



Pyrenees

Shire Council

Communications & Engagement
Strategy 2022-2025

Acknowledgement:

Pyrenees Shire Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land upon which the Pyrenees Shire is based.

We acknowledge the people past and present of the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Eastern Maar and Wotjobaluk tribes as the first Peoples of this region.

We pay our respects to the customers, traditions and stewardship of the land by Elders past and present, and the emerging leaders and recognise their ongoing connection to the land.



Contents:



Where we are now:

Pyrenees Shire Council is going through organisational change to strengthen our focus on *Community First*, while our communities continue to steadily grow.

Our Community

There are around 7500 residents within the Pyrenees Shire, a figure that is projected to slowly rise over the next 10 years.

35.9% of our community is aged over 60 years with a median age of 51. Most residents own their own homes and single person households account for 32% of our people – higher than the State average.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples make up 1.9% of the Pyrenees population, with only 3.6% of households speaking a language other than English at home.

24.5% of households have no internet access at home.

Our Council

Council is going through change to align its service priorities with the Council Plan 2021-2025 and strengthen its focus on *Community First*.

As part of the change program, we aim to rediscover our Core Values to more fully understand who we are and how we see ourselves, shape ourselves as an organisation and set expectations about what our community and customers expect of us.

This program will include a review of our *Customer Service Charter* to ensure appropriate standards are set for us to deliver professional, reliable and consistent customer service that meets our community and customers' expectations.

Developing this strategy

This strategy builds on the work achieved from previous frameworks and its 2021 Community Engagement Policy.

Over the last 12 months we have begun conversations and dialogue with some of our key audiences to expand our understanding of the needs and aspirations of our community, developing a *Pyrenees Shire Community Vision 2021-2031* with which the *Council Plan 2021-2025* is closely aligned.

Through this process we connected with many people who shared their thoughts, experiences and feelings about their communities and the Pyrenees Shire. This feedback has been invaluable and has helped us identify communication and engagement needs, what we're doing well and what we can improve.

This strategy will sit alongside the Community Engagement Toolkit to work towards meeting our priorities, through developing specific and effective communications and engagement opportunities, creating genuine opportunities to connect, and opportunities to make use of Council services, events, and activities.





Where we want to be:

We seek to build on Council's aspirations for community engagement and communication in accordance with the Local Government Act community engagement principles and our Community's aspirations included within the Pyrenees Shire Community Vision 2021-2031 – to have *“Motivated and inspired community engagement and involvement”*.

The actions and goals outlined within the strategy will help us to deliver innovative and responsive communications to our Community, Customers, Councillors and Council Staff.





Our goals:

This strategy outlines the different service offerings and approaches we will take to ensure proactive and positive engagement and information sharing across all our audiences.

The strategy is a 3-year document; however, it will be reviewed annually to ensure that the actions and goals remain relevant and contemporary in a rapidly changing environment. These are our key goals that will guide us for the next 3 years:

Goal 1: Improve engagement and communication methods to better meet the needs of the target community and desired outcome

- Identify stakeholders early in a project lifecycle to target those impacted and not waste resources
- Ensure the appropriate engagement or communication framework methodology is chosen and used
- Utilise active community groups and encourage new and under-represented groups to participate

Goal 2: Build robust processes and tools to support communication and engagement activities

- Develop guidelines to guide the organisation in appropriate communication and engagement activities
- Ensure the guidelines are aligned and included within Council's project and change management frameworks
- Support our community in developing community action plans that align with the Pyrenees Shire Community Vision 2021-2031

Goal 3: Create an engagement environment which is accessible to all

- Utilise a range of engagement methods that ensures all community members have opportunities to contribute and benefit
- Recognise barriers for some groups and identify novel methods and build relationships to reduce those barriers
- Encourage a wide representation of community diversity in gender, age, culture and occupation

Goal 4: Create a workforce that is informed and empowered to engagement and communicate effectively

- Train staff involved in community engagement in IAP2-based engagement methodologies
- Develop Engagement Champions throughout the organisation to support engagement and communication activities

Goal 5: Develop a culture of proactive and authentic engagement, communication and responsiveness

- Include proactive engagement and improved responsiveness within the Community First cultural change project and review of the Customer Service Charter
- Include proactive engagement and communication within the project and change management frameworks to ensure effective monitoring and measuring
- Ensure engagement and communication is done because we want to do it, not because we need to do it.



Our engagement principles:

The following principles underpin and are our guiding rules for community engagement and communications at the Pyrenees Shire Council.

They are based upon the Engagement Principles contained within the Local Government Act 2020.

Principle 1: Purposeful

Community engagement should have a clearly defined purpose. Participants can better engage with Council when they understand the purposes and expected outcomes of an engagement activity. The aim of community engagement is to gather meaningful input from community into decision-making processes.

Principle 2: Accessible

Engagement should be accessible and undertaken in a way that allows participation by all members of the community, regardless of age, ability, education, culture, language, gender, or socioeconomic position. We will work with our community to understand barriers to participation and ensure that these are identified and managed.

Principle 3: Representative

We will aim to engage across all persons, groups, and demographic cohorts of our community to ensure that participation is representative of the population likely to be impacted by a particular project.

Principle 4: Informed

We will ensure that our community has access to information to guide their input into community engagement activities. We will communicate with our participants and our community to keep them informed of engagement outcomes and communicate the ways in which community input has been used to inform decision-making.



Our framework:

This strategy is committed to delivering community engagement and communication activities in line with the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.

The table below sets out the levels of engagement and influence for different decisions. They are not mutually exclusive, and, in most cases, Council will use a combination of techniques to ensure the engagement process is successful.

We aim to ensure that residents and stakeholders have access to information to understand what Council is doing and the decisions we make and participate where appropriate.

| | inform | consult | involve | collaborate | empower |
|---------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| goal | To provide a balanced and objective information in a timely manner. | To obtain feedback on issues, alternatives and decisions. | To work with stakeholders to make sure that concerns and aspirations are considered and understood. | To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision-making. | To place the final decision-making in the hands of stakeholders. |
| our role | We will keep you informed. | We will explore options by listening and acknowledging your feedback. | We will work with you to ensure your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the decision made. | We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in the decisions as much as possible. | We will ensure that the information and tools are available for you to meaningfully participate |
| your role | Keep in touch. | Contribute ideas and feedback. | Participate in the engagement process by sharing ideas, concerns and aspirations. | Work together to develop solutions. | To collaborate with Council to implement agreed decision. |
| example tools | Factsheets Digital content | Surveys Public comment Drop in sessions | Workshops Digital engagement | Participatory decision making Advisory Committee | Toolkits Fact sheets Regular updates |

Source: International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)



Our success:

How will success be measured?

Goal 1: Improve engagement and communication methods to better meet the needs of the target community and the desired outcome

- Increased number of engagement plans developed for projects
- Increased participation statistics measured through the Engagement Hub

Goal 2: Build robust processes and tools to support communication and engagement activities

- Development and implementation of Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit
- Increased number of projects that complete an engagement plan

Goal 3: Create an engagement environment which is accessible to all

- Inclusion within Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit tips on engagement and communication for specific cohorts
- Increased participation by stakeholders formerly facing barriers to engagement


Goal 4: Create a workforce that is informed and empowered to engage and communicate effectively


- Number of staff trained in communication and engagement
- Increased awareness of engagement as part of everyone's role measured through annual staff survey
- Completed Council-wide review of Customer Service Charter


Goal 5: Develop a culture of proactive engagement, communication and responsiveness

- Increased scores as measured through the Community Satisfaction Survey
- Increased number of genuine engagement opportunities
- Reduction in complaints about lack of responsiveness

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