

Community Engagement Assessment Toolkit



The Community Engagement Toolkit is a document designed to assist Council staff when engaging with key stakeholders, including the community. It not only references the key deliverables of the Greater Dandenong Community Engagement Framework, but it also provides practical guidelines for achieving positive community engagement outcomes in the City of Greater Dandenong.

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Community Engagement Assessment



Before embarking on any engagement activity at the City of Greater Dandenong it is important you speak with Council's Media and Communication team from the outset.

They will be able to guide you through the process and provide advice on the best ways to engage with the local community and key stakeholders.

Do I need to engage with the community about this issue/project?

Question	Answer	Deciding to engage
Has the decision already been made?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Advise the community about the decision
	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	May choose to engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Find out what in the project is negotiable
Is there a statutory requirement to engage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	May choose to engage
Has the community already provided feedback on this issue?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	You may choose to engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	You may choose to engage
Can the community's involvement in the project contribute to or enhance the outcome to be achieved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	You may choose to engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	You may choose to engage
Are there benefits to the community from being involved (i.e. education, improved relations, capacity building and networks)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	You may choose to engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	You may choose to engage
Is there benefit or value of engaging internally?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Engage
	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	Advise or engage internal stakeholders
	<input type="checkbox"/> No	You may choose to engage

Risk Assessment – How could Council’s reputation be negatively impacted by any community engagement activities.

Prompt	Anticipated Impact/Value		
	High	Medium	Low
How would you rate the current or anticipated level of community interest in the project?			
What level of influence will the community have on the project?			
How would you rate the need for additional information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to progress the project • to understand community values and aspirations • to assist the development of policy 			
How would you rate the risk to council if the community is not engaged from the following aspects? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Environmental • Economic 			
If council did not involve the community in the project, what level of response would you anticipate from the community? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political • Media coverage • Complaints 			
How would you rate the project’s impact on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region • District • Suburb • Neighbourhood 			
How would you rate the potential financial impact of your project on the overall council financial operations?			
How would you rate the complexity of the project?			
How would you rate your need for specialised skill sets or input from specialists or external stakeholders?			

Community Engagement Plan Template

Insert Project Name

Introduction

Background Information

What is the focus area and the community affected by this engagement?

1.1 Risk Analysis

Consider what are the risks to Council, the level of risk, and actions you will take to mitigate that risk.

Potential Risk	Level of Risk	Risk Mitigation

1.2 Level of Community Involvement

Consider what level of community involvement is required for your issue according to the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, see below. Your engagement may incorporate more than one level of involvement.

For the purposes of this project, Council's level of community involvement encompasses the following levels: *[SPECIFY whether you wish to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower]*

Elements	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement goal	To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of a topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work with the community throughout the process to ensure that 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 the final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the community	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 community input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in forming solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
When to use this element	This element is used to enhance knowledge, understanding, support and transparency. It provides the community with information on something that has been decided and is to be implemented.	This element is used to gather information and have discussions with the community. Feedback is provided to the community on the outcome of those discussions.	This element actively seeks the input of the community into any policy, plan or activity which may directly or indirectly affect them. Alternatives are sought from the community and feedback is provided on how that information was used in forming the decision.	This element is utilised when Council seeks to work in partnership with communities to identify joint solutions and develop initiatives.	This element is used when Council is prepared to put into place the decision made by community.

Engagement Approach

2.1 Engagement Objectives

2.2 Engagement Outputs

2.3 Understanding the Context

List the materials that you will read, have previously read, people you will or have spoken to as part of this project to get to know the community you will be engaging with.

Potential Opportunities:

List the opportunities

Potential Challenges:

List the challenges

2.4 Stakeholder Analysis

Speaking to the right people is probably the most important part of the process, closely followed by planning. There are many ways to create a stakeholder list and you can Google any of the following terms:

- Stakeholder mapping
- Circle of influence
- Stakeholder matrix

What you are trying to determine is who is interested and/or affected by the project, as well as how much control or influence the stakeholder has over the project.

Stakeholders can be divided into different categories.

Critical or immediate stakeholders – this group is immediately affected by your subject.

Influential stakeholders – this group is influential to the project, they may have specific expertise, be able to change the outcome of a project or be a key decision maker.

Interested stakeholders – this group may have a specific viewpoint or interest in the project or issue. Often once their idea or issue is addressed they may move out to mildly interested.

Mildly interested stakeholders – similar to the interested group, they may have a specific issue or focus.

Stakeholder engagement is a process where people who may be affected by Council decisions can provide input and add value to the decision making process. An underlying principle of stakeholder engagement is that stakeholders have the chance to influence the decision-making process. The below table helps assist you in deciding who your key stakeholders are.

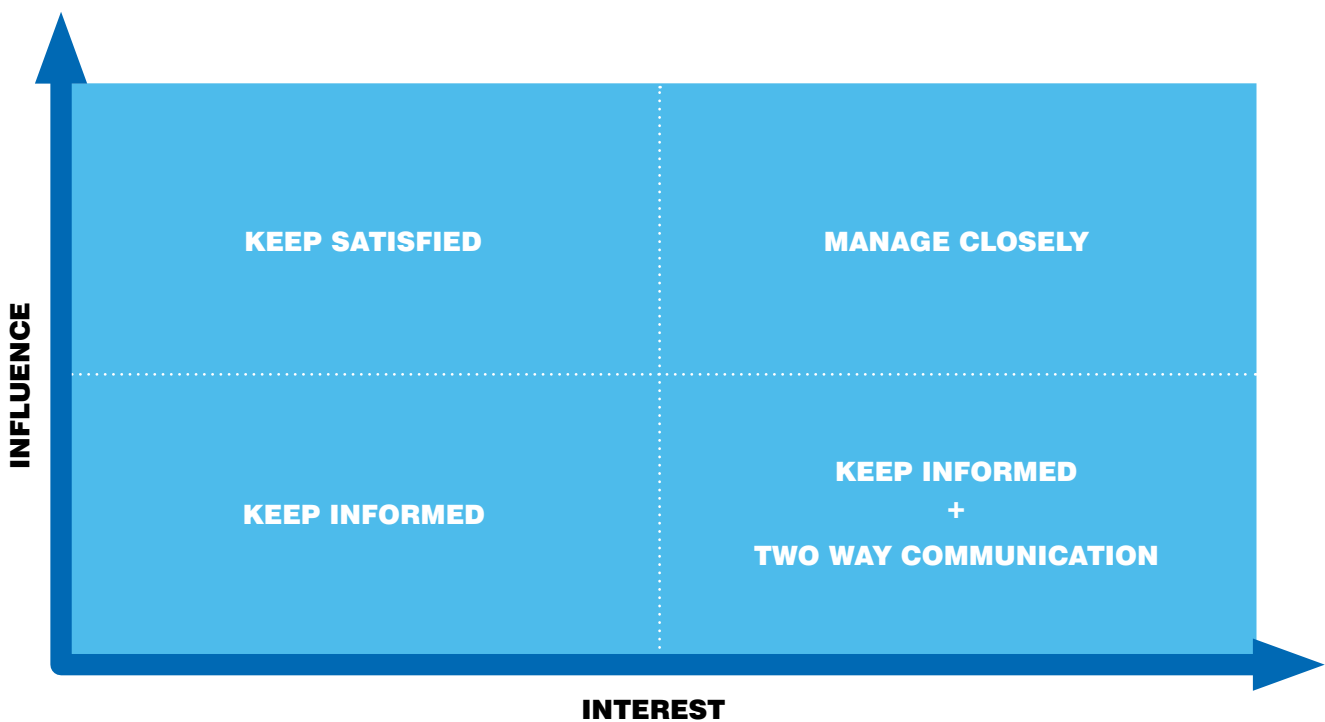
Critical	Influential	Interested	Mildly Interested
List	List	List	List

It is important to recognise that stakeholders may move between the categories depending on the project and stage. If your project is particularly sensitive or topical, it can be a good idea to map their circle of influence.

Using the list of stakeholders in your influential list consider:

- Connection and relationship to other stakeholders?
- Worst case scenario? Best case scenario?
- Strategies to minimize risk and maximise participation.

To understand the level of communication and timing of communication consider the table diagram below.



Community & Stakeholder Engagement Activities

3.1 Engagement Methodology

Consider your community engagement goal/s and detail the activities you have selected that will yield the information you require and fit with your available resources.

Summary of Proposed Engagement Activities (based on the IAP2 Spectrum)

Level	Goal	Community Promise	Proposed Methods
Inform	To provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding of a topic, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed and up to date with the process. We will let you know the appropriate times to get involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Reports • Feature Stories • Media Releases
Consult	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet Survey • Face to face questionnaire/relational meeting (1:1s)
Involve	To work with the community throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how community input influenced the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community workshop • Stakeholder interviews • Kitchen Table Conversation • Community Fairs and events
Collaborate	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation games • Steering or advisory committees • Tour and field trips
Empower	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the public.	We will implement what you decide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Jury • Elections/Polls

Refer to fact sheet 1 for more examples.

3.2 Engagement Tools and Techniques

Detail the activities/techniques you have chosen for your engagement.

Tool/Technique	Description	Timing	Responsibility
Public Meeting	Community meeting with speakers, including leaders from another community garden. Majority of the time to be used by participants in asking questions and discussing residents' ideas or concerns to give those present an idea of community interest.	Thurs 15 Sept, 2015, 7-8.30 pm	



3.3 Engagement Timeline

Outline details of your engagement techniques in more details with regard to timing and location and staff requirements

Schedule	Date	Time	Location	Staff
e.g. Public Meetings	Thurs 15 Sept, 2015	7-8.30pm	Kindergarten	Community Strengthening x 3 ppl

Promoting Your Engagement

This project will be promoted through:

Internal channels such as:

External channels such as:

4.1 Key Messages

Below is a list of key messages for the project, for use when answering questions from stakeholders or for use in the media.

4.2 FAQs

Below is a list of pre-emptive questions that may be asked as part of this project.

Q:

A:

Q:

A:

Q:

A:

Support and Resources Required



Before embarking on any engagement activity at the City of Greater Dandenong it is important you speak with Council’s Media and Communication team from the outset.

They will be able to guide you through the process and provide advice on the best ways to engage with the local community and key stakeholders.

5.1 Staffing Requirements

Task	People required

5.2 Financial Resources

Total Budget:

Item	Cost
Total	

5.3 Equipment

Item	Available from	Sourced Y/N



5.4 External Facilitators

List details of any external facilitators engaged.

5.5 Support from Other Departments

Department	Support provided

5.6 External Support

Organisation	Support provided

Media and Communications play an integral role in Community Engagement activities across Council. Media and Communications will be able to guide you through the process and provide advice on the best ways to engage with the local community and key stakeholders.

Media and Communications have a number of tools they use to engage and inform the community. These include designed and printed collateral like flyers and posters, web content, social media posts, surveys, media coverage and advertising.

All of these things take time so it is important to factor in four to six weeks into your engagement process for these things to be achieved.



Fact Sheet 1 – Community Engagement Techniques

Below is a list of possible engagement techniques that can be used to help you with your consultation. There are many techniques that can be used.

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
► Sharing information			
Letters	An addressed letter to all affected people. It outlines issues and requests participation and/or invites comments or provides a comment form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits comment • Good for a targeted consultation • Can reach a wide audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only as good as your stakeholder list • Materials may not be read • May get lost in all the 'junk' mail
Newsletters	Consultation information provided in a regular publication. Any article should both inform and encourage feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach a large target audience • Encourages feedback • Progress reports possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No guarantee it will be read • More likely that those with strong views will respond
Brochures	A special publication with information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach a large audience • Allows feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be relatively expensive to produce and distribute • Material may not be read
Issue Papers Fact Sheets		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be quite inexpensive to produce • Can reach a large target audience • Allows for technical discussion of the issues • Provides context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs a good distribution method • Materials may not be read
Technical Reports	Technical documents that report research or policy findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits comprehensive discussion of the evidence/reasons for a decision or options • Full costing and benefits can be given • If well written, can empower citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to understand • May present more details than many people want • Expensive

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
Newspaper inserts	A sheet of information provided within the local newspaper. Should encourage public feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits community wide distribution • More likely to be noticed as part of the newspaper than if distributed separately • Can allow feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be expensive • Local papers aren't always distributed to all households • Message can be lost in the ads
Advertisements	Paid advertisements in newspapers or magazines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach a broad audience of the reading public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be expensive • Must be kept short
Feature stories	A story written about the project or consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can increase its importance in the public eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No control over the content or when it is published
Media Releases		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs the media • Can influence a feature story as the content is often used directly by the media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media may not use it • May be placed in a poor location in the paper or at a poor time on radio or TV

► Information gathering

Mailed surveys or questionnaires	Mailed randomly to sample population or to all households to get specific information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide statistically valid, quantitative data, which often is seen as more 'valid' • May get people who don't attend meetings • Provides input from a cross-section of the population, not just activists • Many people find it a more comfortable way to share their thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rates are usually low • Expensive to ensure getting statistically valid results • Can get lost in all the 'junk mail' • Difficult for people with CALD backgrounds or those with literacy issues
Telephone surveys	A random sample of the population by telephone to get specific information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide statistically valid, quantitative data, which often is seen as more 'valid' • May get people who don't attend meetings • Cross section of the population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More expensive and involves more labour than mailed surveys • Low response rate • Many people dislike the invasiveness of phone calls to their home • Many people screen their calls • Declining number of people with landlines

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
Internet survey	Web based survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May attract people who don't attend meetings • Gets input from a wider range of population • Higher response rates if well promoted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't control geographical area of response
Face to face questionnaire	Can be completed at home or at events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides good data • Can reach a range of people • Can be more personal • Can get more in-depth information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Can be difficult to organise • People may not be interested
► More interactive methods			
Stakeholder interview	One-on-one meetings with stakeholders to gain information to help design public consultation or to work on consensus building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows for in-depth information exchange • Permits feedback from all stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Can be difficult to organise • People may not be interested
Appreciative inquiry	Facilitated meeting process to draw on best practice, past and present, and set the stage for innovative visualisation of the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicits full participation in change • Encourages commitment to change as a process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard for those who prefer 'problem solving' focus
Critical incident technique	When reviewing services etc, a facilitated process that request a story about the best and worst incidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows a full range of information to emerge on a service or issue 	
Citizen juries	Before a public audience, a small group of citizens forms a panel to learn about an issue from expert witnesses, cross examine witnesses to explore the issues and make recommendations to the decision maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good opportunity to thoroughly explore an issue before the public • Public can identify with the jury members • Good way to gauge public opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires high level of labour and a sufficient number of experts

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
Charettes	A group exercise in which participants re-design project features or create options around an issue. A common method in urban design, also appropriate for multi-stakeholder planning for the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for problem solving and creative thinking • Brings together lots of information with stakeholders and decision makers working together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating stakeholders may not be seen as representative • Labour and time intensive
Community fairs and events	A central community event with multiple activities to provide project information and raise awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses public attention on the issue • Invites media attention • Allows for information sharing at a number of levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public must want to attend • Requires sufficient resources to do well • May be expensive to do, if using professional displays
Community meetings or forum	Formal meetings often with presentations at the start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If well planned provides participants with the opportunity to learn and speak out • Opportunity to hear a range of views • Can be cost effective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires good facilitation to be productive • Can be hijacked or dominated • Only vocal people will speak up • Can polarize people – unpredictable outcome • Can be difficult to get people to attend unless issue is of major interest
World Cafes	A meeting process with simultaneous conversations among groups of four, using predetermined questions. People randomly change tables at set intervals. A good debrief is required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters open and significant conversation on specific subjects • Can draw out shared issues • Provides a range of perspectives • More comfortable for participants than a formal meeting • Allow people to work in small groups without facilitators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups can get off track • Can only cover a small number of topics • Good planning needed to ensure the data is collected and fed back to participants

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
Expert panels	Public meeting, with a panel of experts who are questioned by media, a facilitator or the public. The experts should have different perspectives on the issue or project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public can participate after the formal questioning session • Permits a more balanced discussion • Clarify technical information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires extensive organisation • May increase visibility of issues of public concern
Focus groups and workshops	Groups of between 5-20 people to obtain input in a discussion. Usually lead by a trained facilitator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works well for a selected target audience • Generates a range of opinions • Can explore issues in-depth • Can explore issues brought up at the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs a skilled facilitator to avoid domination by a minority • Many people are not comfortable speaking in public • Can miss out on issues when engaging more narrowly in-depth discussion • May be difficult to analyse all the information • Time consuming • May not be representative
Real Time strategic change	Large groups of stakeholders with diverse knowledge and competing needs are brought together through a designed series of interactive steps, are enabled to align their needs, become motivated and move towards necessary change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group has a piece of the jigsaw to contribute to creating a decision, option or solution for the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour intensive • May not achieve consensus • May not get full commitment of all parties
Simulation games	Exercises that simulate project decisions to test solutions or explore a situation to determine appropriate responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits debate, especially on difficult subjects • Allows people to explore issues from other perspectives • Can be used as a training tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires time and good preparation • People may not be willing/comfortable engaging fully in role play

Techniques	Description	Benefits	What can go wrong
Steering or advisory committees	A group of representative stakeholders who provide advice on a specific project or issue (steering committee) or on an ongoing basis (advisory committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides expertise and permits more in-depth analysis • Participants gain an understanding of other perspectives, encouraging consensus building • Easy regular access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not provide consensus • Decision makers or committee sponsors must be flexible and listen • Community may not see the committee as representative • Requires time and resources • May be political appointments
Tour and field trips	Provide information for stakeholders, elected officials, advisory group members, media etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to develop rapport with key people • Makes the choices more familiar and less likely that people will strongly object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants is determined by logistics • Can invite protesters



Fact Sheet 2 – Evaluating and Debriefing

Each engagement activity and the overall engagement process should be evaluated in relation to the initial community engagement objectives, the outcome or decision that was made and the effectiveness of the techniques to engage stakeholders.

There is also the option to seek feedback from the community regarding engagement processes they have participated in. Sample evaluation questions have been provided for this purpose. It is recommended that this approach to evaluation be used in moderation and to complement internal evaluation processes. Above all else, in evaluating the effectiveness of an engagement process be honest, maintain a factual and neutral stance and avoid political spin.

This evaluation process and the information obtained will also feed into any reports required for Councillors and/or EMT.

Evaluating information sharing

- Did the project receive any negative response from the community or media? Why?
- Have you received phone calls or other correspondence in response to the information you have distributed?
- Did you feel adequate time was given to notify the community regarding the project?
- How would you rate the technique in terms of value for money?
- Would another technique have met the same community engagement objective?
- How did you use the community input?
- How did you provide feedback to the community?

Evaluating engagement techniques

- Have you received phone calls or other correspondence in response to the information you have distributed?
- What level of interest was generated by the workshops/ questionnaires/site visits?
- How many participants attended any engagement processes involving groups of people?
- Did the activity meet the engagement objectives?

- What value would you place on the comments or inquiries received during the engagement?
- How would you rate the technique in terms of value for money?
- Would another technique have met the same community engagement objective?
- How was the community input used? Did it influence the outcome or decision to be made?

Evaluating the overall community engagement process

- Was the final decision generally acceptable to the public?
- Was the level of community engagement adequate to represent the concerns of those impacted by the project?
- Did the input from stakeholders contribute to a better overall outcome?
- Did decision makers believe that stakeholders' input helped to create a better outcome?
- Was the process implemented as planned? if not, what was changed and why?
- How were the stakeholders' expectations met by this process?
- Was there any change to the internal commitment to the community engagement plan?

Participant evaluation of the engagement process

- Do you consider the process fair considered your input?
- Do you consider that decision makers were sincere in their desire to obtain public input?
- Did you understand the objectives and process?
- Was the process sufficiently flexible to address issues as they arose?
- Did you feel you had enough information to be able to contribute to the process?
- Is it clear how your input has been used or considered?
- How satisfied are you with the overall process that was used to complete the project?

Evaluation	Notes
Purpose of Consultation	
Did everyone (including participants) understand the purpose of the consultation?	
Did the consultation achieve its objective? If not what were some of the obstacles that prevented success.	
Consultation Process	
What worked well?	
What areas could be improved on in the future?	
Participation levels	
Were you successful in reaching all of the intended stakeholders?	
Were the promotional tools you used to inform the community and key stakeholders about the engagement effective?	
What could be improved on in the future? ie types of questions asked, methods to engage ie forums, surveys etc.	
Response Rate	
Was the response rate high enough to give reliable results?	
Did you get the information you wanted?	
Did you get a good response rate from all the key stakeholders you were targeting?	
Consultation outcome	
What were the results and how do you plan to report these back to the participants and the broader community.? ie Greater Dandenong Council News, Website, Email, Media Release, Infosum etc	



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