



Community Engagement Policy

Classification	Policy
Strategic reference	Action Plan 4 – Our Organisation
Relevant legislation	Local Government Act 1999 – Section 50 and Section 50(A)
Relevant documents	Community Engagement Charter (as gazetted 15 December 2025)
Responsible officer	Chief Executive Officer
Version	1.0
Date adopted	September 2026
Next review date	September 2030

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council aims to make decisions in an open, responsible, and responsive way. It does this by communicating and engaging effectively with the community.
- 1.2 Involving the community in decisions helps the Council create better and more informed policies and outcomes.
- 1.3 The Council’s community includes people who live, work, study, own property, run businesses (private or government), visit the area, or use Council services, facilities, and public spaces.
- 1.4 The Council recognises that “community” can mean different things, such as:
 - (a) people living in a specific area
 - (b) people who share common interests
 - (c) groups connected by activities, industries, clubs, or identities
- 1.5 Section 50A of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires the Council to have a policy for community engagement. This policy must follow the rules and principles set out in the Community Engagement Charter¹ (the Charter).

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 This Policy explains the Council’s overall approach to community engagement, as required by the Act and the Charter.
- 2.2 For clarity, the terms ‘community engagement’ and ‘public consultation’ are used interchangeability in this Policy to reflect their interchangeable usage in the Act.

¹ The Community Engagement Charter was established under section 50 of the *Local Government Act 1999* and gazetted by the Minister for Local Government on 15 December 2025.

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- 2.3 The purpose of this Policy is to make sure the Council meets its legal requirements for public consultation by:
- (a) Following the rules set out in the Act and the Charter.
 - (b) Using engagement methods that are suitable, practical, and cost effective for each situation.
 - (c) Making sure the community, key stakeholders, and interested people have a chance to take part.
 - (d) Using community feedback to help improve decisions.
 - (e) Explaining the reasons for Council decisions or actions, where it is reasonable to do so.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies when the Council, someone authorised by the Council, or anyone acting on the Council's behalf carries out decisions, activities or processes that require public consultation under the Act, the Charter, or this Policy.
- 3.2 In this Policy, 'Council' also includes anyone acting for the Council under its authority.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for making sure this policy is put into practice and followed. The CEO also reports the results of consultations back to the Council when needed. Details about who has been given specific powers are set out in clause 9 of the Policy.
- 3.4 This Policy does not apply when the Council is acting under other laws. If another law sets out its own consultation requirements (such as the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016), those requirements must be followed instead.
- 3.5 If consultation is not required under the Act, the Charter, or this Policy, the Council (or someone acting for it) can decide what consultation is appropriate, as long as they follow any other relevant laws or policies.

4. DEFINITIONS

Act is the Local Government Act 1999

Charter means the Section 50 Community Engagement Charter as Gazetted from time to time.

Council means the Southern Mallee District Council.



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5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1 This Policy has been created and adopted to meet the Council's legal requirements under section 50(A) of the Act.
- 5.2 When preparing this Policy, the Council considered the following principles from the Charter:
- (a) members of the community should have reasonable, timely, meaningful and ongoing opportunities to gain access to information about proposed decisions, activities and processes of councils and to participate in relevant processes;
 - (b) information about issues should be in plain language, readily accessible and in a form that facilitates community participation;
 - (c) participation methods should seek to foster and encourage constructive dialogue, discussion and debate in relation to proposed decisions, activities and processes of councils;
 - (d) participation methods should be appropriate having regard to the significance and likely impact of proposed decisions, activities and processes;
 - (e) 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.
- 5.3 The Council will carry out public consultation in line with the Act, the Charter, and this Policy.
- 5.4 Acknowledging that the Policy sets out the minimum legislative consultation requirements, Council can, on a case-by-case basis, choose to do extra consultation steps if it considers them beneficial to the consultation outcome.
- 5.5 From time to time, the Council may alter or substitute this Policy, and will do so after carrying out public consultation.

6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION CATEGORIES

- 6.1 The Charter groups different types of consultation into categories, depending on the type of matter being considered.
- 6.2 These are:

6.2.1 **Significant – Annual business plan and rating policy**

- (a) Adopting an Annual Business Plan – section 123(3)(b)



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- (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)

6.2.2 Significant

- (a) Representation reviews – section 12(7)
- (b) Development and review of Strategic Management Plans – section 122(6)
- (c) Changes to use of differential rating – section 156(4a)(b)
- (d) Revocation of classification of land as community land – sections 194(2)(b)
- (e) Community Land Management Plans – adoption – section 197(1)
- (f) Community Land Management Plans – significant amendments – section 198(3)
- (g) Alienation of community land by lease or license – section 202(2)

6.2.3 Standard

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

6.2.4 Local

- (a) 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)
- (b) Proposed planting of vegetation on a road – significant impact – section 232(b)

6.2.5 Inform

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



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- (b) 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)
- (c) Election information – section 13A (2) of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*

6.3 Clause 7 of this Policy includes a table that explains the types of engagement activities the Council will use to meet its consultation requirements under the Act and the Charter.

7. CHARTER ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 7.1 The Charter also sets out the minimum requirements that must be carried out when the law requires public consultation.
- 7.2 The Council will follow, at a the minimum, the public consultation requirements set out in the Charter for each type of matter. Council may undertake additional activities at its discretion (see clause 5).
- 7.3 The table below explains the engagement activities the Council will use to meet its consultation obligations under the Act and the Charter.
- 7.4 If more than one type of engagement activity is listed, the Council does not have to use all of them for every situation.



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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP & Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Website	Publish information about the matter that can be easily found on a Council website.	X	X	X	X	X	Information published on a Council website.
News publication	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.	X	X				Information published in a print or digital newspaper, community newsletter or other (non-council) publication circulating in the area of Council.
Consult with the whole Council area	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.	X	X	X			Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. Information made available at Council offices and libraries. Consider if site specific and/ or community noticeboard signage would be suitable for this engagement.
Invite submissions	Provide information about how the community can make a submission, including timeframe.	X	X				Engagement material provides information about how the community can make a submission, including the minimum 21 day timeframe for submissions.
Explain decision-making process	In material prepared explain what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks	X	X				Engagement material explains what the Council proposes to do, why it proposes to do it, and what it seeks



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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP & Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
	to achieve. Explain how community feedback will inform the Council's decision.						to achieve. Information published explains that feedback received will be taken into account by the Council before making a decision.
Seek and consider feedback from the community—significant matters	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.	X	X				Feedback will be invited by: • Written submissions • Completion of survey or questionnaire • Attendance in person, by representative or via electronic means at an event hosted by Council. Community Engagement period open for a minimum of 21 days Summary of community engagement feedback considered by Council ahead of decision.
Public Meeting	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.	X					A public meeting will be held either as part of a Council meeting, or as a separate event, for the making of written or verbal submissions.
Council meeting invitation	Invite people who have made a written submission to attend a		X				People who made written submissions will be invited to attend



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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP & Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
	Council meeting to speak to their submission before the decision is made.						a Council meeting and speak to their submissions before a decision is made
Seek and consider feedback from the community	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.			X	X		Feedback will be invited by: • Written submissions • Completion of a survey or questionnaire or other engagement tool • Attendance in person, by representative or via electronic means at an event hosted by Council. Information published indicates that feedback received will be taken into account by the Council before making a decision. Community Engagement period open for a minimum of 21 days (Standard category) (continued next page) Community Engagement period open for a period of 14 days or such other period as determined by the responsible General Manager in consultation with the Comms Team (local category)



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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP & Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Consult with local community	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.				X		Consider information published on a social media platform maintained by Council. Information made available at Council offices, libraries in the area within the Council affected by the Council decision or action.
Information to the whole Council area	Provide information to the whole of the Council's community if it may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council Consider information made available at Council offices and libraries Consider signage in a local location



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Charter requirement	Mandatory minimum actions to achieve Charter requirement	Charter Category					Engagement activities
		Significant ABP & Rating Policy	Significant	Standard	Local	Inform	
Information to local community	Provide information to the local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action.					X	Information published on a social media platform maintained by Council Consider Council newsletter publication (hard copy or digital) Consider targeted letters or leaflet drops to local community that may be directly affected by the Council decision or action Information made available at Council offices and libraries Consider signage in a local location e.g. reserve, shopping centre, library, community noticeboard, community centre or other.



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8. OTHER DECISIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES

- 8.1 Council recognizes there may be decisions, activities and processes where the Act and Charter are silent in relation to community engagement, but for which community engagement may nevertheless be appropriate.
- 8.2 Council may undertake community engagement activities for community participation in relation to other decisions, activities or processes of the Council not specified in the Charter at its absolute discretion. However, Council is not required to give prior consideration and/or to determine whether or not to undertake any such steps in relation to these matters.

9. DELEGATION

- 9.1 Specific engagement activities to be undertaken in relation to any particular decision, activity or process shall be determined on a case by case basis; by
- Council, by resolution.
 - The Chief Executive Officer
 - A delegate with the power to undertake community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy or
 - A delegate with power to make a decision or undertake an activity or process that requires community engagement under the Act, the Charter or this policy.
- 9.2 Council, the Chief Executive Officer or a delegate is not required by this policy to undertake, or to consider or determine whether to undertake, additional engagement activities or engagement methods. Such a decision is at the absolute discretion of the decision maker.

10. AVAILABILITY

- 10.1. This Policy is available free of charge on the Council's Website: www.southernmallee.sa.gov.au
- 10.2 A printed copy of the Policy may be purchased from the Principal Council Office, Day Street, Pinnaroo, upon payment of a prescribed fee in accordance with Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

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

12. ADOPTION & AMENDMENT HISTORY

The table below sets out the adoption, review and amendment history of the Policy.

Version No:	Issue Date:	Authorised by:	Description of Change:	Minutes Reference:
1.0	September 2026	Council	Initial Policy – Community Engagement Policy	Ordinary Council – 16 September 2026