary meeting and be made publically available on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

4.7.9 The Customer Service Charter and Community Engagement Policy

The Customer Service Charter and Community Engagement Policy will be updated every two years with reports to be tabled and presented to Council for approval.

Public submissions on these draft policies will be invited for a period of at least 3 weeks, with the request for comment advertised by:

- Flyers in Council Agencies.
- <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.
- West Coast Council Social media – particularly Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Radio, particularly Mayor on Air (7XS).
- Council maintained email lists.

Submissions will be received via mail, at the Council Office, email, or survey (where applicable).

The public comment will be included for Council consideration at the relevant ordinary meeting and be made publically available on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

4.7.10 Dissemination of Information to Community

Council specific information is provided to the community via the following channels:

- West Coast Council social media – Council information and for other service providers and their interruptions to services, planned roadworks, parks and tracks closures, or important community events.
- Flyers in local businesses, libraries and Council Agencies.
- Council office located in Queenstown.
- Council Email Lists.

Non-Council related information that comes from external sources such as service providers, community groups and other organisations is provided to the community via the following channels:

- West Coast Community pages on social media.
- Flyers in local businesses and libraries.
- Emails to relevant networks and groups.

Such information is shared when there is a foreseeable opportunity for people in the community to benefit. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Grant opportunities.
- Education and training opportunities.
- Local events.
- Information sessions.
- Employment opportunities.

Feedback from non-Council related information is received by way of phone or email.

Councillors also play an important role in disseminating information through their networks.

4.7.11 Other Council Policies

There will be no special request for public submissions on other draft Council Policies. The draft policies will be included in the publicly available agenda for the relevant Council Meeting, available at <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/> or Council Offices and agencies. Submissions may be made directly to Councillors.

Once adopted, Council policies will be available on <https://www.westcoast.tas.gov.au/>.

4.7.12 Land Use Planning Matters

Land Use Planning Matters will be dealt with in accordance with the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (Tas) and the current planning scheme.

5 Legislation and Related Documents

Local Government Act 1993 (Tas)

Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (Tas)

West Coast Community Plan 2025