

<b>Title</b>	<b>Commitment to Respectful Community Relationships</b>
<b>Description</b>	A policy to outline Council's commitment to the manner in which Councillors deal with the community, and set out the community's obligations in return.
<b>Category</b>	Council
<b>Type</b>	Policy
<b>Approval authority</b>	Council
<b>Responsible officer</b>	Group Manager, Chief Executive's Office
<b>Approval date</b>	23 August 2022
<b>Review cycle</b>	Every four years
<b>Review date</b>	23 August 2026
<b>Document Reference</b>	D22/247295
<b>Human Rights compatibility</b>	This policy has been assessed and is compatible with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights of Responsibilities

## 1. Context

### 1.1. The Commitment to Respectful Community Relationships:

- (a) is based on the principles of mutual respect and cooperation;
- (b) supports our values of providing a safe and respectful workplace; and
- (c) outlines the rights and responsibilities of Councillors and members of the community in Council-related interactions;

### 1.2. The Commitment sets out a responsibility for:

- (a) supporting Councillors in the service of the community;
- (b) setting clear expectations for interactions between Councillors and the community;
- (c) maintenance of a safe and respectful environment for both Councillors and members of the community.

## 2. The Commitment

### 2.1. The Commitment to Respectful Community Relationships appears below.

### 2.2. The Commitment is predicated on the need for a cooperative relationship between Councillors and their constituents, working together to support Councillors to achieve the stated role of each Councillor, which is:

- (a) to participate in the decision making of the Council; and
- (b) to represent the interests of the municipal community in that decision making; and
- (c) to contribute to the strategic direction of the Council through the development and review of key strategic documents of the Council, including the Council Plan.

## 3. Councillors

### 3.1. Information on the conduct expectations of Councillors in the performing of their duties and functions are set out in the Councillor Code of Conduct.

- 3.2. The Councillor Code of Conduct applies to all Councillors, and is required by section 139(1) of the Local Government Act 2020. The Code sets out the Standards of Conduct with which Councillors must comply and:
- endeavours to foster good working relationships between Councillors to enable Councillors to work constructively together in the best interests of the municipal community; and
  - seeks to lift the standard of behaviour of Councillors during Council meetings, Councillor briefings and any other meetings which Councillors participate in from time to time; and
  - sets out Councillor conduct, in addition to the Standards of Conduct, that is designed to build constructive and respectful relationships between Councillors and public confidence in the integrity of local government.

## 4. Complaints about Councillors

- 4.1. Councillors are democratically elected officials, and are ultimately held accountable to their constituents through the electoral process. As independent elected officials, Councillors are not directly accountable to the Chief Executive Officer or the Mayor, but they are required to operate in accordance with specified standards.
- 4.2. While the ultimate accountability for Councillors is at the ballot box, there are some circumstances where members of the community may lodge a complaint about a Councillor. Complaints may be made in relation to:
- a Councillor's breach of the Standards of Conduct
  - gross misconduct or serious misconduct by a Councillor
  - corruption or improper conduct
- 4.3. Complaints cannot ordinarily be made about the performance of a Councillor in their role.
- 4.4. Further information about the complaint avenues available and a copy of the legislated Standards of Conduct and the adopted Councillor Code of Conduct is available from [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/councillorconduct](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/councillorconduct)

## 5. Staff

- 5.1. Dealings between community members and the administration are not the subject of this Commitment.
- 5.2. However, Council affirms its support for the Chief Executive Officer in the discharge of the obligation to provide and maintain a working environment for Council staff that is safe and free of risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.

## 6. Related Documents

- Local Government Act 2020
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Complaint Handling Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Governance Rules (including Election Period Policy)



## Commitment to Respectful Community Relationships

### **Our commitment**

In performing the role of a Councillor, our Councillors will:

1. treat people with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect
2. have due regard for opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities
3. not engage in abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour
4. not deliberately mislead the public
5. not bring discredit upon the Council

While Councillors are democratically elected officials, and ultimately held accountable to constituents through the electoral process, there are limited circumstances when complaints may be made about a Councillor.

More information is available at [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/councillorconduct](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/councillorconduct)

### **Our expectations**

In dealing with the community, our Councillors have a right to:

1. be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect
2. a safe, healthy and productive working environment
3. honesty, respect, cooperation and reasonable assistance from the community
4. expect representations from the community to be made in ways that are respectful and lawful
5. not be subject to behaviour which raises health or safety issues
6. exercise zero tolerance for verbal abuse, offensive behaviour, threats and violence

When faced with behaviour that does not accord with these expectations, Councillors have the right to decline further engagement.

**This commitment was made by the Councillors of the City of Yarra  
at the Council meeting on Tuesday 23 August 2022.**