

Hobsons Bay City Council

# Community Engagement Policy 2021

**HOBSONS  
BAY CITY  
COUNCIL**



**Hobsons Bay City Council  
Draft Community Engagement Policy 2021**

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## Acknowledgements

### Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Hobsons Bay City Council acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of local municipal lands and waterways. We recognise the First Peoples' relationship to this land and offer our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

### A Fair Hobsons Bay for All 2019-23

In accordance with the *A Fair Hobsons Bay for All 2019-23*, Council is committed to engaging with and generating feedback from all members of our community, taking extra care to hear a diversity of voices and ensure potentially underrepresented communities are empowered to participate in engagement processes.

### Acknowledgement of Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act and Equal Opportunity Act

Council acknowledges the responsibility to comply with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*. The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity. Council strongly supports equality for all. We embrace diversity and condemn any kind of discrimination.

## Mayors Message

I am proud to present our Community Engagement Policy. During the community consultation of the draft Policy, we received great insights from our community about the increased level of participation, transparency and accountability they want to see in engagement processes. We have listened, and our commitment to connect with our community is at the heart of this policy.

Everything we do is guided by the philosophy of 'Customer First.' We strive to remain responsive to the changing needs of our community. By actively listening to the people of Hobsons Bay about what they need and want for our city, we build capacity for better collaboration and innovation. We look for every opportunity to deliver more efficiently and effectively so that we can honour our commitments to our community.

Happily, Victorian Government legislation sees community engagement in the same light we do – as paramount for the delivery of good services and projects in the local realm. Councils are required to deliver and maintain a community engagement policy as articulated in the Local Government Act 2020. This Policy recognises this need and is an extension of the work we have been doing, guided by the Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy Framework 2015.

Engagement is about an ongoing relationship with our community, and an ongoing conversation about what is important to them. In order to get the best outcomes from these conversations, we rely on having clear processes that enable genuine communication to occur. If we are to connect effectively with our community, we must make participation easy, accessible and appropriate.

We look forward to living out our principles outlined in this Policy to make it even easier for everyone to contribute to our decision-making processes. Together, we will continue to make Hobsons Bay an even better place to live.



## Executive Summary

The Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy 2021 articulates the principles, commitments and various levels of engagement that Council is committed to delivering to ensure a clear process for community engagement in Council's decision-making processes.

The Community Engagement Policy influences all aspects of Council's work, from day to day activities and service provision to overarching organisational policies and strategic directions.

*The Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* requires that all councils deliver and maintain a community engagement policy by 1 March 2021. This policy recognises this need and is an extension of the work Council has been doing in community engagement, as directed by the Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy Framework 2015.

### ***Council's strategic framework***

The Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision articulates the community's vision for Hobsons Bay, and the six priorities. The vision and the six priorities the Hobsons Bay community developed are:

***'By 2030, embracing our heritage, environment and diversity, we - the community of Hobsons Bay – will be an inclusive, empowered, sustainable and visionary community led and supported by a progressive Council of excellence.'***

- **Priority 1: Visionary, vibrant, accountable urban planning**
- **Priority 2: Community wellbeing and inter-connection**
- **Priority 3: Growth through innovation, access to local jobs, technology and education**
- **Priority 4: Proactive enrichment, expansion and conservation of the natural and urban environment**
- **Priority 5: Activate sustainable practices**
- **Priority 6: An accessible and connected community**

Council operationalises this Vision through its Council Plan, which is developed every four years and aligns with the Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision. The Vision is also supported through the organisational mission, as articulated in the Council Plan 2017-21:

***'We will listen, engage and work with our community to plan, deliver and advocate for Hobsons Bay to secure a happy, healthy, fair and sustainable future for all.'***

Council's organisational values reflect the held beliefs about what is important to Council's workforce and drives its behaviour. They are: **Respectful; Community driven and focussed; Trusted and reliable; Efficient and responsible; Bold and innovative; Accountable and transparent; and Recognised.**



### ***What is Community Engagement?***

Community engagement is an overarching term to describe the planned process whereby Council and the community have conversations with each other and exchange information through a range of methods. When we refer to community engagement, these conversations take place in order for the community to be involved in Council’s decision-making process, as well as to build relationships and strengthen the community. The fundamental principle behind Council’s community engagement practice is to ensure a transparent and responsive process. Community engagement is one of the ways that transparency, openness and a reciprocal trust relationship between Council and the community is enabled.

### ***The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy***

The purpose of the policy is to guide and apply to all forms of engagement undertaken by Council officers, Councillors, and consultants/contractors acting on behalf of Council.

### ***Community Engagement Framework***

The Community Engagement Policy is one component of Council’s broader Community Engagement Framework, along with Council’s internal-facing Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit.

### ***Principles and commitments***

This policy includes principles that are responsive to the needs and wants of the Hobsons Bay community. These principles and their associated commitments build upon the Council’s values and outline what the community can expect from Council. The principles are: **Respect and legitimacy; Transparency and honesty; Participation; Inclusion and accessibility; Accountability and responsive approach.** The commitments connected to each of the principles are contained in the ‘Principles and commitments’ of this policy.

### ***Actioning our commitments***

There are many contributing factors and sources that inform a Council decision, and they all hold strong value. Community feedback is one of these factors. All factors need to be considered together as a whole for Council to make balanced decisions that serve the community well.

### ***Why do we engage?***

Council undertakes community engagement in order to: learn from the community about what they want and need for Hobsons Bay; ensure the community has the opportunity to understand the matter at hand and have their say on decisions that may affect them; gather information, feedback and experiences from the community in the planning stage of Council’s projects, services and decisions, as well as throughout the project lifespan; and maintain an active and reciprocal relationship and partnership with our community, and others contained in the policy.

### ***Who do we engage with?***

In the context of this policy, community includes all those who live, work, play and visit Hobsons Bay, or those may be impacted by or interested in a Council decision. Hobsons Bay has a diverse population and Council accepts, respects and celebrates the diversity and differences between people in our organisation and our community. Council, where possible, provides opportunities for all community members to participate in engagement opportunities that may affect them.



### ***When do we engage?***

Council will engage with the community in order to garner specific feedback when there is an opportunity or requirement for community and stakeholder input during the planning stages of a decision or deliverable of Council.

Considerable planning goes into all community engagement activities at Council. Timing of engagement is a key consideration in this planning. We strongly value our community's time and effort, so we aim to be as efficient, targeted and streamlined in our engagement as possible.

### ***How do we engage?***

When delivering community engagement processes, we will be guided by our principles, commitments and the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. Council will be clear about what it is trying to achieve, understand who needs to be involved, and will engage in different ways to ensure everyone impacted or interested has an opportunity to participate. This will be mapped out by Council staff in the form of a community engagement plan that is specific to the matter.

### ***Types and context of community engagement***

Our community engagement activities will broadly fall into the below categories. The engagement approach, level and tools will be selected depending on the needs and complexity of the matter.

1. **Community engagement about major strategic work – deliberative engagement:** The *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to apply their community engagement policy in the development of the below items, and to undertake deliberative engagement practices in the development of: Community Vision; 4 Year Council Plans; Financial Plan; and Asset Plan.
2. **Community engagement about local issues and regular operations:** Some local decisions, projects and services, potentially including but not limited to annual budgets, revenue and rating plans, master plans, structure plans, city-wide policies / strategies / services and infrastructure delivery (built and non-built form) may require community engagement.

### ***The role of Councillors in community engagement***

The Councillors of Hobsons Bay determine the strategic direction of the organisation and its deliverables and they make the final decisions on matters presented to them formally at Council Meetings. As such, the community engagement processes outlined in this policy are designed to support and complement them in this process.

### ***IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation***

This policy recognises the IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation as the guide to engagement levels. The levels of engagement are: **Inform; Consult; Involve; Collaborate; and Empower**. An interpretation of this spectrum is contained in the 'IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation' section of this policy.

***How we determine and deliver the most appropriate engagement***

To ensure effective and strategic community engagement, Council delivers community engagement using the below step by step approach that is an essential part of the planning process. Full details within each step are contained in the 'How we determine and deliver the most appropriate engagement' section of this policy.

**Define purpose, context and scope - Stakeholders identification and analysis - Plan the process – Engage - Review and learn - Share the knowledge and apply to the decision - Closing the loop - Evaluate**

**Definitions; Statutory framework, exclusions, legislative compliance; Development, Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy; References**



## Highlights of Hobsons Bay

The City of Hobsons Bay is situated at the northern end of Port Phillip Bay, about 7kms west of central Melbourne. Hobsons Bay is known for its rich natural environment, its maritime history and its industrial strength.

The Yalukit Wilum clan were the first people to occupy the area now known as Hobsons Bay. A number of sites of significance to the Aboriginal community are located throughout the municipality, particularly along the coastal trail.

The City of Hobsons Bay was created on 22 June 1994, following the amalgamation of the former City of Altona (which at the time included Altona, Altona North, Altona Meadows, Seabrook and Brooklyn) and the former City of Williamstown (which at the time included Newport, Spotswood, Williamstown and Williamstown North) with parts of Laverton (from the former Shire of Werribee) and South Kingsville (from the former City of Footscray).

It includes the suburbs of Altona, Altona Meadows, Altona North, Brooklyn, Laverton, Newport, Seabrook, Seaholme, South Kingsville, Spotswood, Williamstown and Williamstown North. Each suburb has its own unique character, from the historic seaport of Williamstown with its range of heritage buildings, to the more recently developed residential areas of Altona Meadows and Seabrook. In the northern end of the city, Altona North and Spotswood are undergoing a transitional phase as parts of these suburbs are shifting from former industrial to residential land, combined with the presence of new industry such as refineries, warehouses, as well as logistics, considering the proximity to the port. In time, this will contribute to changing the face of our city. Hobsons Bay has a range of major industrial complexes, which contribute significantly to the economy of Victoria.

Hobsons Bay is unique to the Western Metropolitan Region. It covers an area of approximately 64 square kilometres with over 20kms of coastline. It is also home to significant coastal wetlands, five creek systems, remnant native grasslands, and important flora and fauna habitats, which makes up 24 per cent of the city's total land area.

The city is located between seven and 20 kilometres from the CBD and has good access to regional transport facilities such as the West Gate Freeway, the Western Ring Road, CityLink, the National Rail Line, together with the ports and airports of Melbourne and Avalon.

## Our community profile

Our community has told us they love Hobsons Bay for its proximity to the Melbourne CBD, its beaches, its parks and green spaces, its vibrant atmosphere and sense of community, its character housing and above all, its people. For many, Hobsons Bay is the ideal place to live.

Hobsons Bay had an estimated resident population of 97,751 in 2019, which is forecast to grow to 114,426 by 2030. Thirty per cent of Hobsons Bay residents were born overseas. Close to a quarter of those residents born overseas come from non-English speaking countries which results in over 100 different languages and over 90 different faiths being represented in Hobsons Bay. There are 490 residents in Hobsons Bay who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Sixty six per cent of residents speak only English at home, while 24 per cent speak another language and speak English well or very well, and five per cent speak another language and speak English not well or not at all.

It is estimated that 17.6 per cent (16,995) of Hobsons Bay residents have a disability and that that 4,950 Hobsons Bay residents (5.6 per cent) need help with their day-to-day lives due to disability.

Women represent 51 per cent of the Hobsons Bay population. Data on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual (LGBTIQ+) community is limited and difficult to estimate. The Victorian Population Health Survey 2017 estimates there may be 12.2 per cent or one in eight people aged 18-24 years who identify as LGBTIQ+.

This diversity highlights that a variety of communication methods and approaches are required to support the engagement of our community, taking into account different levels of literacy, digital literacy, languages, cultures, faiths, genders, sex, sexual orientation, ages and abilities.

## Council's strategic framework

The Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision articulates the community's vision for Hobsons Bay, and the six priorities. The vision was created in 2016 through an extensive deliberative engagement exercise in partnership with the community, which included a citizens' jury comprised of community members that represented the demographics of Hobsons Bay. The vision and the six priorities our community developed are:

***'By 2030, embracing our heritage, environment and diversity, we - the community of Hobsons Bay – will be an inclusive, empowered, sustainable and visionary community led and supported by a progressive Council of excellence.'***

- **Priority 1: Visionary, vibrant, accountable urban planning**
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The way in which Council strives to operationalise this vision is through its Council Plan. The Council Plan is developed every four years and aligns the Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision to the planning, development, resource allocation and service provision to create an even better Hobsons Bay for the community. The Vision is also supported through the organisational mission, as articulated in the Council Plan 2017-21:

***‘We will listen, engage and work with our community to plan, deliver and advocate for Hobsons Bay to secure a happy, healthy, fair and sustainable future for all.’***

This is delivered through Council’s organisational values. These values reflect the held beliefs about what is important to Council’s workforce and drives its behaviour.

**Respectful**

Treating everyone fairly and respecting different views.

**Community driven and focussed**

Delivering results that demonstrate that we understand community needs and put people first.

**Trusted and reliable**

Working hard to be responsive and meet expectations, delivering on what we promise to achieve in the best interests of the community.

**Efficient and responsible**

Engaged and taking pride in our work, wanting to continually review and improve in order to provide good value and cost-efficient services.

**Bold and innovative**

Proactive, adaptable, open to change and taking calculated risks, not afraid to try new things and learn from mistakes.

**Accountable and transparent**

Making well-informed decisions based on best practice and evidence, which take into account what our community tells us.

**Recognised**

As working for an employer of choice, with leadership that recognises and values the contributions, skills and the expertise of its workforce and inspires people to develop and do their best.

The Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision, which was developed *BY* the community, *FOR* the community informs and guides everything we do. As a Council, we have made a commitment to our community that we will work towards their vision by incorporating it into the development of our Council Plan, Annual Action Plan and Budgets until 2030. The Council Plan 2017-2021 is Council’s key strategic document that describes how we will work, as an organisation, to achieve the vision and priorities of our community.

The Community Engagement Policy influences all aspects of Councils work, from day to day activities and service provision to overarching organisational policies and strategic directions.



*\*The Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision, together with the Council Plan 2017-21, met Council’s legislative requirement for an integrated Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP), as per section 27 of the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.*

*\*In 2021, Council’s reporting framework will change to be compliant with the Local Government Act 2020 and Council Plan 2021-25.*

## What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is an overarching term to describe the planned process whereby Council and the community have conversations with each other and exchange information through a range of methods. When we refer to community engagement, these conversations take place in order for the community to be involved in Council’s decision-making process, as well as to build relationships and strengthen the community. It can also involve conversations about areas of advocacy that Council will direct towards other levels of government or bodies on behalf of the community.

The fundamental principle behind Council’s community engagement practice is to ensure a transparent and responsive process which enables the community to participate, shape and influence decisions affecting them. Engagement at its best must reflect the same diversity that exists in Hobsons Bay and engagement is achieved when the community is and feels part of a process.

Community engagement is one of the ways that transparency, openness and a reciprocal trust relationship between Council and the community is enabled. Furthermore, it leads to the strengthening of community participation, a sense of community ownership and capacity building.

Community engagement is a part of public participation, which refers to community being involved in decisions. Public participation is defined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as *“the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision-making process. We use the term public participation to describe these situations, though the same activities are also described as community or stakeholder consultation, engagement and participation.”*

The importance of community engagement in Hobsons Bay can be illustrated by examples where the community guided the trajectory of Council projects.

1. The community engagement process for the Hobsons Bay 2030 Community Vision resulted in the development of a vision for the city and the six priorities through an extensive deliberative engagement exercise in partnership with the community. This included a citizens’ jury comprised of community members that represented the demographics of Hobsons Bay. (<https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/Hobsons-Bay-2030>)
2. The community engagement process for the Urban Forest Strategy resulted in Council’s commitment to increase the city’s tree canopy to 30 per cent by 2040, which will see the planting of more than 50,000 trees in the next five years. (<https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/urban-forest-strategy>)
3. The community engagement process for the Amendment C131 resulted in the entire community of Hobsons Bay being able to have their say on the important update process of the Hobsons Bay planning scheme to align with Victorian Government requirements. (<https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/amendmentC131> )
4. The community engagement process for the Altona Beach Precinct has resulted in a long-term engagement exercise about multiple aspects of the precinct in order to capture ongoing/future needs of this important civic location. (<https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/altonabeachprecinct-1>)

5. The community engagement process for Better Places Laverton resulted in the progression of open space upgrades on Frank Gibson, Dick Murdoch and Whittaker Avenue Reserves. (<https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/better-places-laverton>)
6. The community engagement process for the Mason Street Traffic Calming project resulted in a range of safety-enhancing traffic measures being implemented into the concept plans. (<https://participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/masonsttraffic>)

## The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy

The *Local Government Act 2020* (“the Act”) requires all Victorian councils to adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy. This policy is an extension of the work we have been doing in community engagement and builds upon the Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy Framework 2015.

It is worth noting that this policy applies to community engagement being undertaken as legislated by the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*, on projects delivered by Council, as directed by Hobsons Bay Councillors or recommended by Council officers.

Some community engagement processes are required to adhere to other Victorian Government legislation, such as land-use planning or service requests/complaints, as outlined below. This policy does not apply to these processes.

The Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme and the Planning and Environment Act 1987 are statutory documents that set out rules and regulations determined by the Victorian Government directing how land can be used, developed and protected within Hobsons Bay. The Planning Scheme contains state and local government planning policies, zones and overlays affecting how land can and cannot be used and developed. This is what guides Council’s planning decisions across Hobsons Bay. The Planning and Environment Act 1987 together with the Planning Scheme and associated policies, outline the process for notification and engagement with the community about planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments.

Customer Service liaison with the Hobsons Bay community is guided by the Customer Focus Charter and the Complaints Management Policy.

The Community Engagement Policy outlines Council’s commitment to the community to engage with them in meaningful, transparent and appropriate ways on decisions that may affect them. It outlines the community engagement principles that drive Council’s engagement practices and outlines how community engagement is carried out using a consistent approach with clear expectations, which in turn enhances the trust and relationship between Council and the community.

The purpose of the policy is to guide and apply to all forms of engagement undertaken by Council officers, Councillors, and consultants/contractors acting on behalf of Council, including:

- the planning, delivery and evaluation of any community engagement process, campaign or activity
- engagement with the community regarding Council matters including proposals, decisions, projects, strategies, plans, programs, services or advocacy
- engagement with key groups in the community, including any or all people who live, work, play or visit Hobsons Bay
- internal engagement within the organisation

## Community Engagement Framework

The Community Engagement Policy is one component of Council’s broader Community Engagement Framework (see figure below). Implementation of this policy will be achieved through the delivery Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit for staff, both of which are also part of Council’s Community Engagement Framework and are internal facing documents.

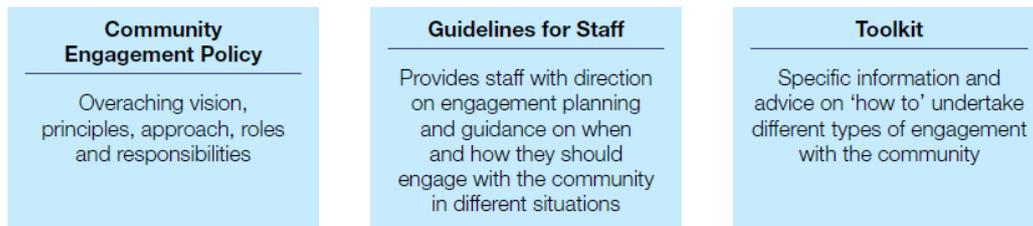


Figure 2. Community Engagement Framework

## Principles and commitments

The *Local Government Act 2020* (“the Act”) requires all councils to adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy, to be formally endorsed by each council by 1 March 2021. This requirement aims to ensure that community members have the opportunity to engage with Council on local priorities.

Section 56 of the Act lists the community engagement principles as:

- a community engagement process must have a clearly defined objective and scope;
- participants in community engagement must have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation;
- participants in community engagement must be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter that is the subject of the community engagement;
- participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement;
- participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.

Council commits to the community engagement principles above, as defined by the Act. This policy includes further principles that are responsive to the needs and wants of the Hobsons Bay community. These principles and their associated commitments build upon the Council’s values and outline what the community can expect from Council.



<b>Principles</b>	<b>Commitments</b>
<b>Respect and legitimacy</b>	<p>We will ensure we identify and reach out to community members directly affected by the matter, and equally, welcome input from all interested groups who may want to be involved in the process.</p> <p>We will actively seek feedback and input from a broad cross section of the community and take all possible actions to ensure the 'quieter voices' are heard.</p> <p>We will value and consider all feedback, welcoming 'out of the box' ideas, provided within a matter's engagement process before making a decision on the matter. We will incorporate your feedback into our decisions where practical, possible and reasonable. While it may not be possible to satisfy all the views expressed, Council will take them all into account, as appropriate.</p> <p>We will welcome, listen to and consider a diversity of views and require all participants in a community engagement process to respect each other's different views and respect Council's need to engage views other than their own.</p> <p>We will engage purposefully, carefully and intentionally when there is a genuine opportunity to have influence. We will respect your time and effort and will seek your input at the appropriate level for the matter.</p> <p>We will engage as early in the project as possible to allow the community to be involved in the decision-making process.</p> <p>We will not use any information you provide us in any other way than the intended engagement activity. Your privacy is assured.</p>
<b>Transparency and honesty</b>	<p>We will plan and clearly explain the reasons, objectives, scope of the engagement, and how much influence you can have in the decision-making process, including what aspects are negotiable and not negotiable. Each operational community engagement plan will include stakeholders, level of engagement and tools/techniques to be used in the process.</p> <p>We will provide you with appropriate and relevant information about the matter at the onset and at key milestones of the engagement so you can fully understand and contribute. This will include any relevant overarching information including local/state/federal government documents or requirement relevant to the project and its engagement.</p> <p>We will 'keep the conversation going' and keep our community 'in the loop' through all stages and the end of a project engagement process. This includes reporting back on the engagement findings, project outcome and how the community input was used to inform Council's work or decisions.</p>



<b>Principles</b>	<b>Commitments</b>
	<p>We will gather and document all forms of feedback and data in an engagement process to capture qualitative, as well as quantitative, information and importantly, the 'lived experience' of the community of Hobsons Bay.</p>
<b>Participation</b>	<p>We will actively listen to our community and encourage them to be honest and open with us.</p> <p>We welcome involvement with people with all levels of knowledge and familiarity on a Council matter. We will enable you to learn more about issues and express your own experiences, needs and ideas.</p> <p>We will provide you with information in a straightforward and clear way, using plain language.</p> <p>We will adapt the ways we provide information to you and capture your feedback in ways that suit our community.</p>
<b>Inclusion and accessibility</b>	<p>We welcome all voices and all feedback from all diverse people with diversity of opinions who live, work, play and visit Hobsons Bay. We will listen to all voices equally.</p> <p>We will proactively engage, reach out and welcome feedback from community members from all backgrounds, income, education, cultures, ethnicities, languages, gender identities, sexual orientations, sex, intersex status, ages, abilities, family status, faith or religious beliefs. We will do all we can to empower potentially underrepresented groups where possible.</p> <p>We will recognise the Indigenous heritage of Hobsons Bay and respect the insights of the First Peoples across our engagement processes. We also recognise the relationship and connection First Peoples have with the land. We will do all we can to ensure that First Peoples have an opportunity to be involved in engagement processes.</p> <p>We recognise there may be barriers to participation, and we will identify and do all we can to reduce physical, social, accessibility cultural and communication and language barriers to participation where possible.</p> <p>We will endeavour where possible to provide appropriate engagement approach, timing, resourcing, tools, methods and platforms to support varied levels of ability, language and other needs across our community.</p> <p>Wherever possible, we will engage face to face in locations where people already are/attend in their community.</p>

Principles	Commitments
	Wherever possible, we will identify and contact special interest community groups/organisations or individuals to assist Council’s engagement process.
<b>Accountability and responsive approach</b>	<p>We recognise the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) as the standard for effective community engagement.</p> <p>We will plan, resource and undertake engagement activities in a timely and coordinated way and provide information that is objective, relevant and easy to understand.</p> <p>We will learn and improve by evaluating our engagement activities.</p> <p>We will be innovative and responsive and seek new ways to engage the community, improve engagement practice and actively work to involve new voices in new ways.</p> <p>To encourage participation in the engagement process, we will contextualise significant city-wide information into locally relevant information.</p>

### Actioning our commitments

There are many contributing factors and sources that inform a Council decision, and they all hold strong value. Community feedback is one of these factors. All factors need to be considered together as a whole for Council to make balanced decisions that serve the community well.

Other contributing factors and sources may include legislated requirements, Council policy, evidence, industry analysis and sought expertise (e.g. Council officers, agencies, contractors engaged by Council).

In some instances, some community members or stakeholders may not support the final decision of Council. However, it is worth noting that Council makes decisions based on relevant available information, which includes the outcomes from community engagement processes, as outlined in this policy.

### Why do we engage?

Council is committed to sound community engagement processes that generate authentic input from the people of Hobsons Bay that shape the direction of our decisions and projects. Council undertakes community engagement in order to:

- learn from the community about what they want and need for Hobsons Bay
- ensure the community has the opportunity to understand the matter at hand and have their say on decisions that may affect them
- ensure Council continually meets the changing needs of the community through the delivery of our projects, services and decisions
- gather information, feedback and experiences from the community in the planning stage of Council’s projects, services and decisions, as well as throughout the project lifespan



- maintain an active and reciprocal relationship and partnership with our community
- strengthen Council's accountability and transparency, enhancing the community's trust and confidence in Council
- make better decisions and identify possible risks, ensuring we deliver a high standard of projects, services and decisions

Good community engagement results in stronger democratic processes, decisions and services that better meet the needs of the community, a more empowered and mobilised community.

### **Who do we engage with?**

In the context of this policy, community includes all those who live, work, play and visit Hobsons Bay, or those may be impacted by or interested in a Council decision. This could include but is not limited to community members such as: residents, ratepayers, families, children, young people, older adults, Council or community advisory committees, customers, community groups, community leaders and representatives, sporting groups, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, health or religious organisations, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, traders/workers, business owners/operators, service users, users of local transport networks, other levels of government, agencies, funding bodies, service providers, developers, or internal stakeholders.

The groups of people we engage with in Hobsons Bay varies depending on the matter – sometimes we engage the community across the entire city on a major policy issue for example, whereas sometimes we engage specific groups that may be directly affected by a matter, for example regarding place-based projects or infrastructure. The people we engage is determined by Council as part of the planning stage for each community engagement process, and may be reviewed as new information and stakeholders are identified.

Hobsons Bay has a diverse population and Council accepts, respects and celebrates the diversity and differences between people in our organisation and our community. These differences refer to inherent qualities of all people from different cultures, ethnicities, languages, gender identities, sex, intersex status, sexual orientations, income, education, backgrounds, age, abilities, family status, faith or religious beliefs.

We recognise that each individual is unique and by embracing these differences and garnering all points of view and experiences in our community engagement, we can only enhance the services provided to our community.

Council, where possible, provides opportunities for all community members to participate in engagement opportunities that may affect them. At times, community members may not be able to participate in decisions that may affect them due to a range of reasons such as, but not limited to confidentiality, statutory and regulatory requirements, operational matters or emergencies.

### **When do we engage?**

Council will engage with the community in order to generate feedback and participation when there is an opportunity or requirement for community and stakeholder input during the planning stages of a decision or deliverable of Council. Council will engage the local community or stakeholders when:

- there is a legislative requirement to consult
- Council is in the planning and development stages of the Council Plan, the Annual Budget (including the Financial Plan and Asset Plan), the Community Vision, local laws, or high-level policies
- a key decision of Council will impact the community to a significant extent

Considerable planning goes into all community engagement activities at Council. Timing of engagement is a key consideration in this planning. We strongly value our community's time and effort, so we aim to be as efficient, targeted and streamlined in our engagement as possible.

To get the best engagement outcome for a Council decision, service, local law, project, plan, policy, budget or service, we engage as early in the process as possible and provide relevant information (such as any relevant overarching Council strategies or documents) at the onset, and at key milestones in the process and communicate the level of influence the community has on the matter at each stage. This enables issues and potential risks to be discovered and managed as early as possible.

Engagement may occur just once or conversely, multiple times through the process before a matter is finalised. We will engage at fair and reasonable times, for fair and reasonable durations, for the community to take part effectively. The timing and frequency of engagement for each matter will be determined by Council as part of the community engagement planning depending on the scale of the matter, the needs of the decision and the impact on the community.

A key component towards the end of an engagement process is reporting back to the community on the engagement findings, project outcome and how the community input was used to inform Council's work or decisions.

### **How do we engage?**

When delivering community engagement processes, we will be guided by our principles, commitments and the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

To make sure we get the best input possible from the community, Council will be clear about what it is trying to achieve, understand who needs to be involved, and will engage in different ways to ensure everyone impacted or interested has an opportunity to participate. This will be mapped out by Council staff in the form of a community engagement plan that is specific to the matter.

Community engagement plans are carefully considered to be inclusive, accessible and appropriate, as well as clear about the engagement goals, process, timing, tools and roles to ensure the particular target group(s) are well informed of both the issue and the engagement opportunities.

Council commits to engaging in an open and honest manner, clearly communicating the extent the community can influence the decision at hand, as well as providing any historical context, statutory processes, known constraints or limitations that may affect the engagement process.

Alongside targeted engagement efforts, Council will also maintain ongoing relationships with community and stakeholders through committees and by providing support to community groups. Wherever possible, Council will identify and contact special interest community groups/organisations or individuals to assist Council's engagement process.

Council is committed to engaging with all members of our diverse community and we will utilise all measures where possible to engage vulnerable and potentially underrepresented communities.

It is important for our community to understand the implications of large scale, city wide projects at a local level. To encourage participation in the engagement process, where possible, we will contextualise significant city-wide into locally relevant information pertaining to each suburb. Furthermore, we aim to engage face to face in locations where people already naturally are/attend in their community, where appropriate.

## Types and context of community engagement

Every engagement project is different. In the early planning stages of a community engagement process, Council undertakes an extensive analysis of the project's context, circumstances, history, sensitivity, stakeholders, level of impact and level of influence the community has. Based on this analysis, we deliver an engagement plan that includes the most appropriate stakeholders, approach, levels and tools of the process. We are flexible and responsive to the needs of each unique engagement process.

Our community engagement activities will broadly fall into the below categories, recognising that different stakeholders will choose to engage at different levels. It is worth noting that some community engagement processes are required to adhere to other Victorian Government legislation, such as land-use planning or service requests/complaints, as referenced earlier in this document. This policy does not apply to these processes.

### 1. Community engagement about major strategic work – deliberative engagement

The *Local Government Act 2020* requires councils to apply their community engagement policy in the development of the below items, and to undertake deliberative engagement practices in the development of:

- Community Vision
- 4 Year Council Plans
- Financial Plan
- Asset Plan

To deliver deliberative community engagement in the development of these pieces of work, we will develop community engagement plans that may use, but are not prescribed or limited to, methods and tools found in the 'Consult', 'Involve', 'Collaborate' and 'Empower' sections of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, as listed in the next section of this policy.

The engagement approach, level and tools will be selected depending on the needs and complexity of the matter. Community engagement on matters in this section may or may not occur in several stages.

While the *Local Government Act 2020* does not prescribe and define specific community engagement levels or actions to be carried out as part of deliberative engagement, it is worth noting that the Act indicates that the key characteristics of deliberative engagement are considered to be: authentic engagement with the community; good representation of the community in engagement activities; clear demonstration of how all views have been considered; accessible and relevant information available to the community to ensure the decision-making process and the community's level of influence is clear in each instance and that participants are fully informed.

## **2. Community engagement about local issues and regular operations**

Some local decisions, projects and services, potentially including but not limited to annual budgets, revenue and rating plans, master plans, structure plans, city-wide policies / strategies / services and infrastructure delivery (built and non-built form) may require community engagement.

To deliver effective community engagement in the development of these pieces of work, we will develop community engagement plans that may use, but are not prescribed to, methods and tools found across the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. An interpretation of the spectrum is listed in the next section of this policy.

A range of services, projects, decisions and local laws reviews are carried out by Council as part of its regular operations that may not be complex and may not have a significant impact. In some instances, there is no ability for the community to influence the outcome of a Council decision or project. In these instances, we may use methods and tools found in the 'Inform' section of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

The engagement approach, level and tools will be selected depending on the needs and complexity of the matter. Community engagement on matters in this section may or may not occur in several stages.

### **The role of Councillors in community engagement**

The Councillors of Hobsons Bay are the elected community representatives for the city. They determine the strategic direction of the organisation and its deliverables. They play a lead role in deliberative decision making about local issues on behalf of residents and they make the final decisions on matters presented to them formally at Council Meetings. As such, the community engagement processes outlined in this policy are designed to support and complement them in this process.

### **IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation**

*(IAP2: International Association for Public Participation)*

This policy recognises the IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation as the guide to engagement levels.

The next page presents an interpretation of this spectrum, with some additional components added. The original IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is found in Appendix 1.

Council recognises that the list of tools and techniques included in the table below is not exhaustive. There is an ongoing need to evolve and update our tools as the community's expectations and needs evolve. We will consider using other new ways to engage the community and adapt our practices when appropriate.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
	<b>DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT</b>				
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
The engagement approach, level and tools will be selected based on the needs and complexity of each matter.					
The levels of engagement may be fluid within an engagement process and may shift based on emerging needs.					
<b>Public participation goal</b>	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the issue, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the community 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.
<b>Promise to the public</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input has influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to 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.

LEVEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
	<p>The engagement approach, level and tools will be selected based on the needs and complexity of each matter.</p> <p>The levels of engagement may be fluid within an engagement process and may shift based on emerging needs.</p>				
<p><b>Examples of possible consultation tools and techniques</b></p> <p><i>*Some tools can be used fluidly across the engagement levels</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website(s)</li> <li>Fact sheet</li> <li>Social media</li> <li>Letter or postcard drop to homes</li> <li>Email and SMS</li> <li>E-newsletter</li> <li>Newsletter</li> <li>Flyer or fact sheet</li> <li>Advertisement in local paper</li> <li>Media release</li> <li>Signage/poster</li> <li>Displays / digital noticeboards</li> <li>On hold phone message</li> <li>Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surveys or polls</li> <li>Comment form</li> <li>Suggestion box</li> <li>Interviews</li> <li>Focus group sessions</li> <li>Booth/stand at event or local market</li> <li>Meetings</li> <li>Doorknocking</li> <li>Online pin drop pin mapping tool</li> <li>Face to face listening pop ups</li> <li>Written submissions</li> <li>Creative projects submissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated Workshops</li> <li>Public meeting</li> <li>Site tours</li> <li>Open days</li> <li>Suburb/Ward meetings</li> <li>Online forums</li> <li>Working groups</li> <li>Community reference groups</li> <li>Conversation café</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Advisory Committees</li> <li>Co-design</li> <li>Detailed online tools eg. Ranking, mapping, prioritising</li> <li>Participatory decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ballots / elector polls</li> <li>Independently governed reference groups / panels</li> <li>Delegated decision makers</li> <li>Citizens' Juries</li> <li>Citizen Panels</li> </ul>



## How we determine and deliver the most appropriate engagement

To ensure effective and strategic community engagement, Council delivers community engagement using a step by step approach that is an essential part of the planning process. The below steps inform the pathway that each community engagement process takes.

This model can be applied to any engagement project regardless of the scale, complexity and level of impact on and influence of the community, and it is worth noting there may be multiple stages of engagement in one project. When there are multiple stages, the initial stage can be centred on understanding the community's broader needs or wants about the matter, followed by a subsequent stage of consultation that addresses more specific detail of the matter.

Further detail and support for Council officers in running successful engagement is contained in the Community Engagement staff guidelines and toolkit (internal facing documents).

- **Define purpose, context and scope**
  - Gather relevant background info ie research, benchmarking, previous consultation, relevant strategies, policies and regulations
  - Identify project staff and internal decision makers, timelines, deliverables, risk and restrictions (if any)
  - Identify what is negotiable and non-negotiable in terms of what the community can influence – ie safety standards are non-negotiable
  
- **Stakeholders identification and analysis**
  - Identify all community members, special interest groups and stakeholders who are impacted by or interested in the project, noting that stakeholders change with every project
    - Stakeholders will usually be defined as:
      - primary - people directly impacted by the decision or project at hand (eg. clients of the affected service, residents of the affected street, users of the affected park, cyclists on the affected trail, etc);
      - secondary - people who are impacted in some way by the decision or project at hand (eg. residents in the neighbourhood of the affected streets or park, etc);
      - broad - people who may not be directly impacted but have an interest or stake in the decision or project (eg. the wider Hobsons Bay community)
  - Identify and contact special interest community groups/organisations or individuals to assist Council's engagement process
  
- **Plan the process**
  - Identify the IAP2 participation level appropriate for the project
  - Plan the engagement level, stages, methods, tools that are responsive to each stakeholder group for each stage of the project
  - Confirm the data and analysis requirements
  - Confirm the promotion and evaluation of the engagement
  - Share how the feedback will be used and how it will inform or influence the project
  
- **Engage**
  - Be clear and accessible in each engagement plan and process about the level and tools used
  - Support diverse needs
  - Remain responsive to needs and issues as they arise

- **Review and learn**
  - Data collation, analysis and review
  - Look for themes and priorities and any gaps
  
- **Share the knowledge and apply to the decision**
  - Report the community engagement outcomes and findings to the relevant project team
  - The relevant project team applies the engagement outcomes and feedback to help make the decision or direct the project at hand (the decision-making process will be unique to each project depending on its needs)
  
- **Closing the loop**
  - Report the consultation participation, findings, data, outcomes and final decisions on an engagement activity back to participants
  - Community engagement outcomes will be made available to the community on Participate Hobsons Bay or on Council's website in the form of a 'What we Heard Report', as well as provided directly to people who elected to be kept informed and have provided contact details.
  - Recognise the community's participation
  
- **Evaluate**
  - Evaluate the engagement process against the Community Engagement Policy and stakeholder experience
  - Look for areas of improvement, key learnings and celebrate the successes
  - Understand the effectiveness of the process to enhance future engagement

#### **Public facing information**

Council will include the below as part of the public facing community engagement information specific to each project. This will be included on each project page on Participate Hobsons Bay, Council's community engagement website.

- the aspects/components of the matter that the community can influence ie what is negotiable and non-negotiable
- how community participation, involvement and feedback will inform the decision being made
- stakeholder identification ie the three levels as above
- level of engagement being delivered, as per the IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation
- engagement tools used, which are responsive to each of the levels of stakeholders

Engagement with the community can and does occur through a range of tools that may not include Participate Hobsons Bay ie direct letters, discussions, meetings etc. In this instance, the above information will be made available upon request.

## Definitions

### **Deliberative**

The Oxford Dictionary defines deliberative as *'Long and careful consideration or discussion'*.

### **Conversation café**

An informal dialogue method that invites people to take part in discussions about topical issues in an informal setting.

### **Co-design**

A process that brings citizens and stakeholders together to design new products, services and policies.

### **Participatory decision making**

Participatory Decision Making is a creative process to give ownership of decisions to a defined group, finding effective options that everyone can agree on. One form of this is consensus, but consensus is not essential component.

### **Citizens Juries and Citizens Panels**

This can take different forms. Deliberative processes often, but not always, involve participants (a random sample of community) coming together for a period of time, being given credible and reliable information on the topic under review, discussing (deliberating) the subject at length and arriving at a shared view on the way forward.

*\*It should be noted that these methodologies will be used in rare and exceptional circumstances only when deemed appropriate based on the needs and complexities of the matter at hand.*

## Statutory framework, exclusions, legislative compliance

Council's community engagement processes are guided by Victorian Government legislation and we are obliged to follow certain processes and Acts that are in place.

**The Local Government Act 2020 ("the Act")** requires all councils to adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy. As per the Act requirements, the policy must be formally endorsed by Council by 1 March 2020. This Policy is an extension of the work Council has been doing in community engagement and builds upon the Hobsons Bay Community Engagement Policy Framework 2015.

It is worth noting that this policy applies to community engagement being undertaken as legislated by the Victorian *Local Government Act 2020*, on projects delivered by Council, as directed by Hobsons Bay Councillors or recommended by Council officers.

**The Planning and Environment Act 1987** sets out the procedures for preparing and amending planning schemes, obtaining permits under planning schemes, enforcing compliance with planning schemes, and other administrative procedures.

As part of this, the Act sets the overarching notification requirements however in some instances planning scheme amendments and planning permit applications may be exempt from the notification requirements. These exemptions are set out in the Act and Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme.

Additionally Council decision making and policy documents must align with the Victorian Government Planning Framework.

**Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008** outlines ways in which local councils are expected to plan for the health and wellbeing of their communities. Under section 26(2)(c) a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan must provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan.

**Disability Act 2006** requires under sections 38(1)(c) and 38(5A) for local councils to prepare a disability action plan that promotes inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability. Hobsons Bay City Council undertakes this through A Fair Hobsons Bay for All 2019-2023.

**Exclusions:**

**Ministerial Exemption:** Under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the state government can exercise powers which exempt the Minister from public notification of specific land use planning matters. At the very least, under these circumstances Council will commit to informing the community of these land use planning matters.

**Health, Safety and Wellbeing of the community:** Where there is a situation which requires Council to respond quickly to avoid an immediate threat to the health, safety or wellbeing of the community, it may not be possible or feasible to involve the community in seeking feedback prior to taking action.

In matters where Council is required by legislation to engage with the community it will adhere to the legislative requirement as a minimum standard. At times this minimum standard may not meet the community engagement principles outlined in this policy. In those circumstances Council will, where appropriate and achievable, aim to go beyond the minimum standards.

**Human Rights Compliance:**

The **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006** (the Charter) is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values that include freedom, respect, equality and dignity.

Council acknowledges the legal responsibility to comply with the Charter therefore in developing the strategic direction of the Community Engagement Policy, the Charter has been used, particularly those rights that relate to equity as follows:

- recognition and equality before the law
- taking part in public life
- freedom of movement
- freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- freedom of expression
- protection of families and children
- cultural rights
- right to liberty and security of person
- right to protection from torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment

It is worth noting there are a number of pending changes in state government policy that may potentially play a role in the way engagement is undertaken. Council will respond to these policies where and when appropriate through the delivery of our community engagement approach.

## Development, Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy

This policy has been informed by evidence based best practice for community engagement, as well as a review of current organisational practices and staff engagement. The policy was further shaped by community feedback gathered during the public consultation period.

Implementation of this policy will be achieved through the Community Engagement Guidelines and Toolkit for staff, both of which are part of the Community Engagement Framework and internal facing documents.

This policy will be reviewed every four years to evaluate Council's community engagement activities and improve practice. Additionally, the community's satisfaction with community engagement will be monitored via feedback in the Annual Community Survey.

## References

IAP2 Australasia

As found at <https://www.iap2.org.au/>

id.community demographic resources for the Hobsons Bay profile

As found at <https://profile.id.com.au/hobsons-bay/>

Hobsons Bay City Council Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey

As found at <https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/>

A Fair Hobsons Bay for All

As found at <https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/Strategy-Planning/Social-policy-planning/A-Fair-Hobsons-Bay-for-All-2019-23>

Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-21

<https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/About-Council/Reconciliation>

Engage Victoria guidelines, toolkit and information about the Local Government Act 2020

As found at <https://engage.vic.gov.au/local-government-act-2020>

**Appendix 1:**

**IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation**

*(IAP2: International Association for Public Participation)*

**IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation**



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, 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.
<b>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	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 decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	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.

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