



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

OCTOBER 2023



Barwon
Coast

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

We acknowledge the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the land, waters, seas and skies of Ocean Grove, Barwon Heads, 13th Beach and Breamlea.

We honour and say Nyatne to Elders past, present and future whose ancestors, for thousands of years, have cared for this part of Dja (Country).

We are committed as an organisation to meaningfully work together with Traditional Owners to make Wadawurrung Culture and Country strong.



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KOLING WADA-NGAL (LET US WALK TOGETHER) WITH THE WADWURRUNG PEOPLE

“Wadawurrung and Barwon Coast have forged a strong relationship, with shared aspirations to care and protect Wadawurrung land, water, and skies. This partnership with Barwon Coast is crucial in empowering self-determination and ensuring the preservation of the Culturally rich and significant Wadawurrung Dja (Country). Koling wada-ngal (Let Us Walk Together).”

– Matthew Chatterton, Wadawurrung Man

OUR COMMITMENT

The Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of the dja, warri and ngubiyt (Country, Water and Sea) of the coastal reserves on the Bellawiyn (Bellarine) Peninsula that Barwon Coast manage. We respect the Wadawurrung People’s ongoing connection to the marine and coastal environment. We honour Elders past and present and those now emerging and say nyatne for their gobata dja baap ngubiyt (taking care of country and waters) for many thousands of years and ensuring the continuation of Culture and Traditional practices.

We support the Wadawurrung People’s vision of wurrurrwilwa gumpa bengadak Wadawurrung wurring-wurring baap dja (all people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and Culture strong). We are committed to partnering with the Wadawurrung People and Aboriginal communities in the spirit of reconciliation and to enable self-determination.

We will embed the Wadawurrung People’s assertions into our decision making, planning and management and support them in wurrurrwilwa (strengthening) Cultural knowledge and practices. Koling wada-ngal (let us walk together) to integrate Wadawurrung gobata dja and ngubiyt (caring for country and waters) knowledge and practices into Barwon Coast’s operations. We will do this by supporting Wadawurrung to gobata dja baap ngubiyt (care for country and waters), to be on dja (country) to continue good practices as their ancestors did, put Wadawurrung language back on dja (country) and educate the broader community through retelling their stories and history.

INTRODUCTION

Communities of Ocean Grove, Barwon Heads and Breamlea, as well as visitors to these towns, love to visit, enjoy and experience the beaches, river and ocean of this special place. Barwon Coast has been delegated to manage these coastal areas and does so in partnership with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, guidance from government agencies, and input from community groups and individuals.

Barwon Coast's planning and management efforts to care for the coast can be more effective and resilient with community input. This framework provides guidance and a consistent approach for how Barwon Coast integrates community input and engagement into its activities.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Barwon Coast's management and operations are carried out in accordance with the *Barwon Coast, Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020-2025* (the Plan). The Plan is an application of the state *Marine and Coastal Policy 2020* at a local level.

The vision of the Plan is "the natural environment of our coastline will flourish whilst meeting the needs of our engaged communities."

A key aspect of this is '**engaged communities**' which highlights the importance of community input and engagement at Barwon Coast.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

This Community Engagement Framework includes:

- An understanding of what community engagement is and why is it important.
- Principles to support a consistent and coordinated approach to community engagement.
- A guide for how and when Barwon Coast engages with the community on different matters.
- Steps to support Barwon Coast staff in the planning and delivery of community engagement.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE FRAMEWORK

The framework was developed with input from Traditional Owners, the community and Barwon Coast committee and staff.

It was also developed using best practice guidance from the Victorian Government Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025 and from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). Visit <https://iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum/> to learn more.

The framework is supported by a community engagement toolkit for Barwon Coast staff. The toolkit includes detailed guidance and templates for planning and delivery of engagement activities.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

“Community engagement is any planned process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making, and that uses public input to make better decisions.”

International Association for
Public Participation (IAP2)

As outlined by The Victorian Public Engagement Framework 2021-2025, engagement encourages people to get involved in decisions that are of interest to them.

Community engagement refers to a range of opportunities including:

- Educating people about a topic.
- Obtaining feedback on a project.
- Working with stakeholders to address local issues.

Community engagement activities may include:

- Workshops, forums, consultative committees, or deliberative panels (also known as citizen’s jury).
- Focus groups, interviews, surveys.
- Online mapping tools or social media commentary.
- Submissions, feedback forms or questionnaires.
- Communication materials like fact sheets, newsletters, displays or letters.

WHY IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

Community engagement is important because:

- Community members can influence decisions that directly affect them and their interests.
- Community members can contribute and input local knowledge and wisdom to support better outcomes.
- Coastal managers can better understand and respond to the needs of the community and provide better services.
- Decisions made by coastal managers can be better understood by the community.
- It builds shared ownership and accountability between coastal managers and the community.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

This table is based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation. The spectrum has five levels of participation, the levels relate to public influence over decision-making in a community engagement process.

Using the spectrum can help ensure engagement best-practice. The table identifies the ways the community may be involved decision making, and the different levels of public participation required depending on the type of project.






	 Inform	 Consult	 Involve	 Collaborate	 Empower
Barwon Coast promises to the public	We will keep you informed	We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns and feedback throughout the engagement process	We will work to understand your concerns and aspirations and ensure community feedback is directly reflected in the options developed	We will seek your advice to create solutions and incorporate community advice and recommendations to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what the community decides
Community role	Listen and learn	Contribute	Participate	Partner	Partner or lead
Common example activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter Website Letterbox drops Fact sheets Social media Signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys Drop-in sessions Walking tours Field trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community pop-ups Stakeholder meetings Focus groups Drop-in discussion Working groups Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community panels Advisory committees Partnership groups Steering groups Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community panels (also known as deliberative panels / citizen's jury)

Table 1. Participation and engagement levels

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Community engagement at Barwon Coast is guided by five principles. The principles were developed in collaboration with the Committee of Management, Barwon Coast staff and community groups.

They provide a shared understanding of the most important aspects when planning and delivering community engagement activities. The principles support a shared stewardship approach in, 'Barwon Coast caring for the coast together with the community'.



1. Partner with Traditional Owners

Put the wisdom and knowledge of Traditional Owners first. We will talk to representatives of Wadawurrung as a first priority in planning and delivering projects to implement the Coastal and Marine Management Plan.



2. Respect and equity

Be respectful and inclusive when planning and delivering engagement activities. Consider needs of all groups, such as people who speak English as a second language, who are neurodivergent and those who do not feel that community engagement is for them.



3. Clear engagement goals

Be clear on the engagement elements of a project so the community can understand what they can influence in the decisions being made by Barwon Coast.



4. Ease of access to engagement activities

Make it as easy as possible for people to participate. Given people are busy, when planning engagement activities be mindful and use people's time efficiently.



5. Close the loop

Inform people of final decisions and how their input was considered.

WHEN IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MOST NEEDED?

Barwon Coast manages the coast in line with the *Barwon Coast Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020-2025*. Community input helped inform and shape the Plan.

At an operational level, to implement the Plan, Barwon Coast will continually assess the requirement for community input on individual actions or projects. Barwon Coast may not need to engage on every project or activity.

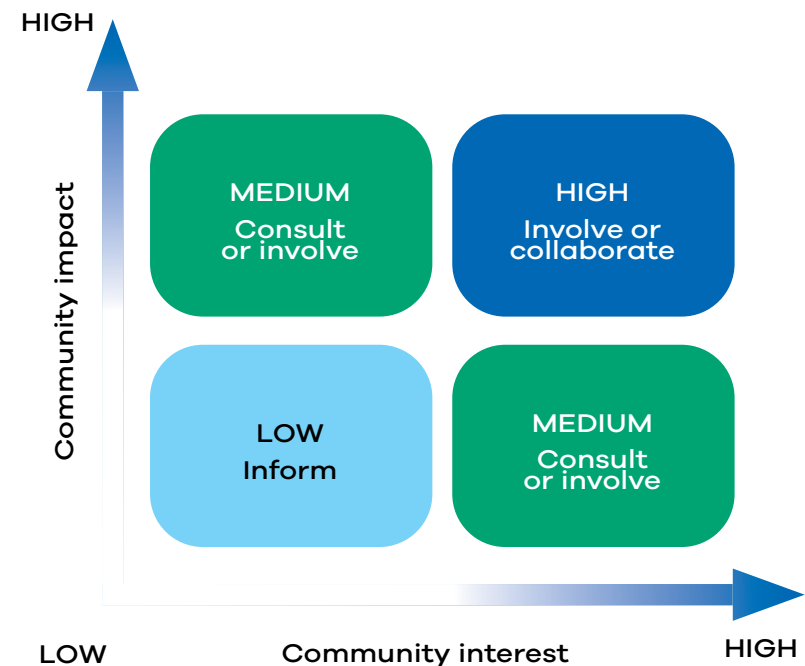
Factors considered in understanding when community engagement is needed include:

- What is the level of community impact?
- What is the level of community interest?
- What knowledge can be gained from the community to improve the outcome?

If a project or action has a **medium** or **high** impact on community members, and the community has a medium to high level of interest, engagement is likely to be a valuable part of the decision-making process.

If a project has **low** community impact as well as **low** community interest then engagement is much less likely to add value, and may not be required for that project.

Community Engagement Guide linked with IAP2 level of Involvement



CONSIDERING WHEN TO ENGAGE

The following prompts will guide Barwon Coast in considering when to engage and ensure the engagement effort matches the level of community interest and impact about an issue. If there is a legislative requirement to engage, the prompts will not be as relevant, but they can help to decide the level of engagement.

- Is the project or action in the Coastal and Marine Management Plan or a Precinct Master Plan and has it already been engaged on?
- Is it a project or action that would really benefit from local knowledge?
- Are community members impacted by the project? (The higher the number of people impacted and the greater the impact, the greater importance to engage.)
- Is there strong community interest in the project or issues being addressed?
- Are there elements of the decision or outcome that the community can influence? i.e. there are negotiables.
- Is there a (i) clear purpose for engagement and (ii) a problem or challenge we should share with our community that the community cares about.
- Is it early enough in the planning and the decision-making process for the engagement to be planned adequately so that the community input can be meaningful and impactful?



STEPS IN PLANNING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

When community engagement is part of a project, Barwon Coast uses three key steps to support a consistent approach for planning and delivery.

STEP 1 PLAN and PREPARE

Prepare community engagement plan and consider:

- Partnering with Wadawurrung as first priority in the planning
- How the decision can be influenced by the community
- Level of engagement on IAP2 spectrum
- Audience and groups to engage with
- Types and methods of engagement
- Timing and resources available



1. Partner with Traditional Owners

2. Respect and equity

3. Clear engagement goals

STEP 2 SPEAK and LISTEN

Run community engagement activities including:

- Getting input from the community as early as possible and responding to issues and feedback as quickly as possible.
- Actively listen to, understand and document the community views and needs using different engagement methods that match



1. Partner with Traditional Owners

2. Respect and equity

4. Ease of access to engagement activities

STEP 3 CLOSE the LOOP

Inform the community about the outcomes of the project and how their input was considered.



1. Partner with Traditional Owners

2. Respect and equity

5. Close the loop

PRINCIPLES

APPENDIX 1: RELATED DOCUMENTS

[Paleert Tjaara Dja, Let's make Country good together 2020-2030 Wadawurrung Country Plan](#)

Vision: All people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and Culture strong.

[Marine and Coastal Policy 2020](#)

Vision: A healthy, dynamic and biodiverse marine and coastal environment that is valued in its own right, and that benefits the Victorian community, now and in the future.

Chapter 12 of the Marine and Coastal Policy provides guidance for engagement, collaboration and capacity building on the coast. Policy 12.1 states.

Engagement on planning and decision making under the Marine and Coastal Act 2018 must:

- a. recognise the rights and aspirations of Traditional Owners
- b. recognise the wide variety of community values and knowledge
- c. be inclusive and provide opportunities for broad and diverse participation
- d. build on existing programs of community engagement.

[Public Engagement Framework – 2021 - 2025](#)

Vision: Working together to make better decisions and improve the lives of Victorians.

[Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action Community Charter](#)

Vision: We work with you to deliver services that support thriving environments and communities.

[Barwon Coast Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020-2025](#)

The natural environment of our coastline will flourish whilst meeting the needs of our engaged communities.





Barwon
Coast

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We care for the coast